

Emeralds

June 16, 4:35 am. A young woman was found floating in the waters of the famous Rosabelle Lake. Campers, tourists, and dog walkers alike were discouraged from early morning walks around the lake until the investigation has been completed. Despite the heavy traffic that came with local news vans and independent journalists' cars, a black Ford Crown Victoria had caught up, following them to the crime scene. The driver of said vehicle was taking mental notes as he neared the killing ground; the Detective.

The trail of blood began five years prior to the latest murder, starting with a beautiful French jazz singer, Ms. Chamberlain. Men loved her, their wives hated her, and the paparazzi couldn't get enough of her. However, there was only one man that felt all three emotions for Ms. Chamberlain; her ex-manager, Mr. Jones. The rumors about the two being lovers were confirmed once Chamberlain was murdered, thrown off her balcony after being caught having relations with one of the jazz musicians.

Since then, Mr. Jones had vanished from the public eye completely. Even then, he never was capable of keeping her out of his mind. Blonde hair, emerald green eyes, smooth pale ivory skin, and glossy pink lips had become the typical description of the next 7 women found dead at several locations, each location more significant than the other. The last corpse was found on the beach where paparazzi had caught Jones and Chamberlain kissing. Just when the department was getting close to capturing Mr. Jones, the murderer decided to go on hiatus without a trace, leaving civilians in relief.

Everyone told the detective that keeping the case open was pointless, the chief, the lieutenant, even his own partner. The detective fought for the case to remain open, gathering as much evidence as he could, researching every bit of information about Jones and Chamberlain. The detective was already very close to locating Mr. Jones when the hiatus came to an end.

The detective's dedication comes from a single motive: his wife.

Her dark brown curls and hazel eyes had always captivated him since they met. He loved to kiss her rosy cheeks and especially her rouge lips. His lips were always on her neck as well, addicted to the scent of her Rosa Dolce brand perfume on her smooth olive skin.

It was ironic that they first met at Chamberlain's crime scene. The young Italian woman was the main witness after all, but she was a quiet woman. Jones made her that way, bruising her neck, threatening her into silence. It was the detective that managed to get her to speak, with the promise of protection.

He kept his promise for five years, and as time passed, the two bonded, finding themselves in a passionate romance. Marriage followed, and so did their infant daughter, born in the middle of May. Despite living happily ever after, his poor wife would sob in her sleep during nightmares of Jones returning for revenge. She'd scream during her worst nights.

The screams of his wife urged him to find Jones, and it echoed as he parked his car a few feet away from the crime scene. He politely waved off curious journalists to get through the yellow tape, only to find his partner walking away from the corpse. The detective followed behind,

"Here you are, the very first time you're early to a crime, and you leave me hanging? What gives?" The detective humored his partner, only to be met with a look of disbelief.

It caught him off guard, only to continue, "what is it? The wife put you in the doghouse again?"

"Just go back home," his partner snapped, "Go home to your family. Let someone else take this case."

The detective couldn't get another word out as his partner stormed back into his car. An eerie feeling shivered through his body, his feet forcing him to move towards the woman's remains, discovering why his partner acted so unusual.

She was nothing like the other victims, her dark curls sprawled on the ground, hazel brown eyes rolled up, a rosy blush lay on her olive cheeks, blood dripped from her neck from her deep wound, and a note was stuffed between her rouge lips.

He gloved his hand before taking the note that reads,

"I know where your wife is... do you?"

His fingers crumbled the note in his hands. He disregards every theory about the possibility that this could be any other killer than Jones. This was no random kill; this was a threat.

"Detective, you can't leave now- detective!"

The detective's coworker's voice blurred as the sound of his heartbeat rang in his ears, racing to his car as he shoved past news reporters, slamming the door once he got in. He nearly hit one of the interns on his way back on the highway, speeding past several cars.

His hands shook on the wheel as he kept his eyes focused on the road. He can't help but think about what Jones must be planning to do to his wife. His heart pounded harder and harder the longer he took on the road, sweat rolled down from the detective's temple to his cheek, and his fingers impatiently tapped on the wheel at every stop.

He took a deep breath when his home was in his eyesight, leaving his car in the driveway as he reached the door, dropping his keys right in front of the door. He snatched them up to shove a key into the lock, discovering that it was the key that belonged to the backyard's storage. He looked through his keys and his sweaty hands betrayed him, dropping them on his feet. He cursed under his breath, grabbing them and shoving another key into the lock, successfully opening the door.

He tried to call for his wife, but a lump in his throat prevented him from doing so. He couldn't speak when he wanted to scream. His house just felt so dark, silent, he wanted to turn it upside down to find his family.

He marched up the stairs, heading for the master bedroom to find that the door was open. She usually kept it closed.

He peeked in to find that the sheets on the bed were pulled back. She'd never leave a bed unmade.

Upon further inspection, he finds that the window was open. She'd never leave the window open.

His head felt like it was spinning and spinning until he heard soft cries coming from the baby monitor that settled on his wife's nightstand. His daughter.

He followed the sounds of crying, stopping in front of the nursery's door. His hand wrapped around the doorknob, but he remained frozen. He pleaded to his eyes to not deceive him, slowly opening the creaking door, to find a figure holding his daughter.

It was humming to her, and as his ears cleared, the humming turned into an Italian song. His vision cleared to find his wife, rocking their baby gently, soothing her with her voice. She was safe.

"Beloved?" His wife ended the song, "You're home so late, I was so worried... Why wouldn't you answer your calls?"

The detective was surprised with himself as he patted his pants, finding his cellphone. He looked through it to find that it was dead.

"I..." the lump stopped him again. "I..."

"What's wrong..? You look so pale, dear... Was it the case?"

The detective looked up to find his wife's eyes as her free hand caressed his cheek. She was smiling at him, with her cute dimples forming in her cheeks. She looked so peaceful at this moment, with the baby still in her arms.

"... I'll tell you tomorrow, darling, just come to bed." was all the detective could come up with. He stopped her from putting the baby back in her crib, "Maybe the baby could sleep in our room tonight, your mother gifted us a bassinet after all."

"Oh? Alright, dear, if you insist.."

The three of them retreated into the master bedroom, giving the detective the chance to dress up for bed as his wife tucked the baby into the bassinet, kissing her forehead before going into bed. The detective joined his wife in bed, holding her close as she fell asleep.

He searched his pillow to find his pistol. No matter what it takes, he is going to find Mr. Jones. He will protect his family with every last bullet.