

Somebody Knows

by Juliana Byers

When I dumped her body in the woods, just past the creek in the long grass by the factory, I saw something out of the corner of my eye. It was just a flash, gone the instant I turned around. It could have been a kangaroo, or maybe a bird, but I couldn't shake the feeling that somebody else was there that night.

Somebody knows.

The trouble started when I met her at the bar near work. She was as gorgeous as they come and she knew it too: tight crop, denim booty shorts, big hoops in her ears... Now, I'm no paedophile, but I'd rather fuck a tight young thing than some leftover slag I went to school with.

Anyway, she was drinking, so she must have been eighteen. At least.

She was making eyes and, really, what was a man to do? I brought her a couple more drinks and then suggested we head on home and she was game. She was texting the whole drive though — I like a good looking girl, but texting your slut pack when a man is trying to talk to you is just rude. We got there and she wanted to use the bathroom (fucking kids speak like Americans these days!) and I heard her texting in there too.

Then she came out and said she wanted to go home.

I'm a nice guy, but what did she think we were there for?!

She tried to apologise, said that she got carried away at the bar and didn't really want to do anything. I told her I wasn't driving her back and she said that was fine, she'd just get an Uber. The bitch actually had the audacity to try and walk out my door!

I'm not old-fashioned, but I have certain expectations when I bring a pretty girl home, especially one dressed like they walked off the set of a Pussycat Dolls video. I'm not into anything controversial — this whole fifty shades craze is the sickest shit I've ever seen! — but a woman can't just string a man along like that and expect to get away with it.

But I swear to *God* I didn't mean for it to happen the way it did!

She was leaving and I told her that if we could fuck I'd drive her back to the bar. She told me no, she didn't want to fuck. I asked her why she was dressed like a whore then and she just *ignored me!* So I grabbed her.

I just meant to teach her a bit of a lesson, slap some sense into her and give her an education on how the world worked. A bit of respect was all I was asking for. I didn't bring her home so she could send a text and then leave!

I gave her a good shove, just to get her back in the house so I could explain a few things, but she lost her balance. She went down hard. There was an old shelf just inside the door, a big, heavy, wooden thing with sharp corners. I'd been meaning to move it for weeks. It was supposed to go in the study, but I didn't want to lift it myself and my mates were all too cheap to give me a hand.

She hit the corner of that thing like a ton of bricks and went straight to the floor. She didn't make a sound. I reckon it took maybe ten seconds for the whole thing to play out. Then, suddenly, there's blood all over my carpet! She's bleeding like nothing I've ever seen before and what am I supposed to do? I'm no doctor! I thought about calling the ambos, but they might have called the police. Cops these days are really big on feminism and might have thought this was some 'Me Too' shit.

I wasn't going to rape her or anything, but if a girl is dressed like that and goes home with a man, what does she expect? Trouble is people don't understand that nowadays. A bloke can get thrown in the slammer for *looking* at a pretty girl if she doesn't like it! I mean, would *you* have called the cops?

Then I realised she was dead. I thought she'd just knocked herself out, but then I saw she wasn't breathing. That was when the shit really hit the fan! Nobody was going to believe it was an accident, that I hadn't meant to hurt her, that she'd still be alive if she'd known how to behave! There'd be some half-ass investigation, and then a bleeding-heart liberal judge would tell me about how I'd destroyed a poor girl's life. Then they'd go ahead and wreck mine like it meant nothing!

That's why I took her body to the creek. The factory guys had been dumping their crap into it for years and it stank worse than a shit-house out there. Nobody went there, not ever. I only knew about it because me and the boys used to sneak out there to smoke when we were young and stupid. It was good cover; no one could smell our joints over the stink. I figured the same rule applied here; nobody would be able to smell her rotting corpse.

But what if it's not enough.

Somebody knows.

The cops keep coming around here! Somebody reported her missing and there's been a nice photo of her on the news in a graduation cap. I guess whoever made the report doesn't want people to know what she was really like. Because I was stupid enough to leave the bar with her, the cops think *I* might have done something to her! They can't find her phone — it's with her down by the creek — but they got the phone company to give them something. They showed me the texts she was sending in my car.

I'm scared, I don't wanna to do this.

OMG! Freaking out!

Can u pick me up? 37 March Road, big Victorian house. I'm real scared.

Her friend was replying too.

U don't have 2 do anything, babes.

It's gonna b ok. Stay calm n get out of there.

2 drunk. Call an Uber n txt me when ur safe. ♥ u.

I told the cops that she did get a bit freaked out, but we had a few drinks together and then she wanted to the dirty. So we fucked and then she left. That was how it was supposed to happen. The stupid bitch would still be alive if she hadn't gone frigid on me! I told them she got an Uber back to the club and I hadn't seen her since she left. The last bit's true, after all. It's a good story, but the fucking dogs just won't let up.

Why was she so afraid of you? Did you hurt her? Did you have consent? The questions never stop. How long was she in the house? What did you do to her? Did you hear the Uber pull up? Did you hear anything else?

I don't know. I didn't hurt her. Of course I had consent! A couple of hours, maybe. Didn't do nothing, just a regular old fuck. Didn't hear the Uber and didn't hear anything else.

They tell me they'll be in touch if they have more questions.

Her parents get on the news sometimes. Apparently her name was Rachael, she was twenty-three and she'd done a double degree in law and journalism. Wanted to be a court reporter or some shit. Really, her parents should be ashamed of themselves for raising a girl like that! But they probably don't know about what she liked to wear, or how she liked to drink. I bet she didn't do all that stuff in front of her parents. She wouldn't want them to know.

I don't want anyone to know about me!

The cops are on the news a lot too. They want anyone who has information to come forward. They say it doesn't matter how insignificant it might seem, it could be the last piece of the puzzle. They say they've spoken to 'a person of interest' — probably me — and can't comment further, but are *determined* to find her and bring her home safely.

I don't get it, to be honest. Why does everyone care so much? Aside from being the most fuckable girl in the bar that night there was nothing special about her. I bet none of these people blubbering all over the news cared about her this much when she was alive! That's usually how it goes, right? Everyone hates you until you're dead.

But they don't know she's dead. They've probably guessed by now, but families are stupid as shit! On the crime shows they always go on about hoping and believing and praying. Honestly! The cops must know, they just don't want to say it on TV. Some of her friends are holding a candlelight vigil in a couple of weeks, as if standing in a circle like a gaggle of witches is going to bring her back. I hope they all catch fire!

This is really messing with my head.

Somebody knows.

They found her. Almost lost my lunch when I saw it on the news.

Someone made an anonymous tip and the cops took a fucking cadaver dog down to the creek. Apparently, the stupid thing found her in about two minutes flat. I didn't think about that. I wonder what else it found out there? A reporter on the TV asked one of the cops if she was killed by the creek. He said that was guilty party knowledge he wasn't at liberty to disclose.

Guilty party knowledge. I looked it up on a library computer. It means something that 'the perpetrator' knows. It helps cops weed out psychos giving false confessions and pick up on any lies. I also had a look to see how long DNA hangs around on a corpse. I didn't get to fuck her, but we were getting heavy at the club before she turned into a prude. I take my car to the carwash a couple of suburbs over and pay someone a fucking fortune to have the carpet pulled up. I had a rug over where she was bleeding, but I don't want the cops finding anything else.

But they won't get my DNA. Unless the cops already have your DNA, they can't match anything they find. I've never been in trouble before, so the cops don't have DNA from me. I'm also not one of those sappy shits who sends their spit in a bottle to the government to track down my long-lost third cousin or something. They don't have a speck of me anywhere.

I could have pissed all over her and they'd never know who did it. I should have. She deserved it.

Even better, according to some stuff I read at the library, bleach cleans that shit right out of everything! I took a couple of days after the carpets were done and bleached the hell out of the house. I had to stay in a hotel because the stink was so bad, but it was worth it. The cops can show up any time, there's nothing here.

Somebody knows.

It doesn't matter anymore.

Everything's gone!

The cops turned up eventually. I knew they would. This time they had a warrant and they took things: the computer, my phone. Stupid pricks. That's why I went to the library! They made me hang around out of the way while they were tearing the place apart and I had to let them into my car too. Nothing there. You're too late, dumbasses!

But they can't prove it was me! Although that doesn't stop them asking all sorts of stupid questions. Why'd you pull your carpet up? Did you go to the car wash recently? You said you had sex with her, but we didn't find any seamen in her underwear.

I've been saving to do the carpet for ages, I get my car washed once a week and she had a shower before she left. I didn't tell you that the first time because I didn't think it was important.

It's not important! It's one less whore to string a man along and then blue ball him! Why is everyone making a fuss about it?

I tell them I want my stuff back. They say they'll return it when the investigation is finished.

Two days later, they're back.

"We've been through your phone records."

Pigs.

"You were the last person to see her alive."

"Nah, she got in an Uber."

"You saw her get into an Uber?"

“I saw her call them and then she left.”

“We’ve been through her phone records.”

Of course they have.

“She never called an Uber that night.”

Fuck.

“She never called anyone after she got home with you.”

“We got busy pretty fast —”

“Someone saw you down by the factory that night. Care to explain yourself?”

Oh God.

Somebody knows.

END

Winner (Adult Category)

Melton Library Short Story Competition 2023

Judge’s Feedback: “*Somebody Knows* is a wonderfully discomfoting story with a strong voice. It is a great example of how a crime story can be just as compelling when its a ‘why done it’ instead of a ‘whodunit.’ From the opening line, we know the protagonist has killed someone. We’re in his head, seeing the world through his eyes. It’s not a comfortable place to be, but it’s all the more compelling for it. The writing stays true to character the whole way through as the narrator absolves himself of responsibility for his actions. More importantly, it avoids voyeurism by bringing the victim into sharp focus. We see her experiences through his biassed recounting, from the politeness she uses to deflect his anger, to urgent texts she sends to update friends about her situation. And, while he remains nameless, we learn that her name was Rachael and get glimpses of a fully realised person with friends and family and dreams of a future. This is a story that left me quietly uncomfortable at the end of it and very appreciative of the work that went into crafting it. Congratulations on a fine piece of writing.”

- *Emma Viskic*