

Late Awakening

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1.

When people die, it makes an impression. Of course. But I have never experienced anything like it when my friend - who was a doctor - died.

Yes, I do not use his name, because his children are still alive.

When he died, there was nothing but doubt and questions between everyone.

Have you heard? Why did he do that?

Was he sick or maybe even insane?

It was not spoken about, but it was spoken.

2.

Let me introduce him. Him who is no longer here. 48 years old with own medical practice. A decent man and a diligent doctor. Father of no less than 6 children, of whom the two oldest boys have already completed their education and the oldest girl has been married.

He was also a very lovable man who we thought was happily married ...

He was fun and the house was such a natural gathering point for good parties and dinners.

But then suddenly ... yes, from one day to the next, he changed. Locked inside himself and his bedroom. Turned his back to his children when they would say hello to him. His patients failed. Rejected his friends.

We called another doctor who came - and went again. "I don't know what is wrong, but he doesn't want help either, so ..."

I was the only one allowed to come by every day. I - his old friend and his pastor. Mostly his friend.

He lay in his bed for eight days. On the ninth day he shot himself.

3.

I couldn't say anything at the funeral. Maybe it was because I knew why he was there. In his coffin.

4.

The first time I met my friend, we were just about to fight. It is ... yes, it must be 35 years ago. I had just finished university and there was a party in the assembly hall. I had made eye contact with a girl who was moving strangely - shall we call it dragging - on the dance floor. I got up to dance with her, but before I reached her, he stood in front of me.

"What are you doing?" he asked, not allowing me to answer, until he turned around and said to her: "I thought it was the two of us to dance."

She smiled crookedly, and whispered in an assumed voice: "If the Lord allows, maybe we could change?"

He replied immediately: 'Not at all. I resign. I will be number 2. I even dance fucking worse than the gentleman there. "

He was still standing between us, so I said, "Well, I think we'll ...".

"Be my guest," he replied, bowing and then he disappeared.

5.

She danced tightly close and once pressed her lap sexual annoyingly against mine. He stood, clearly jealous, watching from somewhere in the other end of the room. I remember thinking, 'Do they know each other? Have they already kissed and is she just teasing him? ' After the dance, I went to say sorry for my short answer. He smiled and we toasted, but we didn't talk about her or that anymore.

6.

Later that night, I danced with her again and her body was all over mine - discreet, but determined. It didn't matter to me, but it didn't excite me either. It was a dance and nothing else.

A few months later I was told that they had already been lovers at the time and so I saw things in a slightly different perspective.

It wasn't so much her body and her movements towards me, but more the first contact I had with her - her eyes and smile.

She was - yes, how should I describe it - dangerous maybe? She definitely did not seem like a girl who could be content with one man. She seemed like someone who hid or was capable of secrets. I had a clue back then. A clue about her empty inner self that was devoid of emotion and only did things for her own sake.

Like a vampire alive on the outside and completely dead inside.

I have followed her through the last many years, as an 18-year-old girl, as a wife, a mother - I have seen her at her daughter's wedding and her husband's corpse, but she has never changed her facial expression. Never. She has always been gentle, calm, attentive and perfectly restrained. An undisturbed cheerfulness.

It's really scary - that I didn't say anything in time.

7

My friendship with the doctor very quickly became deep, important and confidential. Three months after the party, he told me he wanted to get married - to Elise, as she is called.

"But do you know her? Like really know her? Will and can she make you happy? " I asked gently and he immediately replied, " I love her and she loves me more than anything on earth. As soon as I find a practice, I will propose to her! "

So he did. And I have never seen a happier man than him. He was almost flying and was constantly smiling. He could not sit or stand still and his smile infected anyone everywhere he came.

The strange thing was that his patients did not have any serious illnesses during that period - nor did anyone die. It was as if he could heal with his happiness and joy.

It was quite amazing to see his change.

And frightening to look at Elise who didn't change at all.

8

Time passed and it passed well.

Eight months after the wedding, Elise gave birth to their first child and a baptismal party out of this world was held.

Two years later, I moved into the rectory in our small town as a newly ordained parish priest and married my teenage girlfriend Henriette.

The time was good for us.

9

When Henriette had given birth to our first child and Elise to their second, a third couple came into our common life - Frans, who was a military man and his wife, Charlotte. He was the cutest military person I have ever met and she was both beautiful and fun.

Henriette and I lived opposite the other two families and the distance between our houses formed a triangle if you drew lines on a map. That is why our little unity came to be called The Triangle and we met every wednesday night in one of the houses.

We had a great time - so good, so happy that it couldn't possibly last. Everything was perfect! Frans and Charlotte wanted to have children and couldn't have it, but other than that, everything was more than good.

And we were like kids looking forward to wednesdays, which were very special. After a joint meal, we split up. We men played cards and the women gossiped, I think. It was right and important for all of us!

10

There is no doubt that we three lucky men had the most beautiful women on our sides, but damn they were different! And that was precisely the difference that together made them pure - yes, harmony. My wife was quiet and a little shy, while Charlotte was comfy and always ready with a rap note and Elise was the thoughtful and slightly superior. That's how they fit together.

Contradictions have to fit together.

11

We three men were also quite different in many areas. A doctor, a priest, and a major in the military.

Frans, our major, was the least combative of the three of us and he was something so rare as a noble man who believed in justice. Everyone around him respected him and that was because he believed in the individual and was able to handle even the most difficult conflicts without weapons.

I don't think he knew how popular he was with the women.

12

A year later, something happened from one day to the next. Frans, our major, changed. He was either depressed and quiet or talking with words that didn't make sense. It was my wife who made me aware of it and I tried to calm her down.

But I had seen and heard something that also troubled me.

13

We had talked for a long time about making a good old-fashioned costume party - that is, such a party where you had to wear masks so that you could not recognize each other.

Everything was arranged and the party was to be kept in the great hall of the inn. Unfortunately, I couldn't attend the dinner itself, so I sat in the tavern and played cards while people danced next door.

Suddenly I got a really bad headache and I knew that the only thing that could help was to rest for half an hour. The Inn-keeper gave me the keys to a room far away from the party where I could rest in a large armchair.

14

I fell asleep immediately and was almost gone when I noticed the door creaking open and two people coming in. It was completely dark so no one saw each other, but I could hear it was a man and a woman.

"Do it have to be now? What do you want, sweet honey?", he said.

She whispered, "You're so lucky tonight, beautiful man."

"But couldn't we wait until we got home instead of playing adultery?", he said.

Then I heard the sound of several kisses and then they sat down on the couch. Someone quarreled down in front of the inn and suddenly it was quiet on the couch. Maybe they had gone?

In front of the tavern, a bottle was thrown, which accidentally hit a street lamp and suddenly the room I sat in lit up.

On the couch was Frans, our major, and on top of him sat Elise, the doctor's wife. Frans screamed quietly and quickly knocked her off. She hid her face in her hands.

"My God!" he said, running out. She sobbed and after a while she ran too.

But nobody saw me ...

15

I was confused and did not know what to feel or do. I looked into the big hall. Everyone had removed their masks and I immediately saw that Frans, our major and my friend the doctor, was wearing the exact same costume. Not that it was an excuse, but maybe an explanation? Frans was standing with his wife, trying to look happy. Elise, on the other hand, looked like herself, as if she were completely innocent.

I remember thinking of an old scripture I had once read that read: "The Quietness of Hell". This is how she looked. Elise.

And then I had doubts - had I dreamed it all? Or was it Frans and his wife who had been up there?

16

I didn't say anything to my wife, but she continued to be suspicious.

"Don't be so suspicious, because what do you really know? Have you seen anything?", I asked her.

"I saw they had eye contact. He blushed as she looked at him", she replied.

"I don't think we should talk about it anymore. A look can mean everything and nothing.", I said and then we didn't talk about it anymore.

17

Frans got better, but he had become more serious - more dull. But after all, he grew older and the dream of becoming a father disappeared more and more.

We all grew older and as one old writer once wrote: "Time, which rolls us out of its path, wears off all the sharp edges of our youthful feelings."

That's it.

We continued our Wednesdays, played our cards and our kids grew up. Mine the oldest, studied theology - the doctor's two oldest, medicine with different specialties. His oldest daughter had gotten married and my oldest was well on her way to it.

That's how it was.

When it all exploded. The bomb, which was to destroy two families with a bang.

18

I came home from a trip and my wife said that Frans, our major, had become seriously ill. He was lying at home and my friend, the doctor looked at him several times a day.

I hurried over and saw him lying asleep in his bed. I have never seen such a troubled human being. Fingers, lips, eyes, legs and arms were constantly moving as he sweated profusely in his sleep. I had heard of feverishness in children, but had never seen it in adults. I was standing in the bedroom with his wife, Charlotte, who looked worried.

Suddenly he woke up and he sat upright with his eyes open.

"Elise!", he said, looking at his wife as he continued, "What do you want? It should stop now! If my wife discovers you or the doctor or... It should stop now! You must leave! Do you listen to what I'm saying? It must stop. Leave me alone!"

I took Charlotte's hand. A tear slid down her face.

"He has a fever. A serious fever.", I whispered to her.

Frans threw himself into bed and continued, "Why did you make me make the hidden entrance to our shed? There is never anyone who can find it, do you hear? Never ever anyone! A secret door! Ha! You made me make a secret door! Go! Go!"

Charlotte gripped my hand more firmly. I pulled her out of the room.

"Shouldn't we have the doctor over here and consult?", I said and she agreed to call him.

19

The doctor came all by himself and I went with him to the bed, where he took the major's pulse. Suddenly the Major woke up again, staring stiffly and confused at the doctor.

"What is happening? You said your husband was at work all night and yet he stands in front of me? Are you fooling me? Why did you ask me to come? Go now! Now go home and sleep with your husband! "

I brought the doctor away - I didn't want him to hear anymore.

"He's gone -he's mad. You can't trust any of his words." I said and then the major sat up and almost shouted an answer.

"It is a lie! I know perfectly well what I'm saying and it's over now! END! Your husband and my wife do not deserve this! It's over between us, Elise! "

My dear friend, the doctor, looked pale. A sudden movement outside the window made us both look out. In the door to the shed Elise stood for a moment. Then she disappeared.

We both ran out there and found an empty shed. Elise was gone. Through the secret door.

20

I tried to comfort to the best of my abilities. First Charlotte, the major's wife.

"Now listen. Maybe nothing really happened. Don't think about it anymore and be there for your sick man instead. And for God's sake - don't listen to other opinions and fantasies. "

Then I tried to reach my friend, the doctor. I went to his home and he stood in his office, petrified with some papers in one hand and the other hand pressed convulsively against his chest. His eyes were cold and empty, despairing and hopeless.

He must have discovered it all and I didn't know what to do. There is nothing more difficult than to comfort those who need it most.

One can comfort with hope, but he had lost it. You can also comfort with time, but he couldn't stand being in it.

I cried and gently took his hand. He put his forehead against my chest and let his tears run.

21

Suddenly he tore himself loose and threw away the papers he had in his hand.

"There, these are like recipes, she has written! Read! "And I did, while he looked at me.

22

The first letter stated:

"My Beloved! I cannot or will not conceal from you that, just below my heart, I have a secret proof of our secret love. Of course, I have a poor conscience towards my husband, but my love will only do one thing - to do everything for the child inside me.

Frans, you thought you couldn't have children, but you can. I may not go to Heaven, but as long as I can make you happy here on earth, I can give you no more. My Beloved!

Your Elise. "

23

The second letter was obviously written just after the party.

"It happened, that's how it is. Fate has brought us together and I can feel it - I can feel that this is right. I've got a new heart and a new soul! I think of only one thing and that's you! I wish for only one thing and that's you! And I miss only one thing and it is you, my beloved!

Please don't hate me? Love drives me and I hope we can meet tonight at 11 pm so I can explain? My husband is out traveling, so come and comfort an unhappy...

Your Elise. "

24

The third letter was also very direct.

"Secret is the life-principle of our love. It is our temple for secret joys! My husband is going away tonight and at 11pm everyone in the house sleeps except her waiting with burning heart for you, Frans! The sun rises late at 7 in the morning, so we have a long night ahead of us, Frans!

Your Elise. "

25

My hand was shaking and I lost the papers. The doctor got quickly up.

"Well, my dear friend, my priest?" he said.

I replied, "Where do you get these letters from?"

"The bedside table next to the bed. Frans threw them after Charlotte, because he thought, she was Elise. Charlotte gave them to me."

"Okay," I said. "What will you do now?"

He started walking around the office, repeating, "What do I want to do? What do I want to do? " I stopped him and said he should throw out the letters.

"Throw out? These cute, beautiful love letters? That would be a shame. I should take them to the grave and up to God", he said.

I answered him quietly, "I believe God already has been told."

26

He suddenly stopped and handed me the letters. "Here you go. Keep them. Show them to her when I'm dead. When I am gone."

"I promise," I replied, and continued, "But you're not going to die. You going to lose your wife whom you love, but she is not worth retaining. But you still have your children – you'll always have them! "

He looked at me and started laughing.

"My children? You mean the major's kids, don't you? "

I replied that the two elders were born before the Major came to town at all.

"And what about the others?", he answered sharply, continuing, "Have you read the letter at all !?"

"The imagination can sometimes ... ", I tried.

"But here we don't have to fantasize about anything, do we? She says it herself - the whore! "

27

At the same time, the two youngest girls came into the office to embrace him. He turned and rejected them as he sobbed.

I comforted them as best I could.

"My children?" I could hear his voice in my head. And I understood and I could see that he was right. They did not look like the father they thought they had.

Suddenly he stood in front of his desk, sat down and put his hands out to the girls. They crawled in and hugged him. He cried and comforted them.

I left.

28

The next morning he lay in his bed and asked me to sit next to him. After a while, he whispered slowly.

"I just woke up from a dream. A beautiful, clean and sweet dream that has lasted more than twenty years. Can you imagine walking around on top of a volcano - on a thin crust above the burning lava? It was my paradise, but now the crust is gone - cracked - torn apart. My body burns up and there is no other antidote than death. "

He closed his eyes and continued.

"Let me die. Take me away from here. I can't live in the world where she is. We cannot live under the same sun, under the same sky. I need to have time and eternity between us. "

I took his hand and we prayed.

29

The next week I visited him every day. Our dear friend, the Major, died after 7 days in a coma.

He, my friend the doctor, stayed in his bed and rejected his children, but not me. Elise was out traveling, but he was waiting for her.

"Everything will probably fall into place when she comes home tomorrow. Do not worry. The Major and I will meet soon."

But I was not calm - rather suspicious and nervous.

He smiled at me and said, "I only have one wish left before I can tear myself away - I only have one joint left in my chain. When I see Elise, that last part must probably break so I can go. "

I stayed with him until late into the night. He had tears in his eyes as I walked away.

"Thank you - live good so long." was his last words to me.

30th

I went to bed without taking off my clothes - I'd be ready to run over to him.

But the deep, dreamless sleep overcame me and I woke late by the message that he ...

That he had shot himself in the chest as soon as Elise entered the bedroom ...

Elise, who without conscience destroyed two families and spread grief in an entire city.

A grief we will never forget.