

The Dream Detective

Detective Beth Johansson nudged her partner Joe Rossi. “Joe, wake up. That’s the second time you’ve fallen asleep while sitting in the car.”

“Sorry Beth. I don’t know why. I get eight hours a night.”

“And you’ve been forgetting lately too. Like when you were writing up the McKenzie murder. You left out some details.”

“Good thing you were there to remind me. I’m going to the doctor tomorrow; he’s going to test me for sleep apnea.”

“All right Joe, but in the meantime, I guess I’m your backup memory.”

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Joseph set up his sleep apnea machine next to the bed. He had no idea that this machine would be a key to solving crimes.

Something in the setup manual caught Joe’s attention.

The device has built-in WIFI, enabling it to send sleep data to your doctor. It also allows the manufacturer to update your system with the latest software.

“Everything is about technology now. How did we ever get along without apps, cell phones and the internet?” Joe settled into bed with his mask on, allowing air to flow into his lungs and breathe freely. He fell asleep in minutes.

The next day, Joe met Beth early to start their day. “So Joe, how did you sleep?”

“Great. I really feel rested. In fact, I even remembered some of my dreams.”

“How so?”

“You know the Williams murder?”

“Yeah.”

“I got a lead in my dream.”

Beth was skeptical. “Were you drinking before you went to sleep?”

“No Beth. I’m serious. I saw a woman shooting Williams. I couldn’t identify her with any detail, but she was white, tall and had dark hair. That’s not all. A name occurred to me in the dream, Maria or Marla.”

“No last name, no address?”

“Stop messing with me, I’m serious.”

“All right, I’ll go over the case and see if I can find a link to a woman named Maria or Marla.” Beth did some work on her tablet as Joe drove them to the sister of the victim, Linda Washington.

“Ms. Washington. Did your brother ever have a relationship with a Maria or Marla?”

Linda was shaken by the question. “You don’t think?”

“Think what ma’am?”

“His college girlfriend, Marla Green. They haven’t seen each other in ten years. Why? Do you think she was involved?”

Beth took notes while Joe continued the questioning. “Nothing we can go into at this time, just investigating. What was their relationship like?”

“Tony and Marla were engaged, but they broke up when she was caught with drugs. She told police that she was framed, but Joe ended it when she was convicted.” Beth

tapped on her police tablet, looking up Marla Green. She showed it to Joe.

“It says here that Marla was released from prison three months ago, just before your brother was murdered.”

“Oh my God. Then she did it.”

“Hold on now. That’s not proof, just a lead. Has Marla contacted you or anyone else? Do you have any idea where she is?”

“I’m sorry detective. I don’t.”

“Well, just make sure you let us know if you do. Don’t try to confront her. She probably doesn’t have anything to do with your brother’s murder.”

“All right, but I’ll do some searching and let you know.”

“Just make some calls. Don’t try to meet with her.”

“All right detective. I understand.”

Beth and Joe headed back to the station. “Joe, that was freaky. Your dream was on target.”

“Yes Beth. Track down Marla Green so we can pay her a visit.”

By the end of the day, Beth had some information about Marla Green. “Joe. I couldn’t find a home address for Marla, but she works at a clothing company on the peninsula, San Mateo. We can go there tomorrow and question her.”

“Sounds good Beth. Maybe I’ll dream up more info tonight.”

“See if you can get her cell phone number.” They laugh.

That night, Joe was anxious as he went to bed. How was it possible that this name came to him in a dream? Would it ever happen again?

The next morning Joe woke up, refreshed and ready to interview Marla Green. When he got to the station, Beth was waiting for him. “Well Joe? Spill it.”

“Sorry Beth, nothing as specific as a name, but I did see another image of the woman after she shot the man. She dropped something as she was running away, a small item, size of a pack of cards.”

“Hmm. Let’s stop by the crime scene again before we visit Marla.”

Joe and Beth went to the alley in Chinatown, San Francisco, where Tony Williams was shot. It was dirty, with dumpsters, broken glass and garbage from local restaurants. They each took a side of the alley, turning over anything that might hide the mysterious item Joe dreamed about.

“Joe, I found something, behind the dumpster.” Using her glove to protect any evidence Beth held up a small metal container, like a band-aid box. It was dirty and bent. Beth could tell by its weight that something was inside. She photographed the item with her cell phone, and then flipped open the lid.

“OMG Joe. Do you see what I see?” She handed it to him.

“Four bullets, still in their jacket. Get these to ballistics Beth. See if they match the one that killed Tony Williams. We’ll wait for the analysis before seeing Marla Green.”

“Right away Joe. By the way, see if you can dream me up a husband tonight.”

“If only I could dear Beth. You deserve it.”

Joe and Beth met for breakfast before their shift the next day.

“Well, any more clues?” Beth spread butter on her blueberry muffin and looked at Joe with admiration.

“Yes. More than clues. I think providence may be rewarding me for patient service. You know, I could have become a criminal, seeking vengeance for the death of my father.”

Beth’s mood turned. “I’m sorry Joe. I didn’t know you were thinking about your father. Maybe he’s looking down on you and smiling.”

“Maybe Beth. I do feel relieved. The nightmares have stopped. You really think I’m getting help from above?”

“I’d like to think so.” Beth smiled. “Oh, and ballistics confirmed that the bullets we found do match the one that killed Tony Williams. Guess that makes Marla Green our primary suspect.”

“Maybe not Beth. In my dream last night, the woman who shot Tony spoke to another woman. She said ‘It’s done Marla, you can pay me later’.”

“That makes Marla the one who hired the killer. Guess it’s time to pay her a visit.” They drove to San Mateo to confront her.

“My name is Detective Rossi, this is my partner, Detective Johansson. We need to see Marla Green.” The receptionist called for Marla over the intercom. She came to the front office right away.

“I’m Marla Green. What is this about?”

“You’re going to have to come with us to the station.”

Marla knew she was caught. She didn’t resist as Beth led her to their car.

At the station, Joe continued the interview. “Ms. Green, who killed Tony Williams?”

“Right to the point. How did you know I was involved?”

“Old fashioned police work Ms. Green. You were engaged to him before you were caught dealing drugs.”

“I was framed. I never sold drugs.”

“That’s not what the jury thought.”

“I know. Tony set me up. He was the drug dealer.”

“We have evidence that you paid someone to kill Williams. Are we wrong?”

“No. But the person who killed him is dead. Avenged by his gang. I was just the messenger.”

“Beth, place Ms. Green under arrest. We’ll let the district attorney sort out the details.”

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Detectives Rossi and Johansson continued to solve crimes, relying on clues Joe had while dreaming. Commendations and promotions were given to both detectives. They were even transferred to special investigations, the unit that handled the most difficult cases. Of course, they kept their methods and secret to themselves, not that anyone would believe they were solving crimes with the help of dreams.

They maintained a routine of meeting for breakfast before the start of shift. Beth was particularly superstitious about making any changes.

“What’s our next case Joe?”

“A mob hit in the Marina district Beth. Abby Palmer, an assistant district attorney, was found in her condo. Major case just turned it over to us.”

“When did they find the body?”

“An hour ago. The housekeeper called the police.”

When they got to the condo, Joe walked the rooms while Beth opened the victim's computer. Her technical skills quickly paid off.

"Joe, come here." Beth scrolled some documents on the screen.

"She was getting death threats. Apparently, her investigation into the mob got a little too close. I'll need more time with this to put together a complete picture."

"All right. Take the computer back to the station. I didn't see anything obvious that identifies the killer. But the techs will get us forensics by tomorrow. Maybe we'll find some DNA or prints, but I doubt it. Aside from our dead Ms. Palmer, the condo looks pristine."

Beth couldn't determine who sent the death messages but was able to identify the domain server from which they were sent. She printed out the messages and went to the company where the computers were kept.

"My name is Detective Beth Johansson. Someone was sending death threats to an assistant district attorney and she was just found murdered. Can you find out who sent these messages?"

"Sorry detective. These were sent through our server from another server; this IP address isn't even in the United States. I think this one is in South America."

"How did they use your server to deliver the emails?"

"Hacking detective. Even we get attacked. But I'll follow up to see how far we can trace this."

Beth handed him her card, just as Joe was coming in to join her. "Let me know if you find anything."

"Hey Joe. The death threats were not sent by anyone who has an account on this server. It was passed through here from another country."

“Not surprising. No one doing this would want to be identified. So, it’s someone with tech skills.”

“Yes. Any word from forensics?”

“No prints. DNA testing will take another day. Let’s look at the cases Abby Palmer was prosecuting.”

Joe and Beth went to the district attorney’s office. They met with one of Palmer’s colleagues, Larry Jessup.

“Mr. Jessup, I’m Detective Rossi. This is my partner Detective Johansson. We’re investigating the murder of Abby Palmer. Can you tell us who she was investigating?”

“Sure detective. I anticipated your visit. Here is a list of cases Abby was working on, with legal briefs and details. I would look at the mob cases first.”

“Thank you, Mr. Jessup. Anyone in particular?”

“The Langone Construction Company was strong-arming competitors to drop out of bidding on the new basketball arena.”

“Very good. We’ll return these copies for your files after we scan them.”

“No rush, just realize these are confidential documents. Either return them or destroy them.”

“Beth. Run down everything you can find on Langone Construction. See if we have any informants with contacts there.”

“Will do Joe. Or should I just wait for tomorrow’s dream report?”

“Very funny.”

Beth researched the company. Several of the managers had criminal backgrounds. The owner, Ronald Langone, was indicted but never convicted of racketeering. But in mob cases

that wasn't unusual. The boss never gets too close to the crime. One name stuck out, Vito Carlese. He was acquitted of murder in 2011, on a technicality. Beth decided to seek a judge's warrant to search Carlese's records and computer, but decided to wait until she met Joe tomorrow.

"Good morning Beth."

"I'm going to think of a name" as she closed her eyes and put her hand to her forehead. "What do you think?"

Joe played along. "I'm seeing an Italian person, five foot eight inches tall, name is Vito."

"OMG Joe. Vito Carlese. Are you messing with me?"

"No. That's the dream I had. What made you think of him?"

"He was acquitted of murder in 2011, but most figured he did it. Did you background him?"

"No, I was going to wait for your report."

"Warrant for his computer?"

"Go ahead. You did the work."

"Maybe we should just wait a week to get all the clues." Beth laughs.

"One doesn't want to get too cocky Beth. You never know when these visions will stop."

Joe gets a text message. "Beth, the lab has some DNA info back. Let's go."

"If it's Vito Carlese, I'm going to ask you for lottery picks."

Sure enough, the lab tech gave Joe and Beth the news.

“There was a trace amount of blood mixed in with Abby Palmer. It came back to Vito Carlese, who was in our criminal database from a trial in 2011.” They smiled.

“You don’t seem surprised.”

“We had a feeling. Thanks. Place that in the evidence file and lock it up. Send us the report and copy it to the district attorney’s office.”

“Will do detectives. Good luck.”

“I’ll get the warrant Joe. Judge Robinson is a friend of mine.”

“How good a friend?”

“Joe. He’s married.”

“I didn’t mean to imply.”

“And old enough to be my father; although his son David is a doctor at San Francisco General.”

“All right, now I understand.”

While Beth did research on Vito Carlese and his associates, Joe talked to the San Francisco gang task force. They added names and pictures of connected individuals on the white board. A new connection became apparent. Vito Carlese is related to a councilman on the San Francisco Utilities Commission, Robert Bonomo; it was only a third cousin so no one saw it at first.

“Beth, Robert Bonomo is influential in awarding the contract for the new basketball arena. Abby Palmer was investigating corruption in the arena bidding process. Now Palmer is killed by a cousin of a politician reviewing the contract.”

“Joe, we need to get a warrant to look into Robert Bonomo’s finances.”

“Yes, that may be the key to solving this murder.”

“Back to Judge Robinson.”

“Yes. Meanwhile, we’ll set up surveillance on Bonomo. By tomorrow, we should be able to get his phone records.”

In his dream that night, Joe saw someone pointing a gun at his partner Beth. She was hit in the back. Then an ambulance took her away. He saw Beth on the operating table. Then he woke up. From a temporary panic to a relative calm, Joe called Beth.

“Beth, are you there?”

“Joe, it’s 3:00am. What’s wrong?”

“Are you home?”

“Yes. I was asleep until a minute ago. I had a bad dream.”

“What happened in the dream?”

“Someone shot me.”

“Beth, I just had the same dream. You were taken to the hospital and undergoing surgery.”

“Sorry Joe. In my dream, I died in the street.”

Joe did not respond.

“Joe, are you there?”

“Yes Beth. I just didn’t know how to react. I can’t imagine anything happening to you.”

“Well, it was only a dream. It’s not real.”

“Beth, my dreams have some connection to reality.”

“I think it’s just our unconscious pushing out a fear we both have.”

“Maybe. But you don’t leave my side from now on.”

“That’s sweet Joe. A little 1950s, but sweet.”

“I was born in the 80s, just like you Beth. My father was 1950s.”

Beth smiled. “I still think it’s cute.”

The next day, Beth and Joe served a search warrant on Robert Bonomo’s home, to search his computer. They had already received his phone records.

“Mr. Bonomo. My name is Detective Rossi and this is my partner Detective Johansson. We have a warrant to search your home and computer.”

“For what?”

“Conspiracy to murder district attorney Abby Palmer.”

Bonomo started to tense up. “Why would I have anything to do with that? I don’t even know her.”

“I’m sure your lawyer can fill you in.” Joe and Beth searched for any records that might be relevant. The forensic tech packed up Bonomo’s computer. After about an hour, they left. Bonomo was on the phone with his lawyer.

“See you in court.”

As they got back to their car, Joe chided Beth. “Getting a little cocky dear?”

“Sorry Joe. The thought of killing Abby Palmer just gets me so angry. I’d love to put away Bonomo and anyone else involved.”

“Let’s wait for the verdict to celebrate.”

“I can’t wait to go through his computer and records. I’ll find something to connect him to the murder.”

“I know you will Beth.”

“Yes Joe. Most crimes leave tech clues, like fingerprints leading back to the guilty. How did we ever solve crimes before?”

“Fingerprints, DNA, technology. What’s next?”

“I don’t know Joe. Maybe we can put a chip in every criminal to track their locations, or base it on their retina?”

“I think that might be pushing the constitution a bit.”

“I don’t know. Once someone has been convicted, they forfeit some rights. Imagine if we had a database of all criminals based on their retina scan and could access them anywhere in the world.”

“Beth, I think that would be the ultimate invasion of privacy.”

“I would trade some privacy for safety Joe.”

The next day, Beth had found financial files and messages connecting Bonomo with Vito Carlese, in particular a payoff from Bonomo to Carlese.

Another case solved for the dream detectives.

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Joe went to bed that night worried about the dream where Beth was shot. Although it seemed to be a false signal, he had no control over the dreams or their consequences. It wasn’t long before he was shaken out of his bed, literally. It’s San Francisco, and a 5.2 magnitude earthquake flipped Joe onto his bedroom floor. Joe immediately called Beth.

“Are you all right Beth?”

Beth answered, half asleep. “Joe, yes. I guess so. What time is it?”

“Half past five. Why?”

“Are you reading the time from your CPAP machine?”

“Yes, why?”

“Joe, it’s only 4:00am. Your machine clock is 90 minutes fast. There was no earthquake. But I think there might be one at 5:30.”

“What do you mean Beth?”

“Didn’t you say your CPAP is connected to the Internet?”

“Yes.”

“Joe, I think you’ve been hacked.”

“OMG! That means...”

“Yes, it means that someone is controlling your dreams.”

“What about the earthquake?”

“I’ll tell you at 5:30. I’m more concerned that we both had a dream about me being shot.”

Neither Joe nor Beth could get back to sleep, so they got ready for work and met in the diner between their homes. 5:30am came and went. No earthquake.

“Beth, why do you think we both had the same dream..about you being shot? And why did you die in your dream, but not in mine?”

Beth held Joe’s hand. “If someone really planted that dream through your CPAP machine, I’m glad you didn’t see me die. But how did I sense it? Are we experiencing something metaphysical? Am I that close to you?”

“Beth, do you plug your iPhone next to your bed while sleeping?”

“Yes, why?”

“If someone could hack my CPAP machine, couldn’t they have sent the bad dream to you through your phone?”

“Joe, that’s pretty out there, even for 2018.”

“But not impossible. Tonight, leave your phone at the precinct and see if your dream matches mine tomorrow.”

On her way home that night, a robber hit Beth over the head and took her phone. Beth managed to get home and went to sleep early.

Joe woke up again at 4:00am, this time with the same dream that Beth was shot, only this time being killed. He quickly called Beth.

“Hello.” Joe heard a gunshot.

“Beth, Beth, answer me.”

The robber was found dead in an alley the next day.