

Under God's Cloud

By Scribblesinink

By the time Krantz had finished typing up his final report, the offices of Boston PD's Bureau of Investigative Services were dark and quiet, the nightshift his only company. Hitting *print*, he waited for the machine to spit out the copies.

He supposed he should be satisfied with the last few days' work. They'd solved Gretchen Albright's brutal killing and one less murderer walked the streets of Boston: though Chad Goodwell had put a bullet in his own brain before confessing to the crime, a witness had seen him outside Gretchen's house around the time of the murder, and they'd found his finger prints all over her kitchen and the tape measure that had been the murder weapon. If it was good enough for the commissioner, it should've been good enough for Victor Krantz. Case closed, end of story.

Except Krantz couldn't shake the feeling the story had only just begun. And in his nearly twenty years on the job, he'd learned to listen to such feelings.

The printer was done, and Krantz reached over to grab the sheets, automatically giving the report a last look over. Two words jumped out from the text: *Paul Callan*.

Krantz scratched his neck, huffing quietly to himself. It all came back to Callan, didn't it? Gretchen had sketched his picture in her diary. Danielle Franklin had talked to him on the phone minutes before she died. And he'd been there to stop Chad Goodwell from bashing Kenneth Webster's head in with an iron.

Under normal circumstances, all that would've been more than enough to set off Krantz's internal alarms. But as if Callan's apparent involvement with the victims wasn't enough, he'd also told the Denver police as much of a cock-and-bull a story as he'd given to Krantz when explaining his whereabouts the night Gretchen died.

Krantz snorted another wry laugh at his own expense as he thought about Callan's tales: speaking walls in Weymouth, blood forming itself into words.... From most people, that would have sounded certifiably insane. Except—Krantz darted an uncomfortable look around the office, almost as if afraid someone might be near enough to read his thoughts—he'd believed Callan was telling the truth when he'd first talked to him. He'd been too sincere to be lying—well, except for the part when he'd denied he recognized the words scrawled in Gretchen's diary. Seeing how the rest of the case played out, Krantz couldn't really hold that against him.

Callan had told the police in Oregon that Goodwell believed he was doing God's work in killing those people, that God's voice had told him what to do. Krantz was certainly inclined to trust Callan's word on that. After all, why else would a college kid travel halfway across the country to murder people he'd never met and who appeared to have nothing in common whatsoever?

Except the victims *did* have something in common: Paul Callan. And having seen words

written in their own blood. How crazy was *that*? It made Callan's alibi of waiting for the walls to speak seem almost normal.

Krantz shuffled the pages into a pile, and searched for a stapler. He'd looked into that organization Callan worked for, of course. Soli—something or other. He cast another glance at the print-outs. Sodalitas Quaerito, that was it. Despite the weird name, they seemed kosher. Even had a former Boston cop working for them; he'd asked around, and she had a solid reputation, despite having an ex- husband in jail.

Yeah, Krantz decided as he stapled the pages together and put them in the Albright case file, he'd be very interested to hear Callan's story. Perhaps he should call him up in the morning, see if Callan would give him the long version after all.

He put the folder onto a small stack of similar files, to be taken away to the archives in the morning and hidden away in labeled boxes, and was about to reach for his coat and switch off the desk lamp when his phone rang.

He glared at it for a moment, before picking up on the second ring. "Krantz."

"Ah, Detective, glad I caught you. A body's just been recovered in Brookline and—."

With one hand clutching the phone to his ear, Krantz flipped his notepad open to a clean page with the other and snatched a pencil from the holder, his mind already on the new case.

Boston might not be Detroit or Washington, but it had its fair share of murders, and all those victims deserved justice as much as Gretchen Albright. Callan would have to wait.

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