

Le Patriarche

The first world - In the quest of a God

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Préface

Initially, the story of Thomas should only have been a short story, a dream that you just put on paper.

Thomas
August - September, 2003

A midsummer night

Thomas was coming home, exhausted as he always is after any workday, but more than usual. Something was worrying him. He opened the door without even taking his keys out, he knew it wasn't locked. He put his jacket on the sofa in the living-room, undid his shoulder strap and laid his gun down on the kitchen counter. He rested on it for a while, giving himself a breather. In a few minutes, he knew, his mother that probably saw him entering his house -she lived next door- would ring at the door.

He headed for the bedroom. He found her there, lying on the floor, with her arm leaning still on the bed. He bent near her, observed her slit throat, her so white face, the pool of blood around her head. He huddled on her and started to cry. He took her in his arms to feel her warmth, but she was dead for hours.

He got up and called 911... A few seconds later, the doorbell rang, he opened the door.

- Good evening mum, come in, something horrible happened.

Christine, Thomas' mother, had a burst of panic when she saw her son's shirt, blood-covered.

- Jesus Christ! Thomas, you're covered with blood, are you hurt? Let's call...

- It's not mine, mum, it's Seth's. I called 911, they'll be here any minute now.

- Oh, my god! Is it serious? Can I see her?

Thomas held his mother in his arms to calm her down.

- You'd rather not, mum. She's dead, her carotide has been cut.

His mother shut her eyes with disgust and snuggle up in her son's arms.

- Jesus, Jesus! Why? She was so nice, so pretty! My god! Poor Seth... She was so nice...

Thomas held his mother in his arms, speechless, holding his tears back.

- But Tom, who did that? Can't I see her?

She put her hand before her mouth as she would like to prevent her to throw up. They stayed like that for five minutes, Thomas trying to calm his mother down.

- I don't know mum, I don't know who did it...

His mother step back, wiping her tears away, and she looked in his eyes and caught his arms.

- Tom, you have to find, you have to.

Thomas answered without much conviction.

- Yes, mum. I'll find out, that's my job. Come back home now, don't stay here, the police are coming.

Thomas took his mother back, she staggered on a few steps, and he headed towards the unmarked police car parked next to his own. Three guys came out of it, one of them was wearing a police uniform. They waved to Thomas.

- Thomas, it's ugly as they say. The ambulance shouldn't be long now, even though you told us it was too late. Until then, we'll inspect your house. I'd like you to meet Philip, he's a local cop, but you may already know him. He lives by a few blocks, so we took him up. Anyway, I think we'll get in charge of the case, it's not everyday that the "SRPJ" arrive first on a crime scene!

The two men greeted each other, Thomas already had business with him in the past. The other policemen, Stéphane et Jean-Luc, in plain clothes, were some of Thomas' colleagues.

- The locals will be here soon. They'll lock all that up, but still we can inspect. Let's go. You know you'll be, but as we spent the whole day

together, there shouldn't be any problem. Anyhow, you'd rather not come in the house with us, what d'you think?

Thomas cut him up.

- You're right, follow me. Let me just show you the way.

They entered the house with him.

- I stayed in this room for a moment before walking in the bedroom, I might have moved or touched things, I don't know if I can list them, though it will come back to me if any fingerprints show up.

- At what time did we drop you off? Wasn't it around seven?

- I must have came in around ten past seven, more or less. I stayed in this room for a while, you know, just to lay my stuff down and rest a bit.

- Did you notice anything suspicious?

- No, nothing. Then, I entered the bedroom.

Thomas showed them the way, while he stayed in the main room. They looked at the body still lying on the floor, in turns.

- I found her there, like that. I couldn't help holding her in my arms, even though I knew I had better not touched her at all.

Stéphane put his hand on Thomas' shoulder.

- I understand, Thomas. One can't blame you for that but in this case, you'll have to give me your shirt. You know, to check out the blood stains...

- No problem. Can you get me another one in the bedroom closet, please?

- Ok...

Stéphane came back a few seconds later with a new shirt and put aside the one Thomas wore.

- When did you call us?

- Right away, around seven and a half.

They heard sirens and car noises in the background. Thomas put the clean shirt on.

- Seb, go and see if it's the ambulance. Only allow a doctor to pass through, maybe there's still hope. Otherwise, we won't move anything for the fingerprint process and all.

- OK, I'm on it.

The youngest of the men obeyed.

- Do you have any idea of who could have done this?

Thomas waited a few seconds.

- No...

Jean-Luc came back, followed by the forensic expert.

- Good evening, I'm Doctor Paul Égrenne, where's the victim?

- Over there, follow me. Here you are, try to touch the least things possible. I'm afraid it may be too late to do anything.

Thomas went closer, he bit his lips. The doctor went round the bed and kneel down near the victim. He noted the injury at the neck, took the pulse at the wrist just in case, looked to the pupil with a small light.

- It has been at least two or three hours she died. There is nothing left to do.

The doctor stood up looking the body for a few moments, he sighed, then looked sadly at the policemen. Thomas seemed surprised. He moved back a little, walked into the main room, he put his hands in his hair and rub his nape, raising his head. He sighed, as he would like to support this shock, and then turned silently to Stéphane while he agreed to the doctor's conclusion.

- Unfortunately that was what I feared, that's our turn now, then.

Some other sirens sounded.

- Here is the police, it is time! So, I gonna take your statement about the murder, I guess there is not doubt about it.

- Indeed, that's not a common suicide method, and given the body position, yes, there is no doubt.

- Alright, let's go out, Jean-Luc you can start taking pictures waiting for the inspector to come.

An other car arrived while the doctor, the policeman and Thomas went out. A few minutes later five more policemen were busy marking the restricted area all around the house and the yard.

Thomas observed silently, he gave a glance at his mother's house. She was watching the scene through the window, holding the curtain with her hands. Thomas felt like to cry. He looked away when Stéphane, the policeman who was in charge of the case until then, talked to him.

- We will have to question her.

- Yes, I know.

- Did she see something?

- No... Well I do not think so.

Thomas seemed to hesitate for a moment, and finally headed toward his mother's house. His colleague asked him what he wanted to do :

- Where are you going ?
- I am going to interrogate my mother, it must be done, anyway.
- Yes, but you'd better not, as long as you are not cleared, it will be invalid, I'd rather do it.

Thomas went back, embarrassed.

- Yes, OK... You must be right.

One more siren was heard.

- Do you warn the public prosecutor.
- Yes, he told me he is coming.
- Hey, here's the chief.

A car, a big black car, advanced slowly into the yard, already overstuffed. The driver did not even care about parking correctly. A fifty-year old man got out of the car, and, when he saw Thomas and his colleague, leaded to them with hurry.

- Let's throw all these cars away ! We can't move ! The public prosecutor is coming, he needs room to park !

He looked around, then took a handkerchief and wipe his sweat forehead. He turned again to Thomas and Stéphane.

- Are you the only ones ?

Stéphane answered before Thomas.

- Seb, well, Jean-Luc, is inside, I called Serge and Jacques, they'll be here in twenty minutes from now.

- So, what happened ? I've been told that was a murder, is this it ?

- We just dropped Thomas off, I was with Jean-Luc, that's why we were here in less than five minutes. What's most plausible is that Seth caught a thief in the act, and it has badly turned out.

The superintendent did not wait anymore information and commanded them both :

- Well, make the cars leave and buckle the street.
- OK.

Stéphane complied.

- Thomas, I'm not gonna lie to you, you'll be suspected.
- Yes, I know sir.
- OK, aside from that, what do we have ?

Thomas explained to the superintended how he found the body, and the doctor's conclusion. Meanwhile, Thomas' mother came closer. When

he noticed her, Thomas introduced her to the superintended. His mother's house was only thirty meters away from his own. Taking advantage of an house available on his parents' ground, an old outhouse, formerly the servants' one, then fall into abeyance, and finally restored and rented by Thomas' parents, until he settled in. He never had the courage to leave, although he had always craved for, and even more for the last three years after this father's death, which made his mother more and more present.

- Good evening, Madam, sorry for the inconvenience, but you are likely to be bothered for the next few days.

Thomas' mother approached and grab his son's arm, as she would like to protect herself.

- Yes, yes, but don't worry, this is not important beside this tragedy.

Another car entered the courtyard. The superintendent interrupted Thomas' mother when he saw him.

- Ah ! The prosecutor ! I'm going.

The superintendent leaded rapidly toward the new car which did its best to park between the ambulance and an other car, avoiding the car of the superintendent parked just in the very middle of the place. Meanwhile Thomas' mother press her son's arm and question him :

- They have found something ? God, do they know who is the murderer ?

A sudden shiver ran through all Thomas' body, he answered, irritated

- Mum, mun, please, calm down. A long time will be needed to find the murderer, if we find him, you know, that is not so easy !

- But ! With all their electronic devices, the fingerprints... Was she raped ?

- No ! Well I ain't know... Autopsy will say that.

Thomas had just rejected the idea as if just imagining it made him feel uncomfortable. He staid quiet.

- Oh God, this is dreadful... Do you want to come in the house ?

He yearned when he saw the policemen busy setting up the wrappers, trampling without care on his mother's flower and vegetable plants. For a short moment he felt like sending all of them packing, to shout to them because of their lack of attention, then he retracted, this had no importance, Seth was dead. He looked at his mother, she was waiting for an answer, tiring him, already, toward her house. He released his arm :

- No, I prefer not to, I will be suspected, too.

Her mother walk back, surprised :

- Suspected! But you are from the police!

- Yes mum, but this is the process, it's normal, we cannot eliminated any possibility.

His mother looked at the policemen, indignant.

- My Goodness!

Thomas turn toward her :

- They will question you, too, you will have to answer theirs questions. However you had your lunch with your friend Rosie today, right? At what time did you come back?

His mother stopped daydreaming, she just noticed too that the policemen were carelessly walking on her flower plants. But she also thought that, after all, this was meaningless. She looked at Thomas :

- Yes, I was at Rosie's place, I came back around 6pm, not a long time before you arrived, actually. I did not even ring at your door, you usually come back later, and you said me that Seth was in holidays; I do not thought she would be there. Why was it, anyway?

Thomas didn't want to talk about that.

- She came back yesterday evening, sooner than expected.

- Do you think she had any trouble during her holidays? And why didn't you go together? Where was she?

Thomas knew the discussion would irremediably lead to this polemic topic between her mother and him :

- I don't know. In the Alps, If I remember correctly.

- Honestly! Not even knowing where his girlfriend is going! My God, if by chance you were gone with her, but why?... It was the same in November, when she had been alone to the Ré island, what a...

Thomas interrupted his mother, irritated.

- Mum, we are not going to talk about that again, so be it, she wanted to be alone, what could I do about that? Well, whatever, you did not see anything, is that right?

His mother regretted to have irritated him, she well knew that he didn't like to talk about that, but she just did not understand him. She did not understand young people any more, she was thinking :

- No... Now that we need them this is bad luck the Martins were in vacations, usually she is always spying through the window, it would have

been useful this time.

Thomas was going to ask her to go back to her house, but he finally retracted and daydreamed to something else when he saw the hearse arriving. His mother was still talking to him :

- The Piranoccis neither, by the way, both of them are working, but, well, just in case, it costs nothing asking them.

Thomas stepped back into the conversation, without really taking care of it, it has been so much time he has been having false conversations with his mother.

- And the Simons?

- Simons? Noooo... Except if the murderer came from the backyard, but with the hedge the Simons can't see anything, honestly they could cut it a bit more often... No if somebody has see something, it must be Miss Marin or Miss Louis, they always walked in the neighbourhood. But never before 6 or 7pm this days, likely too late, anyway, the weather is far too hot sooner in the day. Well, you know, they were likely just sleeping both of them when the crime happened.

Thomas placed his hand on his mother's shoulder :

- Well, I gonna see what is happening, go back, you warn me if anybody talk to you about something suspect; but be careful not to talk about that too much, even if you hear some new things, this just creates rumors and suddenly everybody knows who is the murderer and has seen everything.

- Yes, OK, but will you sleep now that you house is blocked? You do not want to come in at home?

- No, it's OK, well, I'll see, I'll came back late, anyway. Well, I must go. See you Mum.

Thomas went to Stéphane who was taking notes with Jean-Luc. He gave them some clue about the neighbours, from his mother speech. He talked about Miss Martin and Miss Louis. Jean-Luc did not lost any time and he went to question the neighbours, even if the odds that they could have seen anything were quite low. Thomas, who was a suspect, should go in a police custody. They decided to met Jean-Luc at the police station at 9 pm, to write the Thomas' statement and gather all their clues.

The prosecutor finally came to greet Thomas. He first offered hist condolence to Thomas, but could not help not asking him some questions.

- Do you know if she had any relatives, friends, that we can warn?

Thomas was ill-at-ease in front of this man much older than him, much more respected than him.

- No, she was an orphan, and from what she told me, her nurse passed over.

The prosecutor seemed suprised :

- But, she has no friends, no family ?

- She was very discret about her life, I believe that she had an aunt on the Ré Island, some acquaintances in the Alps, in Nancy, maybe Grenoble, but I can't give you any names.

- Did she work ? For how long have you been knowing her ?

- No, she didn't work. We were living together for nearly 4 years.

- And she did not introduce you to any friends in four years ?

- Well, no, she has always been very reserved.

Thomas showed some nervousness signs, the prosecutor felt them.

- I see, well, I do not disturb you more, whatever the investigation will take care of all that. The security branch should call me when they find something.

The prosecutor greeted Thomas and left him to join the superintendent. Thomas left ten minutes later with Stéphane to go to the Versailles Police Station, his working place.

Jean-Luc confirmed that the neighbours went home late and didn't see anything, of course, as well as Miss Marin and Miss Louis, who did not go out before 7 pm with such a heat. Thomas' deposition was fast, as he was, for the whole day, from 9 am to 7 pm, with Stéphane, and that, if the forensic expert expectations were correct, would exonerate him completely. However Thomas stayed more than two hours in police custody, but this was mainly an opportunity for the three policemen to check the few elements they knew about the Seth timetable. She had gone back to Paris the eve after two weeks of vacations in the Alps, Thomas did not know where precisely, and he saw her for the last time in the morning, she was sleeping when he left his home. She seemed very tired lastly. He repeated what he said to the prosecutor, that he didn't know any Seth's relatives or friends ; the ones who know her would discover her murder in the next day newspapers.

Thomas, Stéphane and Jean-Luc did not wait for the last prosecutor's call nor the superintendent's one, they preferred to leave and try to come

early to the office the next morning. Thomas could not sleep at his home, so Stéphane offered him to stay at his apartment, Thomas will go to his mother's house the next days, but for the short night left, the flat of Stéphane inside Versailles would be more convenient. Thomas did not sleep this night, or not more than a few tens of minutes. He could not move on the small sofa, and he was sleeping on his belly usually. Moreover his burn was hurting him too much. What would he do ? Would he be doing the investigation ? Would he be authorized to do it ? Maybe that would be better if he could do it, after all... He cried, for a long time, so much that his eyes were burning him on the morning, when this blasted Stéphane's alarm clock finally decided to ring.

He had slept in the lounge, he waited that Stéphane arrived to get up. Just one coffee, two coffees, he was not hungry. Stéphane borrowed him some underwear and a shirt. He dressed up in the bathroom, not that he did not feel comfortable being nude in front of Stéphane, but he must cure his burn, and hide it

Ten minutes were enough for Stéphane to go to the Police Station. Stéphane rarely got up before 7.30am, but usually he was at the office at 8am. 8am this was too early for Thomas, but he wondered if it would have more early or late, or just the echoes of an endless life...

The superintendent arrived early as well.

- I suppose you want to take care of the investigation ?

Thomas hesitated for a moment. He looked nowhere for a few seconds, surprised that the superintendent ask him so directly, then he looked his chief comfortably seated behind his perfectly cleaned and ordered desk.

- Yes. Yes... This is better like that.

- If you can find rapidly an assassin and put him in jail, I would be graceful.

- Yes, boss, of course, I will do my best.

"An assassin", as if any one would fit, as if the only important thing would be what people believe, and that no one really care about the truth... Thomas stood up and leaved the office without any salute to his boss. He went to the coffee machine, but ten in a row would not be enough to help Thomas having any clue this morning. He was sharing his office with Stéphane and Éric. Éric was on holidays.

- You could bring me one !

Stéphane spoke to Thomas joking, Thomas did not even notice it and answered without conviction :

- Sorry, I am a bit preoccupied
- I understand. Are you in charge of the investigation ?
- Yes.
- Do you really thing this is a good idea ?
- I have no clue.
- I'll help you anyway, but if you find it too hard just ask me. You can take some days off maybe, so that I can clear the ground.
- No, thank you, it's ok, but in case I will not hesitate.

Stéphane went to take a coffee, Thomas leaned against his desk, without removing all the stuffs which nearly fall down, sustaining his arm to sip his coffee watching through the window. He was lost, lost. He didn't want to do the investigation, he knew that, but did he have the choice ? He wanted to forget, forget everything. But what on earth was he going to find ?

- Does he give you the data from the security branch ?

He didn't even heard Stéphane coming back. He turned round and put down his coffee, which was far too hot, between the keyboard of his computer, which should have already receive at least twenty coffees, it loved that, repeated Thomas each times, and the pile of papers, cards, scribbled notebooks, which were delimiting the few available square centimeters of his desk. He seated down and look to Stéphane :

- No, does he have them ?

Stéphane walked round his desk, which was to the right of the Thomas's one, and a bit smaller, he had been added afterward, but far more well-ordered.

- If I remember correctly he said to me yesterday that they did not have found anything, but that they should have the complete files this morning.

But they had not. Nothing, nothing at all. The security branch did not find anything. Name, fingerprints, or pictures did not give anything. Seth has no address, no birthday, has never worked anywhere. Seth Imah was not known, was not French, nor European, and, as they would discover two days later, did not exist in any country of Interpol, not with that name, at least. But the searches based on the pictures, which lasted more, would not give anything neither.

Rest

Investigation

Île de Ré

He didn't drive so fast. After all being in the police didn't give him all the rights, and he didn't have any mission order nor written paper to justify this trip. His itinerary was scheduling four hours and forty minutes for the trip, he would arrived in four hours and thirty minutes. Once he crossed the Île de Ré bridge, he wanted to go up to the extremity of the island, but it took him nearly one hour to drive the thirty kilometers up to the Whales light-house, where he arrived soon after 6pm.

He would have imagined this island far smaller than that, he would have thought not more than two or three kilometers. Without any map he spend more than two hours just to eliminate two out of twenty-one suspected persons. Full of resentment he decided to look for an hotel. He had to go into three hotels before he was able to find a free room, in Ars-en-Ré; he took this opportunity to show the Seth faces and ask if somebody had seen her, but all their answers were the same, they had all seen hundreds of people who looked like Seth, but definitively not to the point to be really sure to have seen her more than one year before! However, Thomas knew that no one could forget Seth, and anyone who had seen her would keep her as the perfect figure for Beauty for the rest of his live. But Thomas knew that there were so many seasonal workers in these hotels, how could he figure out who could have seen her, and maybe she even did not stop in any hotels... Sometimes he was wondering if she could not stay days without sleeping, without eating, sometimes he had even wondered if Seth was not a Goddess, Athéna with a human form, as the many times she helped Ulysses...

Saturday nigh in Ars-en-Ré, he had his diner in the hotel own restaurant. It was quite crowded, even if this was the last Sunday of August. He didn't know clearly when the student would go back to school after the summer

holidays. He didn't really care. He didn't want to have any children. He never did, and even less since he had met Seth, and wanted to keep her for himself only. However she never talked about children or weddings. In a way that situation was quite comfortable, even if he had been a little embittered because she never talked about a more official union with him, as she never really attached to him, as she never really wanted just a place to rest and just live peacefully her secret life. Her secret life... What had she done during this four years... And him? What did he do, blinded by his love for her, what did he just let happened, without even noticing it?...

One more bad night, will she follow him anywhere? He slept from 11pm to 1am, then turn and turn again, up to curl himself up in a foetal position where he pressed his leg with all his strength against his burn to expel all the evil... He cried, again, as nearly every nights, and finally fell asleep, exhausted, around 6am. Noise in the neighbour room awakened him and as he didn't close the shutter, he couldn't fall asleep again, nor convince himself to wake up and close them. Sunday, 31st, 2003, 9 :35am. He yearned and finally waked up, took a rapid shower and left without taking any breakfast.

Dreams

Murder

Théodore

Ylraw

Free

Ylraw

Ile de Ré November, 2nd, 2002 - Sydney November, 17th,
2002

Holidays

The Universe Stone

Visit

David

Margareth

Viper

Deborah

Balad

Night

Departure

Mexico

Sydney

Thomas
September, 13th, 2003 - September, 15th, 2003

Gap

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