

Danny and Sandy

**A collection of short stories
by the students of Jean Jaurès**

compiled by Antoine Boudé

REMERCIEMENTS

Merci à Monsieur Dominique DUPASQUIER et Monsieur Thibault CIVETTA pour leur travail et leur investissement qui ont permis le sauvetage et la concrétisation de ce projet.

Merci à Monsieur LE GUILLOU, Monsieur MERLET et Madame SINNIG qui ont soutenu ce projet.

Merci à Guillaume BOUDE pour l'illustration en couverture.

Et bien sûr un grand bravo à tous les élèves de Première L1 du Lycée Jean Jaurès de Montreuil pour leur fertile imagination et leur travail:

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AFTER ALL THESE DAYS

WRITTEN BY

ANISSA PASQUES-FARADAY
&
LEAH LADOUX

Tuesday, May 5th - Excellent day

The sun seeps through the curtains and lights up the room. I see her by my side, peacefully asleep, her golden hair scattered on the pillow and her necklace resting on her chest. I am happy to yet again wake up next to her. It has been two years today since she filled my life of joy. Her eyes are as beautiful as when I met her ten years ago, she hasn't changed much ... We've always had a special complicity. Even if our parents did not particularly get along well, it did not prevent us from spending unforgettable moments together. However, I was always a little afraid that she'd leave me, that she'd abandon me. Since the day we were walking in the little mountains lining our valley, near the round stone where we would meet up and that we liked so much. This day when I had had the courage to tell her how I felt about her... That day when she left without a word. As if it was destined that we would be reunited, that she had to be by my side this morning, as every other morning, thus for two years, and for, I hope, an eternity. As usual, to please her when she wakes up, I prepare her usual orange juice and her two toasts with peach jam. Definitely not strawberry jam, she hates strawberry jam. Her eyes finally open, and she slowly gets up, with a beaming smile.

“Oh, you thought of me! I love it when you think of me!”

I now know that I can start the day... this excellent day.

Wednesday, May 6th - Great day

The sun still seeps through the curtains and lights up the room. I see her again this morning by my side, peacefully asleep, the sand-colored hair still scattered on the pillow and her necklace still resting on her chest. The day she left without a word. Without a word and with this exact necklace. This necklace which I had just given her so that a part of me

would always stay with her. It was a simple silver chain, with a pendant decorated with a red stone. By being reunited with her 10 years after she'd disappeared, I was delighted to see that she was still wearing it, that she had never forgotten me, as if it was destined that we would be reunited, that she had to be by my side this morning, as every other morning, thus for two years and a day, and for, I hope, centuries and centuries.

Just like yesterday, to please her when she wakes up, I prepare her orange juice and two peach jam toasts. Still no strawberry jam, she hates strawberry jam. Her eyes open after a few seconds; she slowly gets up, an angelic smile on her lips.

“Oh you thought of me! I love it when you think of me!”

I can finally begin this day... this great day.

Thursday, May 7th - Nice day

The sun is shining less than at the start of the week. It seeps through the curtains and gently lights up the room. I watch her again this morning, peacefully asleep, her blond hair scattered on the pillow. Never forgotten ... But as time goes, it's like she's always been there, so close, and that she never came back, one day on my doorstep, saying she loved me, as if it was destined that we would be reunited; That she found herself by my side this morning, like every other morning, thus for two years and two days, and for, I hope, a long time.

As usual, when she wakes up, I prepare her juice and toast with peach jam. Not strawberry jam. No, not strawberry. She wakes up and gets up, a small smile on her lips.

“Oh you thought of me! I love it when you think of me!”

Let's start the day ... this nice day.

Friday, May 8th - Just a day

It's cloudy today. You can't see two meters in front of you.

She's asleep, her hair on the pillow. To tell myself that she loves me? But in that case, why? Why did she run away? Was the situation too complicated? We couldn't be together. That's why you looked so sad each time we saw each other. It was because you knew it couldn't last ... I'm so sorry. Sorry if everything scared you. I didn't want to scare you... You were my destiny. We were meant to be together this morning, like every other morning, thus for two years and three days, and for still quite some time.

As soon as she wakes up, her juice, her toast. Peach, not strawberry. Strawberry, not peach. I don't know anymore. I see her getting closer to me like every other morning, a smile on her lips.

"Yes I know, I thought of you, you like it when I think of you, I've understood."

Let's get this day over and done with. Just this day...

Saturday, May 9th - Horrible day

It's raining. Not a cat would go out in this weather. She's still sleeping. Her hair is in a mess on the pillow. If you're scared, imagine me! Wasn't I scared? To admit everything, to give you the necklace that meant so much for me, and then to see that I was all alone, next to our round stone, with the sound of these rocks falling at the same pace as my heart? That broken heart that you left when you went who-knows-where? And why did you come back? Out of pity? Because you finally remembered me? Did you even wear the necklace? I see you, this morning, once more, like every other morning, thus for two years and four days, but for how much longer?

I'm hungry. I don't usually eat, but I have a sudden craving... for strawberry jam. I love strawberry jam. Then

here she is, with a stupid smile on her lips.

“I ... didn't... think of you” I hear myself tell her...

“Oh you thought of me! I love it when you think of me!”

While her voice echoes in my head, I hear the doorbell ring. But nobody ever comes here...

Still Saturday, May 9th - ...

I approach the door and suddenly stop. But who is it? And why? What time is it? Maybe it's the postman... But I'm not waiting for anything from anybody. What do they want? I open the door a notch and lean my head outside. I recognize the figure that's walking away and catch her attention. My girlfriend's sister looks at me with a relieved face, but her eyes are sad. She comes towards me and takes me in her arms before speaking

“Danny, it's been such a long time!”

“It's true, what brings you to London?”

“I'm so sorry, Danny, it might seem extremely sudden... But we've found Sandy's dead body over the cliff edge in the hills near your round rock. We thought she was with you all this time, and you know how our parents disapproved of your couple. So they didn't try and contact her, and as for me, I thought she was just too busy with her life. She brings her hand to her mouth to hide a sob.

I stay speechless. A thousand questions pop into my head. Was it all a dream? Was I going to wake up in my bed? My heartbeat speeds up.

Could it be that... no... the crickets, the wind, the birds... The falling rocks. She must have slipped from the edge... And me, I just walked away! My heart stops.

After a moment of silence, she takes something out of her pocket.

“I brought you this. It was the only thing left when we found her... and I automatically thought of you. It was... a beautiful gift.”

In the crook of her hand is the necklace that I had given her, that day when actually, everything changed. But the chain was all rusty and the small red stone was gone.

10 years ago...

“How long have we known each other now?” I ask her, turning towards her. Her golden hair is flowing in the wind, and her smile that’s so attractive illuminates her face. The scene in front of us is just exquisite. We are overpowering our valley on top of our much beloved hills. She doesn’t say anything, as if she were thinking.

“By the way” I rummage in my pocket, looking for the object. “I couldn’t help but think of you when I saw this.” I hold out a small pendant with a red gemstone, hanging from a simple, slim silver chain. She jumps into my arms and holds me tight.

“Oh you thought of me! I love it when you think of me!”

I can feel the blood rushing to my cheeks... I gently move away a little and turn away, not being able to hold her gaze.

“I...”

I have to tell her. I think she knows. But if I don’t tell her, I’ll never be sure.

“... I think the feelings I have for you are much stronger than you can imagine. Run away with me, come to London!”

A small sound, her voice maybe. A few pebbles fall from the edge. A long silence follows my last words. Is she so touched that she doesn’t dare say anything? Spinning around, I realize the pain of being left here alone and the reality I had to face. My words must have frightened her away. She must have gone home, maybe she wasn’t ready for the life I was offering her.

But if one day you come back, every day of my life,

every morning, day after day, I will watch you by my side telling myself how lucky I am to have you. I will remember us. I will always prepare breakfast for you, remembering what you like or dislike, and I won't be able to start the day without seeing you happy. And after all these days, I will know that I have cared for you.

**TUESDAY
APRIL, 8TH
2014**

WRITTEN BY

**Juliette BOUTTE
&
KEYNA ANTON-LABONNE**

Danny used to be a great inspector. He loved his job. His wife Sandy thought that he was too busy with it. When he was fired from the London police, she hoped that he would relax and spend more time with her. It turned out that he wouldn't. He was depressed and he just stayed home drinking beer all day long. Sandy didn't know what to do. She was a beautiful 36-year-old woman. She had a great job at the BBC and a big house close to Green Park. She loved her husband and couldn't help herself being worried for him. Danny, on the other hand, was a mysterious man who didn't show his feelings easily. He was two years older than Sandy. They got married only four months after their meeting. Danny had proposed in their favourite restaurant, *Burger And Lobster* in Mayfair. Danny was spending his time pursuing a serial killer who had operated in London for some years. He was obsessed with him. The police forces had named him "Norman" like Norman Bates in the Hitchcock movie "*Psycho*" because he only killed women named Marion.

More than an obsession, Danny spent all his time at work and his free time running after him, to his wife's despair. She was tired of seeing him doing nothing of his day. So one day, she requested him to look for a job. After going to the job centre, Danny found a job at the HMV near Harrods in Knightsbridge. Sandy thought that the situation would be better now. But she was wrong. A few months later, Danny continued to go every day at work but what Sandy didn't know was that Danny had been fired a couple of weeks before. Instead of going to work, he was hanging out in pubs all day long. She didn't know that he continued to hunt the Marion killer.

09:24 AM

This day was cold and windy. Sandy looked through the window and saw kids playing in the street. She would love to have a child. Danny wasn't in a hurry yet but she knew she would really like to be a mother. She sighed and went downstairs to meet her husband. He was wearing his coat to go to work. She kissed him and wished him a great day. He did the same. She had a big meeting today and he wished her good luck.

09:41 AM

He was walking down Chesterfield Street to the Shepherds Tavern. He had collected some clues of a new murder two nights ago. Another Marion. Once again. "This bastard will not escape this time!" Danny was speaking to himself. He took a seat and began to expose his clues on the table. He often tuned to the police radio frequency to follow the investigation closer. Actually, he only knew that the victim was Marion Maxwell, 19, Caucasian. She had gone jogging on Sunday April 6th in the evening but she'd never come back. She was found in Regent's Park. The police didn't find the weapon, and considering the blows in the head, they should be looking for a blunt object. It left deep blows to her skull; maybe a claw hammer or a claw. Danny examined the photographs that Roger, one of his former colleagues, had supplied him. He noticed that the victim had some traces of blood at the back of her head. The autopsy report revealed that the cause of death was a brain hemorrhage that had resulted from cardiac arrest caused by the contusion at the back of her skull. The rigor mortis was

total at the time of the arrival of the police on the location of the crime. She had been discovered by two boys at about 11:00 pm. Therefore, the death had occurred between 08:30 pm and 10:30 pm. There were two holes, 0,79 cm in length by 0,36 cm wide. No epithelial cells were found under the fingernails of the victim, no visible marks of struggle, so she had been surprised from behind. No marks of sexual assault, as in the habits of "Norman". The marks and bloodstains on the ground showed that she was killed on the way and then dragged into the ditch. Danny drunk one last drink before bringing together the clues in his pocket, paid the bill and left. He needed to see by himself.

11:00 AM

The forensic team had finished examining the area. The crime scene was free. He went up Shepherds Street and turned to White Horse Street to arrive on Piccadilly and take the underground. He stopped at Baker Street station and went in Regent's Park. After twenty minutes of walk, Danny was where blood had flowed two nights ago. This thought made him shiver. He took out the photographs to put things in place in his head. He looked at the time, it was 11:00 am. He was supposed to meet Sandy at lunchtime, so he needed to leave in just thirty minutes. He sat on a bench and tried to replay the scene in his mind. Marion Maxwell should have come from the right when Norman jumped at her. Marion... He hated this name, the name of his mother. Marion Marshall was a horrible woman who mistreated her son. He tried to run away many times, unsuccessfully. She found him every time and the punishment was terrible. He stayed in the cellar of their house, he never went outside. The year of his sixteenth birthday, she died of a stroke. He

went to some host homes until his majority. Every victim of Norman reminded him his part of his life. He absolutely wanted to catch him for, in some ways, proving his mother that he wasn't "*good for nothing*" like she used to tell him all the time.

12:18 PM

Danny had to meet Sandy at a new restaurant three minutes away from Sandy's workplace. When he arrived, she was already there. He understood that he was late. Danny came in and waved at her. She looked angry.

"18 minutes."

"Sorry?"

"You are 18 minutes late."

"I apologize. There were too many people. It's really crowded at the store these days."

But she changed subject abruptly.

"Well, ok. So, it's all right. Since you've had this work, we can see each other more often and you don't finish as late as before"

"Yes it's really great, we have more time together."

Sandy didn't suspect anything. Danny was dreading the day she would discover the truth. But, for the moment, everything was alright, no need to worry. But when Sandy suggested coming to the store to see him one day, Danny got scared.

"You shouldn't"

Sandy's answer was predictable.

"Why's that?"

Danny tried to find an alibi.

“Well, you know, I'm very busy. There is a lot of work to do. Then, there is this guy at the store who chats up every girl coming in, so...”

“Jealousy? It's the only thing that you found? You know, if you're embarrassed of me, you can tell me!”

“You know that's not true!”

They continued to eat without a word until Sandy broke the silence. She wanted to speak about when Danny woke up in the middle of the night, to go she had no idea where. She thought that he was tormented, and sleepwalking was one of the consequences of his condition. Danny didn't even realize that he was sleepwalking. But to go where? He asked her.

“No idea darling. Last time, it was two days ago, you woke me up when you got up, I didn't dare follow you, you certainly stayed downstairs before going back to bed.”

She added:

“If you want, we'll go see a psychiatrist that my friend Mary recommended me. Apparently she is great!”

“If it makes you happy...”

The rest of the day passed quietly but the investigation didn't progress. Danny thought that he would never find the killer that easily. He felt like he was constantly in front of a wall.

09:13 PM

When Danny came back this evening, he looked tired. Sandy had been home for twenty minutes and she was taking a shower. He put his coat on and his briefcase on the dining room table and went to the fridge. This day was exhausting, he needed a beer!

"Drinking again?" asked Sandy, going down the stairs with wet hair because of the shower. "Honey, you shouldn't!"

"Sandy, please, I've had a hard day at work!"

"Do like me, take a shower to relax!"

"Alright, I will... After that beer!"

Sandy started to cook the dinner. Danny went upstairs to take a shower, a beer in his hand. He stopped in front of his former study, when he was an inspector. Now, this room is used to store furniture and other stuff. He put his briefcase between two boxes on his former desk. He opened the first drawer and a lot of documents about Norman burst out. He added what he had in his case before going in the bathroom. Yet another day was ending. Sandy had finished to put the chicken to cook and went to the TV room. She just sat down. When she turned on the television, the news were on. The journalist spoke about the new murder of that serial killer that her husband had spent so much time hunting. The TV journalist said that the crime weapon was apparently a claw hammer or something similar according to the inspector in charge of the investigation. She noticed something besides the garden door. She stood up and moved closer to the thing. A claw hammer. She looked at it for a few seconds. "Danny. Danny!" she shouted, "you did it again!" She sighed and put the claw hammer into his tool box before she went to check the chicken cooking.

CONSCIENCE

WRITTEN BY

LINA BEN HASSINE

CHAPTER 1, TEAR

I am Danny. I am 27 and I live in London with my wife Sandy. She is 26 years old. I married her 9 months ago. I am in love with Sandy and she loves me too. Our life is peaceful and nice. We are young and we enjoy life. Until that day, my life was perfect. Until that day when, in my car, I heard this terrible news. I felt a huge weight on my heart. At that moment, I immediately thought of Sandy. It was the beginning of my misfortunes. I went home immediately after. I took a shower. Under the water, I thought about all this. The warm water that burned me did not distract me from my anxiety because I knew that, from that day on, I would develop unimaginable anguish. I had finished washing but I did not walk out of the shower. Despite my anxiety, I strangely felt safe in the shower because I knew that when I would go out, I would never feel like this anymore. I put my bathrobe on and I laid in bed. I looked at the ceiling. Then, I jumped out of bed to watch the news. It was in my interest. Indeed, this news was everywhere.

CHAPTER 2, NIGHTMARE

“We arrived on the spot immediately”... “a corpse has been found”... “he didn’t have”... “any identity document”. These words sounded like a torture in my head, I could not think anymore. My thoughts were entangled. I was considering all solutions. I didn’t understand anything. It was six o’clock. I was trying to collect myself. I was thinking “yes, you have to stay realistic, you made no mistake, no one can find you.” My breathing resumed at a normal pace. My heart slowed down. It was better. My nightmare was finished. I heard Sandy's key in the door and I got up to kiss her. I found my composure.

“I'm hungry. We can order pizza” she said.

“Yes, anything you want”. The evening was going well. I focused on my dear wife. She was all I had. We were going to bed. Sandy and I sleep in the same bed.

“Sleep well darling” she told me.

”You too, my love.”

I felt a sense of extreme fear. I was lost in the dark. I wanted to scream but I couldn't. It was horrible, my heart, what's happening to me. I had to go out of here.

My bed... I got up immediately. I couldn't realize. It was a nightmare. I was very scared and sweating. Sandy woke up, she looked worried, but I could not reassure her. I was not totally out of my nightmare. I thought it was just a nightmare. I had to keep on hoping not to be crazy. But unfortunately, I was very far from imagining what was expecting me after that. I never thought that my past would catch me up this way.

CHAPTER 3, CONFESSION

My life became unbearable. My nights were cruel and frightful. Every night, I struggled to sleep. Staying in the dark, even next to Sandy, terrified me. I scanned the furniture with terror and fear. My heart no longer beat. It trembled. Every day I had the feeling of being hunted. And as soon as I fell asleep miraculously, my nightmare continued this torture. I sank into a deep loneliness with, for only company, my fear and my conscience. I came to wonder how much I should suffer to desire death. Because the worst part about it is that I could not die. Once, I had tried to kill myself but I couldn't. Misery loved me and I was condemned to live with it until life has mercy on me and lets me die. At night, I felt my fear and during the day, it didn't stop. My torture was limitless. I lost interest in life and I found no consolation. My face widened, huge dark circles around my eyes. My hair turned white and I lost weight. I was rather strong before but I became unrecognizable. Sandy, I still loved her. I thought it was her who kept me alive. She was the little ray of sunshine in my

hell. Yet she suffered too because of me. Every day, she saw me waste my life away inch by inch. Every day, she powerlessly attended my descent into hell. When I would wake up at night sweating, she was there. When I had anything to eat, she supported me. When I was crying in the middle of the night, she was still there. Three months ago that was when my nightmare started. Three months ago, I heard the news in my car. Three months that I have been living every second in terror. That evening, Sandy and I were watching TV together. A police officer was talking on TV. When he said that hair was found on the body, I felt my heart stop and I burst into tears. Sandy gasped and started screaming, weeping.

"But what's happening to you, Danny? Danny, have mercy on me! I cannot stand it anymore, my love. When I see you like that, I feel like I'm dying".

Our faces in tears, she put her hands on my cheeks.

"I've killed a man" I said.

Silence. I saw her face change. I told her everything. It was 2 years ago, I was living in an unsafe neighbourhood. I was a young offender. And then, I met Sandy. And she became my girlfriend. I wanted to stop doing wrong things, marry her and start a new life. I quickly decided to propose her, but I did not work. So I couldn't afford a ring. I decided to steal a ring. With a mask on my face, I went to the nearest jewelry with my friend's gun. I had not intention to kill him. I just wanted to frighten him. But when he rushed to the phone, my finger pulled the trigger. It was too late when I realized what I had just done. I took the keys of the jewelry and I went out, closing the door. The same night, I returned to the shop with my friends to get rid of the corpse and take the ring. I cleaned the room before burying him at night in the forest. I burnt his identity papers but I will never forget his name, James Cross.

"James Cross?" she repeated, terrified.

"Yes, and I've paid the price for three months. I hope you will manage to forgive me. I'm out!"

I went out to breathe. That was the cause of my fear and my nightmares. This man who stole my happy life because I stole his life. I'm afraid the police officer on TV announced they had found the friend who helped me carry the corpse. It was only a matter of time before they would find my hair on the dead body. On my return when I told that to Sandy she told me we were going to run away the next day. She would help me. She took me in her arms. All that I could say was "Thank you." I loved her like crazy. I did not show her but I felt that Sandy did not sleep. Considering what I had told her, it was normal

CHAPTER 4, FLIGHT

For the first time in months, I felt peace in my heart, I was feeling good. I was feeling relaxed. It was nice. We would start a new life. I was happy to have Sandy in my life. She is really all I have.

We were in the airport and I was walking. Then I realized she was no longer at my side. I turned around. I saw that someone was looking at me from behind. I asked him what was wrong when I felt someone grabbing my arms. It was the police and Sandy was there. I looked at her and I understood everything: She had betrayed me. My heart was broken. I told her in a mournful and lifeless voice "Why?..." She threw a book at me. I picked it up and opened it. That's when I understood. I closed my eyes automatically. My heart was totally broken. My soul was totally broken. And I looked at her. This book was her family book.

"This man you killed, James Cross, he was my father."

A KILLER LOVE

WRITTEN BY

MELINA PINTO
&
AMANDA MECILI

2000 : 16 YEARS BEFORE

Danny met Sandy at HMV where he worked. She wanted the album of a new British band called Coldplay¹ but couldn't find it. She was totally lost in this massive store. When she saw him, she asked for his help. Not only because she wanted that CD but also because she found him really hot. It is true, you couldn't be near this big and beautiful brown haired guy without drowning into his ocean blue eyes. He was the most beautiful man she'd ever seen. For Danny, it was a pleasure to help this wonderful creature named Sandy. She looked like an angel with her long and beautiful blond hair and her icy eyes. Moreover, the white dress she was wearing made her look like she came from another planet. As she took the CD he gave her, she put really discreetly something into his hand and walked quickly to the checkout. Danny opened it and saw a piece of paper which read:

Sandy
020 7763 1839
Call me maybe xoxo

When he finished work, he didn't wait a minute to call her. After only two ringtones, she picked up the phone and said:

"Hello?"

"Hello, is it Sandy on the phone?" he asked.

"Yes, who is it?"

"Hum, I'm the guy who gave you the Coldplay album earlier." She laughed. He loved it, it was like angelic sounds.

"I'm glad you called", she said.

"Well, of course I was going to call."

She laughed again.

"My name is Danny by the way", he said.

"Well, Danny. It's nice to hear your voice."

Danny started to feel stupid because he didn't know

what to do. Indeed, he was a beautiful boy, but a girl had never given him her number like that. Then he started to think. Now, he knew what he had to do.

“Can I ask you something, Sandy?” he asked.

“Of course.”

“Would you like to go out with me tomorrow night?”

“Really?” she asked.

“Yes, I'd like to know you more.”

“Well, when should I be ready?”

“I'll be there at 8 pm in front of your door,” he said. “Just text me your address.”

“Awesome! See you tomorrow, Danny.”

“See you, Sandy.”

After this call, they were both really excited for the next day, and they hardly slept.

At 8pm the next day, he was right in front of Sandy's door. He couldn't wait to see her. He knocked at her door and a few seconds later she opened it. She was in a little black dress. He couldn't stop looking at her. Her hair was done in a bun and the blue of her eyes was made more intense by her eyeliner. He said to himself that she was the sexiest girl he'd ever seen.

Sandy couldn't believe what she was seeing. Danny was standing right in front of her, with a white shirt which fitted him perfectly.

So, they went to this beautiful restaurant in Brixton. They had a perfect dinner. They learnt a lot about each other. For example, Danny was a big fan of American TV shows just like Sandy. They were both fond of British pop music. They both dreamt about travelling all around the world. They perfectly completed each other.

As they came out of the restaurant, Danny asked Sandy if she liked the dinner. She was totally delighted. Then, Danny did something that he didn't expect himself to do. He laid his hand on her cheek and kissed her very softly.

He was going to beg her pardon when she grabbed his neck before kissing him back. They both couldn't believe what they had just done. At the end of the kiss Danny looked at her and asked:

"Would you like to be my girlfriend?"

Sandy laughed softly to such childish innocence and said :

"Yes, I'd like to be your girlfriend, but at one condition."

"Which one?" he said, worried.

"I'll be your girlfriend only if you'll be my boyfriend."

They both started to laugh. Danny because he was relieved and Sandy because of Danny's worried face.

As they walked across the street, Danny grabbed her hand and said:

"Now you're mine."

2002 : 14 YEARS BEFORE

Two years, it's the time this love story lasted. Their love was intense. They lived together in a little flat in Whitechapel with their little grey kitten named Sanny which they treated like their own child. However, the problem was with their personal life projects. Sandy wanted to marry Danny, she wanted to have a big and beautiful house with a dog and children running in the garden full of flowers and a fountain in the middle with fish swimming and living their peaceful life. She imagined what she'd do when Danny would come back from work. The children would run towards him and he would play with them. She'd prepare the dinner, with candles, go up to him and kiss him. She'd tell him she loved him and that she missed him all day long. He would give her a hug and whisper "*I love you*" to her. However, it was just a dream...

Danny's plans were not the same. He wanted a future with her but it was too early for him. He thought he was too young to marry, to have children. He wanted something else.

He wanted to live like Sandy told him she wanted to live two years ago. He wanted to travel all around the world, to discover new things before having a stable life.

This day was a rainy day. Danny came back from work all wet. He had something important to say to Sandy. He laid his coat on the sofa and looked at her. She was reading one of those books about British pop music. What he was going to tell her was probably going to break her heart. Yet, he had to tell her. Things couldn't go that way anymore. He sat next to her, kissed her and asked her if her day went well and if she was tired. She said that she was very well. As she got up, Danny said:

“Sandy, sit down, please. I have something to tell you.”

“What's going on? She asked.”

She sat on the sofa with a worried look. Her hands became sweaty.

“Darling, you know that I love you and that I want to do my life with you,” he said.

“Yes...”

“But, you know, I feel like I've always wanted to do something useful with my life.”

“What do you mean?”

“I've always been perfectly happy with my family and with you but...”

“But what, Danny? What's the point of all this?” she asked.

“I... I feel like a part of me wants to be elsewhere.”

Sandy was completely lost. She didn't understand anything. What was he talking about?

“Sandy, I have decided to go to Africa for charity,” Danny announced.

“To Africa?” she asked, even though she had perfectly understood what he had just said.

“Yes.”

“And for how long?”

He looked at her in the eyes and said with a tear rolling down his face:

“For four years.”

“For four years. Why?”

“Please, let me finish,” he said. “You know that I've always loved to help other people. This is a dream for me and it would be amazing to carry this out. I think it's the best way to fulfill my goal and to feel completely alive.”

Sandy didn't understand what was going on. She felt abandoned. She loved him, yes. But not seeing him for four years? She felt totally lost.

People usually say that love is stronger than distance, but was it possible for them to go through this? They both didn't know the answer. Danny asked her to wait for him. He promised that when he'd come back he'd build a life with her and that he'd stay with her until the day he'd die.

2006 : 10 YEARS BEFORE

Four years had passed, Danny was arriving at Heathrow airport. Of course, he hadn't forgotten his love, Sandy. However, being far away from her for so long had taken a toll on his mind: he felt the need to be with her and only with her, again.

He took a taxi and went to their little flat in Whitechapel. He rang the bell and wait for Sandy to open the door. He couldn't wait to see her. He imagined her, drinking a cup of tea while watching an American TV Show. He also imagined what she was wearing. A white t-shirt, blue skinny jeans and Vans shoes.

Surprisingly, this was not Sandy but a beautiful Latino girl, the total opposite of her, who opened the door. Not knowing what she was doing there, he asked her if Sandy was in. She looked at him, with a strange look, and said in a Spanish accent:

“There is no Sandy here, amigo.”

“You must be kidding me,” he said. “My girlfriend has been living here since 2010.”

“You must be at the wrong address, amigo.”

“I'm not at the wrong address, OK?” he shouted at her. “I've lived here for two years so I know that I'm not wrong!”

“Estàs loco!” she said in Spanish before slamming the door.

He was totally confused. It was true that Sandy hadn't answered his calls for the past two years but he thought that it was because of the expensive telephone bill. Now he was back in England, she would be able to answer the phone.

Danny took his phone and called Sandy. Yet, what he heard bewildered him. It said: “The number you dialed has been changed.” He couldn't believe it. First, Sandy wasn't in their flat, then her number had been changed. What was going on?

After that confusing moment, he had an idea. He decided to visit her parents in Covent Garden. When he arrived, Sandy's mother was shocked.

“What are you doing here, Danny?” she asked.

“Thank you, Maureen, I'm also glad to see you. Well, I'm back from Africa. You know, I went to our flat, but Sandy wasn't there. I called her, but her number has been changed.”

“Danny, please, you need to go.”

“Why? What's going on? Where is Sandy?”

“Danny, please. If I tell you where she is, you will regret it.”

“Tell me where she is!” he shouted.

Maureen was afraid. She picked a piece of paper and wrote something on it. She gave it to Danny and said:

“That's where you will find her, but I warn you, if you do something bad to her, I will kill you with my own hands.”

He took the paper and left the house, anxious. On the paper an address was written:

*46, Bloomfield Road
Little Venice, London.*

He took a taxi and went to the address. When he arrived, he couldn't believe what he was seeing. He was standing in front a big white house, with a beautiful garden. Still, what shocked him was who he saw in the garden.

Sandy was there, sitting on the stairs, next to an elegant man. She had a baby in her arms and two other children, who were certainly 3 years old, were playing with a dog. Sandy had changed a lot. She was wearing a beautiful dress and her hair was short. She looked like she was very tired because she had dark circles around her eyes. What broke his heart was the look she gave to the man. It was a loving and caring look. Danny looked at her hand and saw a ring. She was married. He understood. Those children were hers, this man was her husband, this house was hers. She didn't wait for him. She had forgotten him. She had betrayed him.

2016 : NOW

“You watch me bleed until I can't breathe”²: That's exactly what Danny had felt like and what he still felt. Sandy having a life without him broke him inside. In fact, Sandy had the life they wanted to have together, but with another man. And that's why he became a drug addict after a big depression: alone, in his dirty, dank and dark flat full of rats. As time passed, the flat walls were gradually covered with Sandy's family photographs he took from the distance. She haunted him.

For Sandy, it was hell. She didn't feel peaceful anymore. Her house alarm didn't help her. She felt constantly spied on, hunted by someone she didn't know. After some more time, her life became worse. She started receiving threats and accusation letters: “Traitor”, “You don't deserve to live”, “Disloyal”. Those words confused her. She didn't understand what she had done wrong.

The threats became even harder. Moreover, she didn't know who could send her those words.

One day, she received another letter in which the words and the story told seemed familiar to her: “Fourteen years ago, you promised me you'd wait for me. But, I see

that you didn't keep your word." She understood that the stalker was actually Danny.

The first thing that came to her mind was to call the police, but she didn't want to worry her husband. She first thought that she'd never be able to get rid of Danny. It was the only thing she wanted, of course, she had forgotten him during all these years: waiting for him was impossible for her.

A few months after Danny's departure, she had met Freddie, her husband now. He knew how to make her feel better and happy again. She knew Freddie was the good one. He gave her three wonderful children: the twins, Isaac and Mason, who were 13, and the last one Elizabeth-Alexandra, who was 10. Even though she had loved Danny, it was all in the past now. Her family, her massive house and her Golden Retriever, Lewis, were giving her happiness. Danny's letter broke this dream life, but she didn't tell anything to Freddie.

He came to her house, but she refused to open the door. It had been 14 years since she had last seen him.

One evening, on her way to the supermarket, Danny appeared out of nowhere. He jumped on her, grabbed her and said:

"Do you love me? I know you love me, darling."

"Let me go, Danny."

"Why didn't you wait for me? Why do you have a life without me?"

"Let me go, Danny, please."

"You see what mess I've become because of you, Sandy," he was sobbing.

She started to scream, but he put his hand on her mouth.

"Come back with me, Sandy," he said, "leave this stupid guy and have the life you should have had with me."

"Never," she said.

When he heard this word, Danny became even more furious and totally crazy, maybe because of the drugs he'd taken before. He grabbed her neck and started to strangle her.

“Please, Danny,” Sandy tried to say, “I... I've got three children.”

“I don't care,” he screamed. “You abandoned me! You don't deserve to live.”

Sandy started to suffocate and to see everything in a blur. She knew it was the end. Her skin became purple and in a second, Sandy gave her last breath. Danny dropped her and started to cry. He couldn't stop to say sorry.

“I'm sorry, Sandy, he said. Please wake up, I'm sorry. I'm going to let you go. I'm begging you Sandy. Wake up! Wake up!”

But she was dead. He gave her a last kiss and laid next to her. He took the gun he had in his pocket and said:

“I love you, Sandy. Now we will stay forever together.”

He took the gun and killed himself.

1. *Parachutes* by Coldplay, 2000.

2. *Stitches* by Shawn Mendes, from the album *Handwritten*, 2015.

CHOOSE TO LOVE

WRITTEN BY

NOUR HADJADJ,

Makani DIABATE

&

SOPHIE CHAMBON

Danny and Sandy have had a passionate love for 2 years now, a passionate but secret love. They live together in London. Only Danny's family knows this relationship and approves but Sandy's family is not so understanding. Danny is a Muslim and works in a record shop called HMV. Sandy is a Christian and she is a communication manager at the BBC. Religion is a barrier in their relationship and the young woman is very afraid of the reaction of her parents. Sandy's father is a celebrated man in the small town of Clifton. There is no possibility that his daughter marries a Muslim and a black man to boot. At a dinner, in private, Sandy couldn't keep it for herself and talked about her problem to her fiancé...

Seeing that his companion was feeling very bad, Danny asked her to talk about it. He wondered if the problem was with his work. At the moment his work is very intense with what is happening in the world but Sandy didn't reply. Sandy thought about it but in her head, everything was so confused. She did not know if she should actually talk about it clearly with her darling. A few minutes later, she burst into tears and told him that she would like to give it a shot and introduce Danny to her parents for Christmas. It was Danny's turn to feel uncomfortable. He didn't know what to say because he doesn't really want to meet them. After this conversation, the couple decided to leave the restaurant back in their London apartment. In the car, on the way home, Danny told Sandy that with his parents' help, things can be easier for them. After this emotional evening, the couple goes to bed with doubt and fear in their mind. The next morning, when she woke up, Sandy felt better because Danny had reassured her during night. They had decided to go directly to the family of the young man. His parents live a five-hour drive away from London. The couple hit the road early in the morning.

When they finally got there, Danny's parents were happy to see their son and their daughter-in-law. The mother

of the young man questioned them about the reason for their unexpected visit. Not wanting to directly address the subject, Danny pretended that he only wanted to spend time with his family away from the city and their work. Meanwhile Sandy, who really gets along with her sister-in-law Alia, decided to talk to her about the decision she and Danny had taken the day before. Alia jumped with happiness and thought that their idea was great. But Sandy started to cry because she knew her demanding father can have the worst reactions about this kind of things. She explained it all to her sister-in-law. Alia told her that she would support them and that the whole family would do everything to help them. All gathered in the living room, Danny spoke in front of his father, Zinedine, his mother, Wafa, and his sister, Alia. He told everyone that Sandy had decided to introduce him to her parents. Danny's mother remained speechless because she knew what the situation was about. She had already talked about it with her daughter-in-law. She understood the young couple's apprehension. But she said that their idea was good and that the time had finally come. They would finally come out of the darkness and stop living a lie. Zinedine, the young man's father, told his son to be strong during this difficult time and if things don't go as the young couple expected it, they would unfortunately have to give everything up. Danny has a very strong bond with his father since he was a young boy and he felt thankful for these kind and wise words. It made his heart sink. At the end of the day, the couple decided to go. But Danny's mother insisted for them to stay and have dinner. They accepted and Danny and Sandy left after the meal. When they drove home, they felt a little relieved. To forget all that, Danny suggested they took a short vacation in Europe to relax before Christmas and before the big day with Sandy's family...

During the vacation, the couple had a great time but Sandy couldn't help thinking about Christmas Day. She finally decided to send a message to her mother to tell her that this year for Christmas she would not come on her own.

After this message, Sandy's mother, Kate, warned her husband. She was so excited by the news. Sandy's father, Reverend James, was happy too and did not doubt the choice of his daughter, who had always honored him.

Christmas was in two days, but they hadn't packed their bags because Sandy was about to change her mind. Fortunately Danny is there to cheer her up and reassure her. Five minutes before taking the car, the young woman's hands were shaking, her body got tense, she was scared. Her darling told her to get in the car and during the road trip, not a single word came out of the mouth of the young fiancée. The closer they got to the village where she grew up, the more stressed Sandy was. When they arrived in Clifton, they went passed the sheriff office. It was the workplace of her father and Sandy saw that it was closed. She wanted her father not to be home when they arrived in order to introduce Danny to her mother alone. The young woman pointed a house and told Danny that it was where they must stop. Danny found it to be a beautiful place. But, even if he was not particularly stressed, he started to be more tense, thinking back of his father's words. Having heard a car in the driveway, Kate and James, Sandy's parents, came out to welcome their daughter and the surprise guest. The father was surprised. Actually, he was and he fainted. Sandy's mom and Sandy herself tried to revive him. After one hour of first aid, the father awoke and found himself face to face with his future son-in-law. He turned to his daughter and to be reassured, he asked if the young man was her driver. The girl replied with a sickened look "No!".

To calm down everyone, the mother decided it was time to have dinner. The father wanted to protect his reputation as sheriff, so he masked his house by closing all windows. During lunch, Sandy talked about her plans with Danny to her parents. The mother seemed happy for her daughter. Unlike her, the father was constantly making biting remarks to his future son-in-law and that annoyed Sandy.

However, Danny tried to be friendly with his future stepfather. But James didn't care. Sandy told her parents that she intended to marry Danny. The angry father opposed and kicked Danny out after insulting him. The couple returned home reassured. At least they had released their secret. Still they were also disappointed by Sandy's father's reaction.

Life resumes its course for the two lovers with work and especially love. But one evening, Sandy had an announcement to make to Danny. Being sick, she had decided to go to the doctor's. This one announced that she was 3 months pregnant. Danny took her in his arms and hoped the baby's arrival would appease the family tensions. He called his family to tell the news, which was nice for Danny's parents. Sandy said that her mother had told her to keep it for herself. A few months later, Danny grew impatient as Sandy's belly grew. She was very tired but luckily, Danny and his family supported her. She was seeing her mother secretly on Sundays when her father was on missions. When the last months of pregnancy approached, the mother did not want to keep on lying and told the truth to her husband who did not want to hear about it. The birth day came, and the newborn was a girl. The new parents decided to name her Kenza, which means "treasure" and which qualifies the relationship between the young couple. Everyone was present that day except for the paternal grandfather. So a new life began for the couple. Kenza grew up surrounded by a happy family but without a grandfather.

The days passed and it was the birthday of the girl. For her first birthday, her parents organized a birthday party in the park with Danny's family, Sandy's mother and their friends. The girl was happy with what her parents had prepared for her. Everything went well when suddenly a person wearing in a bear costume entered the park. This bear was heading to Kenza and offered her a gift and wished her happy birthday. Nobody understood what had just happened or who this person was until Sandy recognized the

voice of her father. The grandfather took his granddaughter in his arms and repeated the word "sorry". Then he decided to go to his daughter and her husband to apologize for his selfish attitude. The happy couple accepted the apology and therefore offered him a drink. The family enjoyed the birthday of the little girl and the grandfather played with her. Watching them, Sandy was much moved. Sandy's father spoke and asked "So will we baptize the girl at the church or the mosque?" There was a silence then he began to laugh and told them that this was a joke. Everyone laughed and the evening continued in happiness and good humour.

The couple's life went on well and Kenza was happier than ever, surrounded by her family. Everything had fallen into place thanks to the love of a baby and the strength of the couple's love. Sandy's father decided to make Danny his heir. And Kenza discovered a passion for reading. She would decide to study literature and would enter the most prestigious literature university in London. After a few years, Kenza decided to write the love story of her parents and called it: *Love, Hate and Colour*.

A SHADY PAST

WRITTEN BY

NERMINE HAIR
&
HATOUMA BARADJI

Danny and Sandy were a couple of thirty something people. They had met at Danny's shop. They had an instant crush. Danny worked in a record shop called HMV, and Sandy was a reporter at the BBC. They were in love and they lived in London. Danny and Sandy lived in the district of Camden Town but after one year in the same apartment, they decided to move to America because they had found a job in Miami, but that was not the only reason. At first, they had a rather normal lifestyle, but one day everything changed in their life. Danny is a person with no problem at all. He is apparently a kind man, but the arrival of Kateleen is going to change everything. Before meeting Sandy, Danny was with another woman, his childhood sweetheart.

-- FLASH BACK --

Danny and Kateleen are a couple who is not very loved in the neighbourhood. They seem strange for their neighbours. One night they came home with a lot of bags. The neighbours found it very suspicious because on the TV they announced a robbery which had just been committed. After the robbery the friends of the couple, living nearby, came to see them to speak about this story.

“Hi Danny and Kateleen! Did you hear the news about the robbery at the bank last night?” said Jack.

“Hi Jack. No, we were sleeping, and I don't care.” said Danny.

“Ok, you know what honey, we go back home!” said Jack to his wife.

“Why did you say that, what's wrong?” asked Danny.

“Nothing, goodbye!” said Jack.

Jack and Beverly went back home. They talked about Danny's reactions.

“Don't you think there are many suspicious things? First thing, when we saw Danny and Kateleen go back home with a lot of bags after we had just announced a robbery on TV. Second thing, Danny's reaction when I talked to him about the robbery. We have to tell the police,” said Jack.

“I completely agree with you. But it is dangerous, we are going to have problems” said Beverly.

“Don't be afraid, baby. I am here,” said Jack

As they wanted to go the police to accuse Danny and Kateleen for the robbery, someone knocked at the door. It's Danny. He wanted to know why Jack had left so fast. Danny entered the house and talked with Jack but things got worse and worse. Before leaving, Danny took out the gun they had used for the robbery and he killed Jack.

Beverly saw everything but she was unable to stop it. She was too afraid. Danny decided not to kill Beverly but pushed her when she wanted to protect her husband. She fainted right away. Danny decided to go back home as if nothing had happened.

Back home, his wife found his attitude strange. He explained it all to her. Kateleen was totally shocked. She could imagine that her husband would capable of doing that. He asked her to say nothing because, if so, he would accuse her in his place.

But Kateleen was not afraid. She decided to go to see her neighbours. When she arrived, she found the police officers and he asked her numerous questions. She told

them the truth but what she did not know was that the police had to find the fingerprints on the gun. And it was her who had used it during the robbery. And when he held the gun, Danny was wearing gloves.

She was arrested for the murder of Jack and she spent 15 years in prison. As for Danny, he started a new life.

-- NOW --

Danny knew that the release date of Kateleen was approaching. He tried to forget this story but Sandy had to film a TV report in a prison in London. And that might make Danny's past reappear.

When she arrived, Sandy met Kateleen. She began her interview. Her story really affected Sandy and she decided to visit her a few times while she was in London. Sandy spoke with her about Danny. Kateleen asked her to show her a picture of him to see if it was the same Danny.

"I know that it's strange to ask you to show me a picture but the man who got me in this prison is called Danny too," said Kateleen.

"No problem, look!" said Sandy.

"Oh my god, it's Danny!! What a coward!" said Kateleen.

"It's not possible! My husband cannot do that! He is so sensitive. He couldn't hurt anyone," said Sandy.

"I promise you that it's the truth, said Kateleen.

Kateleen was shocked it was Danny, her ex-boyfriend who she hadn't seen for 15 years. Kateleen assured Sandy

that the man who got her in prison was her husband. Yet, Sandy did not want to believe it.

They decided to make a plan and to say nothing to Danny. Sandy and Kateleen traveled to Miami and they arrived in the house. When Danny saw Kateleen, he did not react. He pretended he didn't know her.

Sandy and Kateleen's next plan was to record Danny confessing the facts because Danny is very sensitive. But he is also a manipulator, he can lie.

They decided that Sandy would be the one who would make Danny confess his murder. But it was going to be difficult. The night came, she started to record.

"Danny, you were confused when you saw Kateleen!?" said Sandy.

"No, why do you say that?" said Sandy.

"Because she told me a story about you. She said that you killed your neighbour. Is she lying or not?" asked Sandy.

Danny started to cry. "Sorry Sandy. I couldn't control myself. It was a big mistake to accuse Kateleen. But I couldn't think clearly" said Danny.

Sandy didn't have the time to say anything. The police burst into the house and took Danny.

"You are under arrest for the murder of Jack" said the police officer.

Danny was arrested and spent 60 years in prison. As for Sandy, she decided to start a new life and Kateleen became her new best friend.

BY YOUR SIDE

WRITTEN BY

RAICHAM ALI
&
RANIA REBAINE

I was home, waiting for Danny to get home but he still didn't show up. I was starting to get worried, he didn't reply to any of my texts or calls. Danny worked in a record shop called HMV. He usually finished at 8pm and it was 11:15pm. I thought for one second that he had abandoned me so I went to check if his stuff were still there. I searched into his desk drawers but everything was here. I didn't find anything suspicious.

All of a sudden my phone rang, but it wasn't Danny. It was a text message from Gustave. Gustave was my husband, kind of "*husband*." I'm only married to him because Danny thought it was a good idea. Basically, only for our interest. This is, without the shadow of a doubt, the worst decision we could ever make. Gustave was an asshole. I still had to go to work. I work at the BBC. I had to go because I didn't want to have any trouble but I was still worried because Danny was still missing. Arriving at the BBC, it was really dark and silent. I walked to Gustave's office. It's always during those kind of moments that the victim in horror movies gets attacked by some murderer. Here the victim wasn't me. Here the murderer was Danny. And the victim, Gustave.

Danny had killed Gustave. And this is where the story begins.

At the time Danny and I were really close. I fell in love with him the very moment when I laid my eyes on him. When I saw him, I couldn't resist his charm, and this is when the love story started. Nothing existed for me besides him. Danny is tall, his hair were always disheveled, he has dark hair. He used to always wear a black sweater that was too large for him. He always had the same shoes: some Doc Martens, low and black.

He didn't grew his beard which made him look younger. He had sunken cheeks, brown eyes that turned kind of gold when the sun was shining on his face, a tiny nose and you could literally do anything for his smile. His smile could even turn Donald Trump into a lovely person, a

miracle!

He's very charming by the way, all the girls had a crush on him, even our English teacher. A picture of him would have been easier for me to talk about him but I don't have one with me. Not only was he attractive, he was also smart, manipulative, adorable, strategic in a way, lovely but extremely jealous and possessive. Yet I still loved his person, and by the greatest mystery in all the cosmos, he was also in love with me. Who knows why? How to describe myself?.I'm short, I'm a brunette, I have brown eyes but they don't shine when the sun is shining on my face, a little nose, I'm shy and ordinary. I always wanted to be popular, which explains certain things. And also, my name is Sandy.

We really needed money. We had just finished our studies and I worked as a waitress. That didn't get us much money. One day at HD Diner, Gustave came to order food and he took the opportunity to chat me up. I immediately told Danny about this, and Danny found an idea that was going to get us out of this nightmare. At first everything was working perfectly for our relationship. Gustave offered me things but we would resell them, and that would earn us a certain amount of money. This lifestyle worked for 8 months only. And then Gustave asked me to marry him. I thought that all of this had gone too far but Danny insisted that it was a great idea and that it would be good for us. "At worst, if one day you get sick of him, I'll kill him and voilà! Fixed!" he said. I remember that I laughed when he said this.

The situation was what it was: Gustave and I got married. Everything was going well between Danny and I. Yet one day in May, Gustave finally showed who he really was. He beat me. He would beat me every single day. I tried to hide it from Danny but the bruises were too visible.

Let's go back to the beginning of the story. I clearly remember how I felt seeing Danny with blood on his hands and Gustave lying on the floor with blood all over him. I was

scared. A hundred questions were going through my mind, I was anxious. I knew Danny was going to do something but a crime?! I wanted to scream but no sound got out of my mouth. I wanted to hit Danny. Everything was his fault, he always wanted more, and it ended up with a murder. Danny rolled Gustave's corpse in a carpet, and we ran to the emergency exit. We made it to the car, he put the dead body in the car trunk and drove away. Danny was quiet, he had an unsmiling face. He stopped to throw the body in a forest. I didn't want to see it. Thirty minutes later, we were back home. He helped me get out of the car and he put me on the couch. I stood a long time there without saying a word, He breathed deeply and said "He's not going to hurt you anymore." Hearing these words I felt my heart shrinking. I went into his arms to cry quietly. It was completely insane.

I was asking myself "How could we escape from this all?" But I trusted him and by his side, nothing would happen to me. The day after, I had the feeling that I only slept two hours, and I wished deeply that all of this was just a terrible dream. Danny was waiting for me in the kitchen with the breakfast ready. I wasn't hungry. To be honest, I just wanted to throw up when I saw him, Danny...the killer. It's impossible it's not my Danny who did this, he has a heart, I know it, I even saw him crying once while watching *Bambi*. But at that moment, I felt like I was in front of a stranger. On the other hand, Gustave being dead was an advantage. I wasn't really sad. It actually did nothing to me, I felt nothing. I was simply afraid of the consequences. I didn't want Danny to get into trouble. I took the initiative to live normally, but I was afraid. It shouldn't have gone wrong like this. It was my fault. Because of my job as a waitress, I had ruined our future.

During the same evening, I asked Danny to go eat at a restaurant. He accepted right away, he even smiled. Was he that insensitive? I took 20 minutes to get ready. After that, Danny appeared wearing a black suit. He looked posh. I wasn't used to seeing him dressed like that. He actually had

used Gustave's money to buy this suit. I knew it, but I didn't say anything.

I was not to sure about the idea of going out to eat with him. He had committed a crime. I felt like I was repeating myself, I found it so foolish. Gustave was certainly not an angel but killing him wasn't the solution. I had to accept the fact that I was now living with a murderer. I love him but I was slightly scared that I would be the next on the list. Still, he killed Gustave to protect me after all. It was just a mistake, everything is alright. We arrived at the restaurant. It was a little bit crowded, on a Sunday night obviously. We were talking about all the things that fascinated us. I was trying so hard to forget what had happened the night before. It was difficult.

I stood up and right away a guy came by to talk to me. Danny got really mad. I saw it in his eyes even if he was trying to hide it. So when the guy went out, Danny caught him, like I told you, everything went so fast.

Danny broke his skull, there was blood everywhere. I wanted to die too. What am I going to do with this man? I wanted to run away, but he didn't let me. He pressed me against the wall and told me to stay calm and that it was just a simple accident. Danny was a psychopath and he was going to kill me as well. I fell in love with a killer. Was our story a fiction? It wouldn't be possible otherwise. Why didn't I notice certain details or something? I think that I started to lose my mind at this moment. I was drowning into despair and I regretted so bad to be involved in this. Unfortunately, thereafter, I witnessed many other crimes. That was the real Danny. He committed all his crimes with a strange concentration that I never knew about. He seemed furious. I spent most of my time with him and I felt like I knew exactly what to do. Until I felt like I had to kill someone too. So, by his side, I killed someone. I started by killing Sarah, the girl who was quite close to Danny at work, I didn't have any plan. I waited until she got out and right at the moment when she

opened her car door, I stabbed her in the back with a knife. I stabbed her many times. It gave me a certain feeling, a good feeling. I finally understood what Danny was feeling during his first crime. I left the dead body where it was.

Sarah was my first crime but with Danny, we couldn't stop. We made it to the front-page of the British newspapers:

BREAKING NEWS :
5 BODIES DISCOVERED IN THE CITY OF LONDON.
NO EVIDENCE HAS BEEN FOUND.
IS JACK THE RIPPER BACK IN TOWN?

I've always wanted to be popular and I had finally made it. We became partners in crime. He was happy, I was happy. I didn't feel any pity or whatsoever for the victims. I was obsessed with the crimes. And Danny was only doing it for pleasure.

That was the difference, I killed to kill. He killed because he thought it was fun. To be honest I killed to be with Danny. I became crazy for him.

"You know that you scare me sometimes? We should stop our crimes. After all, it's cruel and I don't feel like myself anymore. And most importantly, I don't recognize you" he told me.

"You're kidding, right?" I replied.

"If only..."

I didn't want to stop killing. I always wanted more. Danny was following me but I know that, deep inside, he was regretting it.

Our last crime together was during the night of May 7th, 2013. I had finally managed to convince him to commit crimes with me. It would bring us together and that was our activity. I finally understood why he was manipulating everyone. During that night, the plan was simple. I only needed to flirt with a guy, to ask him to come to the hotel and

to kill him. I was staring at a certain James, dark hair, green eyes, handsome face with dimples. He could have been my style if I wasn't dating Danny, whatever...

He chatted me up. I followed the plan and I told him to come to the hotel, and he said yes right away. I noticed a ring on his finger. It was apparently a good choice. He was cheating on his wife. How could he be so cruel?

In the hotel room, he started to kiss me. I pushed him away but he wanted to lay in bed, what he quickly did. I took care of covering his eyes and to attach him to the bed. He seemed to like it, which was strange. After this, I called Danny. He was in the hotel lobby, waiting for my signal.

He arrived with a weird smile on his face, and a black bag full of objects to torture James with. I took a knife and caressed him with it. I drew a line and he started bleeding. But he didn't even react.

"So James, are you married" I asked.

"Yes, is it a problem?" he replied.

He was really arrogant. At his words I planted the knife in his belly and he screamed with pain. Danny weakly smiled. I lent him the knife for him to finish the work but he was shaking. He didn't want to.

"Danny, what's wrong?" I told him.

"Me? Look at you!"

I felt my heart breaking inside of my chest. I was so angry at Danny. I didn't think and I stabbed him in the neck. He fell on the floor, he was trying to fight back. And then, he tried to strangle me. I planted another knife in his belly to weaken him, I took the gun in my pocket and pointed it at his head. "I love you" were his last words, I pulled the trigger without wanting to.

I HATE MYSELF.

I just killed the person I love. What have I become? I'm horrible. I tried to kill myself but apparently a guy who heard the gunshot called the police and I woke up in a hospital bed.

Police report:

Sandy Parker has confessed that she has committed several crimes in London with the help of her boyfriend, Danny Stilinski. She also admitted being guilty of Danny Stilinski's murder. Because of her critical state, we cannot keep her here and we are forced to send her to a specialized centre. The death penalty has been refused. "Death would be too soft for her."

This is the police report they wrote about me. Their plan failed, I made it. I managed to escape. I'm free now and I'm preparing a new plan. Now, right now, this very minute when I'm writing this, I'm heading to the house of my next victim. I lied, I don't regret anything, I absolutely love killing and I'm never going to stop. A few steps and I'll be here. I'm at the door. I'm waiting for a reply. I'm wearing a wig so no one can recognize me. It should work. He's not answering. I decide to break into his house with a credit card, it always works. I'm hiding behind the desk. I'm waiting. I hear the key. You made it to the end. I don't have nothing against you, don't blame me. After all, I'm only human. And all monsters are human.

FOLLOW THE WHITE CAT INTO THE WOODS

WRITTEN BY

FLORE ALLEGAERT,

HANNA LAOUFIR

&

TAMAZIRT SMAILI

On a summer night in the Bow Road district in London, the street had never been so quiet. This district is normally seedy with a constant background noise: the taxis and their horns, the patriotic songs sung by alcoholics and some emergency lights. But not this night. At 65 Swaton Road the only din was coming from the apartment of Danny and Sandy, a young couple. Sandy had met Danny in high school and she soon realized that she was made for him or rather that there was just him for her. But actually, they had been having rows nonstop for a month and that night a violent fight happened.

At midnight, Sandy felt tense and hot, she tried to sit in her bed but she felt like she was suffocating. She felt stupid to tell Danny that she was going out to relax. She suddenly felt the urge to smoke 3 years after her last cigarette. When she stood up, her legs were shaking. She felt sad and lonely. She needed to walk to dissipate this strange state of mind. She put on her coat and her shoes and left the apartment, walking northwards without really knowing where she was going. She saw two deep blue balls in a dark street. She was a nosy woman so she stepped into the alley and saw a little white cat. And she strangely wanted to follow him. It seemed that he was watching her. Suddenly the cat ran away and seemed to plunge into a puddle. A shiver went through Sandy. She could not believe what she had just seen. She walked, with sweat drops streaming down her face and when she put her hand on the ground, she fell into the bottomless puddle.

She opened her eyes with difficulty. The sunlight was blinding her. She felt unbelievably light. It was not difficult to get up, and it was a real shock to discover that she was in

the middle of a foreign landscape, plains as far as she could see, trees as high as the mountains that drew the sky with a blue that reminded her of the blue eyes of the cat. She realized that she was sliding through the high grass toward the forest and then she disappeared. This incredible forest calmed down and intrigued her. Sandy did not understand how she had landed there but thought that staying there doing nothing wouldn't help her find answers. She ventured into this disturbing and mysterious forest. But after several hours walking, she realized she was going around in circles. Desperate and exhausted by the long walk, she sat at the foot of a tree and helplessly fell asleep.

All around her, darkness fell on the forest. Small strange noises resounded and small creatures sneaked into the bushes. But Sandy did not hear that, she was sleeping tight. She did not hear when a man approached her, stealthily, and carried her in this gloomy forest. When she awoke, she found herself lying near a wood fire attached by a rope around a tree trunk. Next to her, a man was asleep. The links were lacerating her wrists. She tried the best she could to take it off in vain. The sound of the links beating and rubbing against the wood of the tree woke the young stranger up. He rushed to her at superhuman speed, putting a knife decorated with an emerald stone on her throat. And he put his hand on her mouth.

“Do not move if you don't want to be you eaten by a troll!”

Frightened Sandy struggled as she could. In the darkness of the night, she had trouble to see the man's features but she saw the white hue of his hair and his abnormally pointed ears. His eyes were piercing and blue and it reminded her of the eyes of the cat. After

understanding that struggling was useless, because she was too weak, Sandy calmed down.

“Have you calmed down?” asked the man with long white hair.

Sandy nodded.

“I will remove my hand from your mouth slowly but if you scream, I'll kill you.”

Sandy nodded again and the man removed his hand. She opened her mouth to ask questions but the man saw her mouth open slightly and he pressed more his knife on her throat.

“Do not say a word! If you want to know who I am and what I want from you, just know that I need you to get through this forest. I know it's all very weird for you but then I'll take you back in your world at the end of my quest. In the meantime I need you to promise me to stay wise and do what I tell you to keep us alive. Because this forest seems peaceful like in a fairy tale at first glance but after nightfall only the fire that you see there and the silence can make sure we end up alive on the other side of the woods. Making a list of all the things that could kill us in this forest would take an eternity so let me tell you about the most important ones: The trolls, the goblins and the furies. The Furies are the least dangerous but they are still able to cut our throats with a single scratch and their sense of smell is overdeveloped because they are blind. Goblins are small evil beings who, like me, have a superhuman speed but have a terrible fear of water. Their teeth and their claws are poisonous and only one small scratch might cost you your life. Trolls are the worst of all because they only eat Elves and in addition to their enormous strength and their axe, they also have lightning speed and are not afraid of anything. The

only option is to kill them. But all these monsters sneak out at night and sleep during the day.”

Sandy listened to the man's monologue and was stunned by his words. She thought it was a prank or that she was on a film set. In fact, she did not know what to think. Her mind got confused and she looked at the young man's eyes, the blue reminded her of the calm and soothing sky she had seen on her arrival. Their faces were very close and being accustomed to the darkness, she began to see the young man's face in details. He had long silky white hair and a pale skin. She saw that he was tense because his impeccable square jaw was trembling. She did not know why but she felt that he was worried. His nose was long and thin and he had hollow cheeks. He was dressed strangely, a bit like Legolas in *The Lords Of The Rin...* An absurd idea came to her mind. What if the person she had in front of her, so beautiful, so perfect, angelic, was an elf, a real one. Then she came to her senses within seconds and felt crazy to believe in all this nonsense. She still wanted to learn more and for that she had to play his game:

"Your name?" she whispered.

Surprised by this stupid and courageous act of speaking while threatened with a knife on her throat, his eyes widened.

"Yackho", he announced then.

"I will not speak loud so, please let me ask you questions..."

Yackho hesitated, letting this human speak could cause his death. In the prophecy announced by the Oracle, he was to lead a quest in which he had to pass through the enchanted forest with the help of a human that would help him to stay alive. But at the moment, he only thought she would slow him down. Seeing this long moment of hesitation, Sandy asked:

"Why are your ears pointy? In what year are we? Are we still in England? Haven't you seen a white cat with blue eyes? Wh..."

"Stop!"

"Why you..."

"Stop it! My ears are sharp because I'm an Elf like all people in this world. We are in the year 4000 and we are not in England because we are not even in the same universe like your planet. I would say we are light years away from your life in England. No, I have not seen any cat and even if I had, that's no time to go looking for a cat. And now will you stop with your questions because I would like to sleep and tomorrow we have a long day! And you'd better stay with me because without me, I do not give you more than an hour to survive in these woods. And secondly the only way for you to go home is to get out of these woods with me. So you'll question me later! Now we need to sleep to be fit tomorrow and not dwell in this forest!"

A light breeze blew, a great silence followed. Then suddenly a huge wind blow put out their fire. Horrible buzzing noises alerted Yackho. The noise seemed to get closer at lightning speed.

"The Furies! Follow me! Quick!" shouted Yackho, loosening the ties of Sandy. His face was still beautiful and his stare icy but she felt he was frightened. They ran to a mud puddle.

"Roll in it."

"What?!"

"Sandy, furies are blind, they spot us with smell. Roll in it! I will do the same .Quick! They probably already found us!"

After rushing in the mud, the two young people crept under a pile of dead leaves.

Two giant legs of raptors landed and through the leaves Sandy discovered the atrocity of this half-woman half eagle creature with sharp teeth and claws. Three Furies flew

above Sandy and Yackho. They roamevery corner and the smell of Sandy's perfume made one of the Furies approach dangerously near the couple.

Yackho took Sandy in his arms to leave less space between them and to stifle her smell. She slowly looked up at him and they got lost in each other's eyes. Their souls merged. They didn't pay attention to the furies hovering above them. They were in their bubble. The furies left and they didn't notice. Their hearts beat in unison, tight against each other. Sandy had never felt this feeling, even for Danny. Yackho then relaxed his grip and both got back to their minds, still a little confused by this experience. Yackho, keeping up to his icy personality, put the blame on her:

"Your human smell almost got us killed!"

"Sorry? No one apologizes for wearing Chanel. Sorry I do not roll in the mud every day!"

"I do not roll in the mud every day either. But I can put my principles aside when it comes to life or death. And if you need to wear Chanel, because yes I know what it is, it means you smell not so good. Each of us, Elves, has a distinct smell and a shape shifter ability from birth. Hence the resemblance to a cat. I'm sure you have doubts."

"What? The cat? The little white cat? That was you? You can turn into a cat? So it's you who lead me here."

Sandy was upset and felt a little naive to have for a few seconds been charmed by this Elf. She promised herself to be careful now.

"And please do not squeeze me like that ever again. I nearly died crushed! And I heard a lot of myths about Elves' seduction abilities. So stop trying on me! I'm not fooled!"

"Hahahaha! Yes, I promise not to use it any more. Anyway, the strength and speed are also essential skills for an Elf in your culture. Let's continue our journey."

Sandy did not really understand why Yackho had laughed but she did not linger really on it and followed him.

They had walked all day and nothing unexpected and dangerous had happened to them except that Sandy had almost been sucked into quicksand, but nothing serious. Night was falling but for now sleeping was not an option for the night was the most dangerous moment of the trip, knowing that all creatures were beginning to wake up.

"We have escaped the Harpies' territory during the day and we are now in the Gobelins. There is little chance that we run into one this season but let's remain on our guards."

Sandy only listened to him with one ear. She was trying somehow to remove the mud from her clothes and her body. She still felt a bit strange after what had happened earlier. Yackho watched Sandy. Her long blond hair even dirty was very beautiful and her slightly tanned complexion adorned with freckles was perfectly fine. She had large green eyes and a lovely mouth, drawn well, with a small nose and a thin face. She was beautiful. She was wearing jeans and a t-shirt, everything was simple, but the lines of her body being beautiful, we could guess that everything suited her. Sandy felt watched but did not dare turn for fear of ending up in the same situation again.

Yackho honed his sword with a black coal stone. And Sandy was still busy getting clean when suddenly Yackho raised his head. Sandy looked worried. He moved his ears. "Pick up your stuff, we're off," he said, suddenly whispering. "Why?" "Hurry up!"

So Sandy put on her jacket and shoes and put the knife she had carved in stone in her pocket. Then shrill cries were heard by thousands, louder and louder as if the source

of that din was approaching at incredible speed. Yackho took her hand and shouted "RUN! IF YOU WANT TO LIVE RUN!"

Sandy understood it was the goblins! She was breathless and she was beginning to see the goblins behind them. They were going too fast! Yackho was pulling her as he could but Sandy was exhausted. She had been eating roots for two days, she'd had enough. She stumbled and fell. Yackho lifted her and carried her on his back. When suddenly they saw a lake, it was their only hope. But the goblins got closer and Yackho began to get tired. Sandy then hugged him hard and whispered in his ear: "I believe in you"

Moved by this mark of affection, Yackho's felt better and he had a sort of energy boost. On the bank of the lake, Yackho jumped as far as possible and the duo took off and then landed in the water. Afraid that they goblins may catch them, they swam as fast as they could, even if the goblins were supposed to be afraid of water, still in shock and fearing of being poisoned. Then, suddenly, Sandy had a terrible cramp in the leg and began to sink.

Far ahead, Yackho was almost at shore and had forgotten that Sandy was much slower than him. He did not notice that she was drowning. The water was freezing and Sandy had no oxygen anymore. She tried to call Yackho but he did not hear. Then she fainted. Yackho arrived on the other side, then he looked behind him to see where Sandy was but could not see her. Frightened, he shouted her name with all his might and feared for a moment that she did not jump in the water and that the goblins had caught her. He went back into the lake and saw something dark as if something was sinking. He dived to see if it was her. Bingo! He rushed straight to her and pulled her out of the water. He laid her on the shore and gave her mouth to mouth. Then after a few

minutes she woke up spitting water. Heavy rain poured on this nightmarish forest. The young duo set up camp between insects, mud, and strange noises. Sandy fell asleep. During the night Sandy moved a lot. She was probably having nightmares, but was also very cold. Yackho warmed her by hugging her and wondered if the Oracle had not been a little wrong in his prediction because at the moment he saved her life more than she did. When she stopped shaking, he healed her wounds. When suddenly Sandy opened her eyes, Yackho exclaimed "You should go back to sleep. Tomorrow we have a long day ahead." Not paying any more attention to her surroundings and being utterly exhausted she fell asleep quickly.

Yakho heard deafening and piercing noises coming from the back of the camp. He prepared his sword and then, two trolls of indescribable ugliness advanced:

"Hmm Elf. Good smell. Me taste it?"

The other replied:

"Hmm yes. Another but not pointy ears. Tasty!"

The trolls raised their axes, mouths open, on the paralyzed couple Sandy was awake, alerted by the noise. The first troll went towards Yackho who fought body and soul with his sword adorned with pearls and dazzling stones. He perfectly handled it. Yackho cut off the head of the troll in a clear and precise move. That made the other troll even more aggressive. He wanted to revenge his brother. Yackho and the troll fought like crazy. Sandy witnessed everything and time stood still for her: Yackho's blue eyes had become blank as he was feeling his final hour had come. Then, Sandy jumped fast and, with all her strength, she pushed the troll to the edge of the cliff and the troll fell to his death.

In the orange light of dawn, Sandy's green eyes were even more dazzling. Sandy reached out her hand to help Yackho but he didn't take it. He simply thanked her.

They finally reached the other side of the forest, so they thought their quest was done with. They advanced to an ark but an invisible barrier stopped them. A downy cloud encircled them and a winged horse with the bust and head of a woman stood on their path.

"I have seen everything. You cannot leave the forest unless I want it."

"I had forgotten! The dilemma!" he thought and hesitated a moment and then decided, "We are ready!"

"I'll let go only the one who is devoted. No interactions, you choose. Whisper your answer. For one of you, the quest will be completed."

They whispered in the ear of the goddess the name of the one who deserved to go out.

Sandy stared at Yackho. She wanted to tell him how happy she was when she was with him. How free she felt, but nothing came out of her mouth.

She was afraid. She did not know what Yackho had answered and he avoided her gaze. She did not really know what she preferred: Staying here all alone and allow Yackho out or going out without him. Then after much thinking, she had made the right choice: Yackho had to get out of these woods. Everything became cloudy and Sandy, just thinking she would never see him again, felt tears in her eyes. But the goddess continued:

"Love is the key to the ark. You can go."

Their eyes widened and Yackho turned to Sandy. He hugged her as tight as he could.

"We did it!"

Sandy agreed with a smile. She had never been so happy. Yackho then released her and took her hand to take her to the Fountains of Time. Sandy had forgotten that at the end of the quest, she had to go home. But nobody was

waiting for her on Earth. She knew that Danny was cheating on her and she was an orphan. She just wanted to stay with the man she loved but now she did not dare ask him, expecting him to.

"This will bring you home, thank you Sandy. Your help was invaluable to me, you can go home."

"Do you want me to go home?"

"I want what you want."

They kissed.

"I like this world, I love you. And you? I really don't want to go... And this world is so magical."

"And you haven't seen anything yet!" replied Yackho to her with sparkling eyes.

Crossing the bridge leading to the castle, a young boy ran to Yackho exclaiming:

"The Prince is back! Everyone comes! "

A crowd of hundreds of Elves filled the streets of the castle and soon reached the couple. Yackho found himself pulled up by Elves who cheered him and he lost Sandy.

After a few minutes he calmed the crowd down and saw someone walking away. The King who was in front of the castle gates was ready to welcome his son. And he saw him heading to Sandy.

"So, you're a prince."

"It's not important, is it?"

"I'm a human, Yackho. Will they accept me?"

"They will love to see me love you and will love you in return."

Sandy thought that following this cat was really the best thing that had ever happened to her.

BURNING LOVE

WRITTEN BY

LOU FLOQUET
&
SYLVIE ARGIBAY

When Danny woke up this morning, he looked next to him and saw an empty bed, as often these days. He got up and got dressed, and then went to the kitchen. Sandy was already there, almost ready to go to work. The first thing she said when she saw him was:

“There's no more coffee, Danny.”

Danny knew that when she said his name at the end of a sentence it meant that she was angry.

“You could have bought some coffee yesterday when you went off from work”, she said.

“Yes I could have. But I didn't”, he answered, annoyed.

“No you didn't, like a lot of things these days.”

“What is that supposed to mean?”

“Nothing. Have a good day.”

And then she left the flat quickly. Danny thought about all the fights they had been through these days and felt sad about it, even if he was still mad at her. He thought that nothing was like before, when they met in high school, or even when they moved in into their new apartment. But lately, he felt like fights were their new daily routine. Whatever he said, she ended up angry about him. He sighed and ate something. Sandy was going to have a big day with her job today, so she wouldn't be in a good mood tonight. Like every night. He went outside. It was one of the first hot days of May. His work began at 11:00 am today so he had some time left to hang out in the streets. The sky was blue, not a cloud anywhere. Danny lit up a cigarette and walked down the street leading to his job, the record shop. Then, he went into the shop, ready to work. The day went by fast, there were not many customers today. And so, Danny finished at 5 pm. He wasn't in the mood for going back home, so he decided to go have a beer in a pub, next to the record shop.

“A beer, please”, he asked to the waiter once he got there.

Danny slowly started to think about Sandy, and all the trouble they went through these days. When he remembered the day they met, he never thought they'd end up there. He still remembered their first date in high school. She was so pretty, with her little white dress. He had never seen such a beautiful smile in his life. He had walked her home, and then kissed her. Since that day in senior year, they never left each other. And here he was. Drinking his beer on his own in a miserable pub at 5:30 pm. He felt really sad about it, because he knew their love was special, but right now, it was like nothing was in control anymore.

The barman suddenly turned up the volume of the TV. BBC News was on.

"... just got a breaking news, an impressive fire just began in parkway street. Three buildings are burning, the firemen are already there but this fire seems really big."

The TV showed the building of the couple. Danny stopped drinking and stood up. It was their neighbourhood, their building, burning completely. He started to panic and took his cellphone to call Sandy.

No answer.

"What's happening, boy?" asked the barman.

"This is my apartment, and my girlfriend doesn't answer the phone!" answered Danny.

His heart was starting to beat faster and faster.

"Where is she, boy?"

"I don't know, maybe she is still at work, but maybe she already got back home!"

"Okay, calm down, stop moving everywhere and call her office", said the barman.

"Yeah, you're right. I'm gonna call her office."

Danny tried to calm down and called her office. The assistant answered immediately.

"Hello, this is Danny, Sandy's boyfriend, do you know if she is still here?"

"No, I'm sorry, she left earlier today."

He felt like he had a heart attack. So, she was home. In the fire. He came out of the pub and started running. He ran faster than he ever had to their street. When he finally arrived, it was insane, the street was full of people, and the media were here too. Firemen were trying to stop the fire, but as the man on TV said, the fire was huge. Danny saw his bedroom window. There were flames everywhere. The firemen were evacuating people. Danny pushed everyone to get to the victims, and see if Sandy was there. He looked everywhere, but he couldn't see the face of Sandy. Danny started to panic. Where was she? Suddenly, he saw Mary, the caretaker of the building. She looked very afraid and was holding his son in her arms.

"Mary! He screamed."

"Oh my god Danny, this is awful! Everything is burning!"

"Do you know where Sandy is??"

"Jesus, isn't she with you? She got back home an hour ago, I thought maybe she left to meet you..."

"You mean she's up there? I gotta go get her! Sandy! Sandy!"

"Mister, get back, get back!"

A fireman pushed him back and ordered him to stay behind the line.

"This is my fucking home! Get the fuck out of my way, my girlfriend is in there! Danny was going mad."

"Mister, calm down! What floor do you live? We are going to get her, calm down! The fireman was shouting at him. My partners are inside, they are going to get your girl, just calm down!"

"I can't calm down okay? She could die! I have to go!"

"No, you can't! There is smoke everywhere in there, you will die too! Stay here, calm down!"

"Just stop asking me to calm down!"

Danny suddenly had an idea. He pretended to leave

and the fireman left too and got back to the truck. He had to go. If she died, he could never forgive himself. He had to save her. No matter what. So, he ran, jumped the line, punched a fireman who was trying to stop him, and entered the building. He heard screams behind him, but it was replaced by the sound of the flames. There was smoke everywhere. He put his shirt over his face to keep his breath. He ran into the stairs. Some steps were missing so he had to jump. He broke open the door of the flat. The fire was everywhere. No more couch, no more, table, no more room. Everything was burning.

“Sandy! Sandy where are you?” he screamed.

Sandy heard him but she couldn't answer or even move. She was too weak.

Danny looked for her everywhere, breathing was getting harder and harder. Finally, he saw a body, lying on the floor.

“Sandy!”

He arrived next to her and screamed.

“Oh my god, Sandy, are you okay? Baby oh my god...”

“Danny...”

She was crying and bleeding.

“I'm gonna get you out of here, don't worry, just try to breathe, it's okay.”

“Danny”, she said slowly... “Danny I'm so sorry, I love you, I love you so much, I'm so sorry.”

“Shut up, it's okay, you're gonna be okay, you are not going to die here, I love you too, so much.”

He started to carry her to get her out of the burning building but she was injured so she couldn't walk normally. There was too much smoke, too much fire.

“You are the most important person in my life”, she said coughing because of the smoke”

“Yes I know, you too, don't worry, stop talking, just keep your breath”, he answered.

Their eyes were starting to itch because of the smoke. Danny knew he had to keep going, no matter what. His only goal now was to save her. He knew that if he fell now, he couldn't get back on his feet. He had to stay strong for her.

Suddenly, he heard screams and saw a light in front of him. They did it. Immediately someone took the girl away from him. He couldn't do anything, everything started turning around him, even the fireman's face who was asking him how he felt.

"Sir! Sir! Are you alright? Stay awake! Stay with me!"

"Sandy..."

The fireman asked him to sit down, and gave him water, and an oxygen mask. Danny was suddenly feeling so weak. He couldn't think normally.

After a while, he felt a little better. His brain seemed to restart to work, and think.

"Sir, do you hear me? Danny? Hello? Can you hear me?" The voice of a fireman next to him got to his ears.

"Yes...I'm okay...Sandy...I wanna see Sandy..."

He started to get up but the man didn't let him.

"Your friend is okay, she's injured and weak but she is going to be okay. We got her. What you did was really dangerous, you could have died, Sir."

"I know, but she's the love of my life, and I just realized that, you know."

"Yeah okay", the man said while laughing. "Okay, go see her she's out there."

Danny got up quickly, and ran to the truck. She was lying on the stretcher. She had blood on her face and on her leg too. She was breathing with difficulty and slowly, while two firemen were talking to her.

"Sandy!"

She opened her eyes and for the first time in a long time, the way she looked at him made Danny feel like the

first time they looked at each other. She seemed in love and so happy to see him. He went next to her and took her hand.

“Baby, baby you’re okay?” he said, holding her hand tightly.

“Yes, I’m okay, thank you...I love you, I love you...you saved me.”

She started crying and touched his cheek.

“Listen to me...” he said. “I thought I was going to lose you forever. And I never want to feel that again, ever. I love you too much. Marry me, Sandy...”

She cried even more, and the firemen smiled behind them.

“Yes, I will... I will, she said.”

And she kissed him, like she never did before, and Danny felt like his heart was burning because of the desire he felt for her right now. The firemen applauded.

“Okay, congratulations, but now we gotta go to the hospital if you want to get married one day!” said one of the men.

Danny and Sandy smiled and kissed again. At this moment, Danny didn't care at all that they just lost everything, because he felt like he won her heart again, and she just won his too. It was a new start, for both of them, and their love was stronger than it ever was.

Danny watched their burnt out building disappear through the truck window, thinking he had no idea where they were going, but just knowing that it would be with the girl he loved since he was 16. Now, everything was going to be okay as long as she was there with him.

BRIDGE OVER TROUBLED WATER

WRITTEN BY

LILAS RICHARD,

JONAS PIROTTE

&

GASPARD BONNARDEL

On the road, June 22nd

When I first heard the authorities warning about the so-called serial kidnapper, I was surprised. We were driving to Amarillo with Danny, we were visiting Mama. I was driving and Danny was smoking his fag. It was a beautiful day, shiny and hot. Danny had opened the window, and we were listening to the radio. The song was Johnny Cash's "Hurt". When it was over, the news started and a journalist talked about a series of events which had happened in Cleveland, Oklahoma, very next to Stillwater where we were living with Danny. Shit, it was sordid things...

"The corpse of Patrick McLewis, who disappeared a few weeks ago, was discovered this morning in the Arkansas river, Oklahoma, 5 miles from Cleveland. The body was found in an outrageous condition: half of the body has been bitten. Following the autopsy, the forensic doctors did confirm that the bites were inflicted by a human being. The police has opened an investigation, and the area had been closed. Visitors are not allowed to enter the area."

When we arrived at Mama's home, she was in front of the door waiting for us. We got off the car and she looked troubled. She immediately started talking about the news, and proposed that we stay a few days with her instead of leaving the next morning. We refused because we both had a lot of work to do at home and so we told her we would go back home.

At home, June 23th

So we got back home the next morning. After almost an hour on the road under the sun we reached home and

switched on the TV on the news channel. The murder and the ongoing of the investigation were actually discussed on every channel and newspaper. Impressing! Photographs were also published in a few newspapers, but the scene was very hard to look at so the authorities quickly stopped publication of these pictures.

At home, October 9th

The investigation continued for approximately four months. It was going nowhere, so the authorities were forced to put it aside. Life was going on. Incredible thing: our old friend Agath Cobel had moved into our street with her girlfriend Natascha. It had been a long time since we last saw her, since college... When Danny and I weren't even together. We planned a picnic this week-end. Natascha was very pleasant and we immediately became friends. Danny lent Natascha an Al Green CD, and, in return, Natascha gave out a Johnny Cash CD that he didn't have, "*The Man Comes Around*". We soon started to meet every week or more often. Sometimes they came in our house, sometimes we were going to theirs. One day, they invited us to a dinner when Natascha made her famous "*varenyky*", a dish from Russia, her birthplace. After dinner, Agath and I went up in their bedroom while Danny and Natascha stayed downstairs, talking about old and new gipsy Jazz. I asked Agath if she still had the earrings that she was wearing almost every day in college, and that we both liked so much. She told me she didn't wear them anymore because they were too shiny. She suggested giving me her jewelry. First, I refused, but she insisted.

"Listen Sandy, We've known each other for so long and life made us meet again. I think it's destiny. It means that I have to give you something," she said ironically. "No, seriously, take them, I don't wear them anyway."

I finally took the little blue turtles. They were so cute... I put them in my pocket. In return, I gave her a very beautiful necklace that I had at home.

Stillwater, November 2nd

Everything was alright then in Stillwater, until it happened. This time, it was even closer to our city. Agath had disappeared. Her car was found upside down on the shoulder of road 177, which runs in Stillwater. We couldn't find anything else. No body, no clues. Agath had just disappeared like the previous victim before the police found his corpse in the river. Natascha was totally forlorn. She was first interviewed by the authorities, and then by the press. She didn't want to think about what could have happened to Agath, so she locked herself up at home all day. She called the police station almost every hour. Danny and I were very shocked. We felt so bad and we wanted so much to support Natascha. We called her a few times to offer her to come around. She didn't answer, but called us back the next day.

"Sandy? Yes, it's me, it's Natascha. I'm sorry I didn't answer yesterday."

"There's no problem Nat. What can I do for you? Danny and I are here for you."

"Yeah, I... Maybe we can meet? I need to take a break."

“Of course. If you want to, you can come over to have dinner tonight. We can come get you when you want if you don't wanna walk alone too.”

“Yes I really would like to have dinner with you. What time can you come?”

“Maybe an hour from now?”

“It's perfect. Thank you, Sandy. See you.”

“See you tonight, Natascha. Don't worry about nothing, huh? We're here with you.”

She hung up. Danny and I started cooking. We cooked a meat gratin. We knew that Natascha liked it so much. Then we got her at 9 PM. Natascha was like... like she was dead inside. She spoke very little, she looked tired, so tired. But I knew she was glad to be here with us and finally get out of her home and see people that she liked. She returned home at 11:30 PM. She wanted to walk quietly. We called again her a few times after that.

Stillwater, November 8th

Several days later, Natascha had left. She didn't tell us, or anybody else, before. Her dad had come to see her the previous day, and he didn't know more than we did. We walked in front of the house every day. It was very, very hard to see it surrounded by policemen again. They also questioned us and the other neighbours. An inspector and a police officer came in our home and started asking.

“Hello, are you Mr and Mrs Dagger? We're here to ask you some questions about Mrs Natascha Cobel. Are you

aware that she disappeared? Right, so can you tell us when and where you last saw her?"

"We invited her to have dinner at home last Tuesday... We had dinner and Danny drove her back home at, maybe, 11 o'clock, something like that," answered Sandy.

"Thank you, ma'am. What did you talk about that night? Did she inform you about some trip, or some plan to go away?"

He noticed that we were looking at him with a confused look. The inspector went on: We found out that she booked a plane for Novossibirsk, Russia.

Yes, she's from Russia. I didn't know where from exactly, but I suppose that it's this city, I said looking at Danny.

"So she didn't let you know that she wanted to leave the USA?" asked the policeman.

"Not at all. We didn't even know that she could... leave, just like that. We just don't understand. We called her this week, and she didn't answer. What is she doing? Will you... find her please?"

"Ma'am, I hope we'll find her alive. We have, huh, some reasons to think that... sorry about it... that she could be the murderer of Patrick McLewis and the other victim after him."

Danny and I were astonished. We looked at each other silently and just didn't know that THAT could happen around us. Danny asked:

"How can you say that?"

"We're not totally certain she's guilty. What we are pretty sure about, in fact, is that Mrs. Cobel had, I mean, murdered her wife Agath Cobel. We have some evidence.

But we also think that all these murderers have been committed by the same person.”

He showed us quickly some little plastic bags with the word “EVIDENCE” written on them. There were hairs, there was also a scarf and screen caps of the visited websites on her computer.

“We found out a few clues. Particularly this... It's the most important proof that we have. (He searched for something in his pocket). Have you already seen this? It's an important object that can bring us closer to that murderer.”

This time, I just had a headache. He pulled out a tiny plastic bag, with a little blue turtle earring inside. I couldn't stand it anymore. I went sitting on the couch in the living room. I didn't understand what was happening. The policemen had a very serious attitude. I didn't hear anything else. I saw Danny let the police constables in for a quick examination. They looked around without belief, and didn't insist more. They finally left, they were sorry for Agath and said sorry that I was in shock. Danny sat next to me on the couch and we stayed there for several minutes. Then I stood up, and took the car. I drove until I saw the Arkansas River. Afterwards, I pulled out of my pocket my blue turtle and threw it as far as I could in this troubled water.

???, around the first week of November

Where am I? What day is it today? What the fuck is happening? I feel messy. OK, I know that I'm Natascha Cobel. That's it. Calm down, calm down. I open my eyes, I

don't see anything. It's all dark. I try to move my hands. I can't! I think a rope is tied around my wrists. Jesus! I hear voices... I try to shout something. Whatever I shout, I need to be heard. I have a gag in my mouth. My efforts are vain. I can hear people walking upstairs. They can't hear me. I cry. Then I hear a door shutting and a car starting. A few minutes later, the door opens and closes again and a second car starts. I faint.

I don't know if I was sleeping, but I don't know what I did. Like half an hour later, a car suddenly wakes me up and someone walks in the house. Then, music starts. I know what it is. It sounds like Johnny Cash. Someone opens the door.

I can hear footsteps in the stairs. Someone is coming. The sudden light hurts my eyes. I see nothing. When my eyes get used to it, there's something just in front of me. Or someone. I suddenly feel a stroke in my jaw. I faint.

When I wake up, the light is brighter than before. I can almost see right. Where are my glasses? Shit. Oh Lord, someone's here. He's looking at me. I look up. I almost recognize him... There's also a woman behind him.

I recognize Danny and Sandy Dagger.

