

A
VIEW FROM
THE
WINDOW

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Mark Thompson pulled back from the library window in a hurry. Had he turned away from the window in time? Had he been seen? He just didn't know. His heart was beating hard in his chest and he could feel himself starting to panic. He had to pull himself under control again.

Despite his inner voice screaming out at him not to do it, he found himself slowly moving back to the window. He had to be sure about what he had just seen. Carefully he started to look out again, down onto the street below.

Sure enough, there lay the body in a still growing pool of blood. The blood looked black in the eerie light being cast from a nearby street light. The body was that of a woman, maybe in her late twenties, early thirties. Standing beside the body was the man who had taken her life so coldly. He was looking straight up at Mark; their eyes met and locked. They stood looking at each other for what seemed to Mark to be an eternity, but could only have been a few seconds in reality. If he hadn't been seen the first time, he had definitely been caught now.

The man on the street raised his hand to point at Mark.

That was too much for Mark to deal with. He pulled away from the window and spun round so that his back was against the wall beside it. He had to call the police and he had to do it right now. Why had he gone back to the window? Why had he taken the extra risk?

Now the killer knew what he looked like and where to find him. The killer would know that he could describe him, that he could describe the car that he had been driving in. Would the killer take the chance of allowing him to speak to police? He thought not. Damn sure if it were him down there, he wouldn't.

In his mind he saw the killer trying to find a way into the building to clear up the mess. He couldn't risk leaving any witnesses alive, could he?

Mark finally started to move. The fear that the killer was either looking for a way into the building or was already inside was finally spurring him forwards. He had to call the police. He started to move across the room, making his way between the book shelves and the tables which in many cases were also piled high with books.

Why had he decided to have a look out of the window at that point in time? It had been something so small but something that had had seriously unexpected and frightening repercussions.

He reached the telephone which was mounted on the wall itself. He grabbed the receiver and was dialling 999 before he even had it to his ear.

A second later, he heard a woman's voice asking him what emergency service that he required.

'Police,' he answered in a weak voice.

Once connected to the police operator, he began to tell them what he had just witnessed and that they had to send officers right now. The operator assured him that they would dispatch some officers immediately. Mark

nodded in relief even though there was no way that the operator could see that.

With the police on the way, Mark decided that he had to make sure that he was safe until the police actually got to the door. He couldn't shake this horrible feeling that the killer was already in the building and was making his way room by room looking for him even now.

He paused in his thinking. The killer would have to have known that he would call the police. If that was the case, surely he wouldn't chance breaking in to kill him...would he? That would run too high a risk of being caught red handed when the police actually got here.

That thought made him feel a bit better, but it still didn't quite remove his fears that he was on borrowed time.

He went back towards the window again and cautiously looked out onto the street down below. There was the woman's dead body but this time neither the killer nor the car that he had been in were anywhere in sight. That was good news surely, Mark thought to himself. It had to mean that the killer had fled...didn't it?

If the killer was that concerned about being caught then why hadn't he made any effort to hide his face from Mark, when he knew that he had been seen? It was as if he didn't care that his face had been seen. Could that be the case? If so, then why wasn't he bothered? What did he know that made him so uncaring? For that matter why kill someone in the middle of the street where anyone could have come past or just like Mark had, saw the whole crime from a window in one of the many surrounding buildings?

That was almost as unsettling a thought as imaging that the killer was inside the building and looking for him had been. Even if the killer had fled now, if he was that certain of himself, if he was that uncaring as to where he killed or who might see it, then who was to say that he wouldn't come looking for Mark before the police could catch him?

A gust of wind hit the window pane and caused it to rattle in its frame quite dramatically. Mark jumped at this sudden fright, muttering to himself. His already thumping heart sped up further. With a deep breath, he forced himself to try and calm down. He wasn't paid enough for this he thought to himself. He was a bloody night janitor for God's sake, not a have a go hero.

Finally, after what seemed to him to be forever, he saw the blue flashing lights in the street. He turned away from the window and started to hurry across the room towards the stairwell so he could get downstairs to the foyer and deal with the police.

He reached the door seconds before the first of the responding officers started to knock. Opening the door, he started to gush his story at them in a mass of jumbled words and gestures.

'Calm down,' the closet officer soothed him. 'Start at the beginning.'

Feeling marginally braver now that the police were here to protect him, Mark decided to do one better than that and moved past them out of the door.

‘Follow me,’ he called out over his shoulder. ‘I’ll take you to the body.’

The police officers looked at each other before following him around the corner of the building into another street and came to an abrupt halt when they saw for themselves what Mark had called them out for.

Standing this close to the body, Mark felt his bravery start to waver and his stomach start to turn. He was aware of one of the officers speaking into her two way radio but he couldn’t process what she was saying. The other police officer was taking him by the arm and trying to lead him away from the body, for which he was silently grateful.

He allowed himself to be led back round the corner and into the foyer again. As they got there he saw out of the corner of his eyes another police car pull up, presumably to offer assistance to the original responding officers.

The officer who had led him back into the building took him towards a worn looking cushioned bench at the side of the foyer and sat him down on it.

‘Do you need a glass of water or anything?’ the officer asked Mark.

Mark said nothing but shook his head at the offer.

‘Okay then,’ the officer continued. ‘I’m going to need to ask you some questions about what you saw here tonight.’

Again Mark said nothing but instead nodded his understanding to what the officer had just told him.

‘Good,’ the officer replied. ‘If you could start with your name, address, date of birth and then we’ll move onto what actually happened here tonight.’

Mark started to give the police officer all of the information that he was asking for and then began to tell him about how whilst on his rounds, he had happened to wonder over to one of the windows in the library, for no real purpose other than to have a quick look outside and break the monotony of his shift.

He told him about how he had witnessed the car come to a screeching halt and how a man had gotten out of the car and dragged the young woman out of the passenger seat. He told the officer about how he had watched as the man had brutally killed the young woman and finally about how the killer had looked straight up at him before disappearing.

As he continued to tell his story to the police officer, Mark happened to glance outside through the open doorway into the street. His breath caught in his throat and he felt his heart start to thump faster again in his chest.

He got back up to his feet and pushed past the officer to get a closer look. It couldn’t be, could it? Outside several emergency vehicles had now gathered but it was an unmarked car that had gotten Mark’s attention.

It was the same make, model and colour as the car that the killer had driven but surely it couldn’t be him, could it? Why the hell would the killer come back to the scene of the crime after the police had arrived?

Mark hadn't been able to see the vehicle registration of the killer's car so he couldn't know for sure if it was the same car but deep down he just knew it was.

'What's wrong?' the questioning police officer asked him.

'That car,' Mark managed to mumble. 'It's the same one.'

'The same one?' the officer repeated in a questioning tone.

Mark started to half walk, half stumble out of the main door again into the street, hoping to God that he wasn't going to see the face of the killer again. Maybe the car was just a coincidence and that would be the end of it.

Outside there was now a lot of activity. The area around the body was cordoned off from the public by yellow tape. Most of the people were in a uniform of some sort but there were a few who weren't.

Then he saw him, the killer standing beside the cordoned off area talking to the police officers closest to him. Why weren't they making any move to arrest him?

Mark watched as one of the officers who were talking to the killer turned and pointed in his direction and for the second time that night Mark met the gaze of a killer. This time however, the killer's face remained expressionless and he started to make his way over towards Mark and the police officer who had been questioning him.

'That's him,' Mark said in fear. 'That's the killer.'

The questioning officer looked at him in shock but didn't say anything as the killer finally reached them.

'I was passing on my way home and I heard the call go over the radio, so I thought I'd see if I could be of any assistance. I'm Detective Inspector Stewart.'

In that instant, Mark knew why the killer hadn't been too concerned that he had been seen. He knew that that no one was going to believe him, when he told them it was a Detective Inspector, not unless there was some physical evidence but he didn't want to bet his life on it. What the hell was he going to do now?