

Title: We Held Each Other

Soundtrack link: <https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLCGZn542hhIRpmhVuwECv2zIWtDtqeg0W>

Copy:

“Subject is a six-foot male. Brown, short hair. Clean-shaven face. Wearing all white shirt and trousers. Deep lacerations on the neck and bruising around the face and upper chest pertain to strangulation but further post-mortem examinations still pending.”

I clicked off the tape. It had been an uncharacteristically bleak afternoon – the type where the weather is somewhat unsettled, as if it hadn’t made peace with the sun or rain so hung dangerously on the cusp of both- when that case file labelled as “Extremely Confidential” was placed upon my desk. One turn of the page had turned my whole life upside down.

I rubbed my temples in an attempt to soothe the throbbing headache I had acquired. My hand lingered, wavering, over the “Play” button on the tape recorder. I’d heard it all before – I was the one who’d made the recording, but in all the haste and haze of the moment, the sheer magnitude of the situation never truly sunk in. The weather decided on torrential rain. I pushed the button.

“Officers at the scene of the crime identify him as previously missing-presumed-dead, HRH Prince Arthur. This has since been confirmed from DNA testing by Forensics on site.”

I took a walk in the downpour. Strangulation was fairly rare. It takes a truly harrowed and disturbed individual to watch as the life beneath their harsh compression is drawn out of the victim. Yet the most mentally tormented people are the ones who look the sanest. And whoever had committed this heinous regicide knew exactly what they were doing. Every detail had been deliciously plotted with extreme intricacy. I only realised this as I lay rigid in my bed late on the night we discovered the body. Bleach. It had irritated the skin and removed all colour from his clothes – and with that, any trace of DNA that would hand the identity of the killer over to us on a silver platter.

The saturated ground had soaked my brogues as I came to a standstill. I looked up at the ruins of what once was a great castle. The gnarled stone that had stood tall and proud was reduced to rubble with only a singular tower remaining. It stood precariously amidst its fallen counterparts. At first glance, one could almost feel sympathy for it before ever learning of the horrors that took place within its walls. I took in a breath of damp air. In an odd way, it felt rather fresh, like the calming breaths you take after you’ve stopped crying and someone has assured you everything is okay. But then, at sometime or another, you start crying again. And realised they lied.

In the coming days, interviews were carried out and newspapers were informed. But nothing really happened. Naturally the story spread like wildfire around the country – the missing Prince had been found, but in the worst possible way. The niceties and protocols bored me so I was bound to my office for the majority. And so I paced back and forth. Mentally and physically. How did they get in? Where the hell was the murder weapon? And who would do such a thi-

“Mr Grimm?”

I didn’t look up ; I didn’t care who it was.

"I'm busy."

I wasn't.

"Mr Grimm...someone has handed themselves in."

I ran out of the room.

Only a table sat between myself and the murderer.

"Miss. R. Gothel, Sir."

A colleague had said to me, before leaving the room. We were silent. Then she spoke.

"I did it"

"I know"

"I was nothing to him. And he was everything to me. I really should have known, but I guess I'm naïve in that respect."

I began to write down in my book.

"Okay – a misunderstanding – but why did you kill him? And what does 'R' stand for?"

"He wanted his face on every newspaper ; his name to be the one on everyone's lips. And I was part of his 'plan'. His profile was slowly disappearing within the media as his siblings all married off and had children. But a shock romance with a mere village girl, now that was a story worth printing. But I was not and never will be merely a village girl."

"So?"

"So I lured him in. Convinced him to keep seeing me. Until he couldn't see anyone. Ever again. I gave him his headline. One that would keep him in the limelight forever."

I hadn't been particularly concerned at any point during this interview. Until she spoke again.

"We held each other. Then I did it. I just wound it round and round and round. He still deeply desired me. We stared into each others eyes . And then his started to bulge. I pulled tighter. He started to scrabble at his neck. I pulled tighter. And in that moment I had all the power in the world. I controlled life and death. I drained the life from his eyes and I watched every moment of it. It was so satisfying. Bruises bloomed all over his neck and blood started to trickle down my hand. I pulled tighter. And then his heart stopped. He was still looking at me. He had been born into this world with all the grace and privilege one could have and yet the last thing he every saw was a woman from the lowest of the low and she had more power than he would ever have possessed in his life. And I'm so proud of what I've done."

I was stunned. I didn't ask anymore questions after that. I understood. She stood up. She was about to leave the room and get away with it and I was going to let her. As she stood up, I noticed a long strand of golden hair that had unfolded from the neat bun at the base of her neck. She reached the doorframe.

"What does the 'R' stand for?"

She smiled.

"Rapunzel"