

The last thing left to do

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

The deep, smooth voice of her wake-up app pulled her out of her sleep.

She groaned as she opened her eyes. Her head hurt like hell, and she felt nausea rising as she sat up slowly. Too much red wine last night, and a couple of sleeping pills on top of that...

Serves me right, she thought angrily, why did I cram all this poison into my body? But after that awful scene with Marvin she had just wanted to plunge into darkness...

A look at Marvin's side of the bed showed her it was untouched, it seemed he hadn't come up to sleep here all night.

With a pang she thought of the nasty things they both had said just to hurt the other badly.

She couldn't remember exactly what she had said, and what he had said, but she did remember that it had been quite horrible. She had been very drunk and he had been very angry.

And now Marvin was probably downstairs in his workshop working away like mad on one of his sculptures.

She decided to go down and find out what kind of mood he was in.

After grabbing her fluffy pink dressing gown she stumbled downstairs.

He was not working in his usual morning place near the large easterly window. In fact she couldn't see him in the workshop at all.

But it was much too early for his “brunch break” around eleven. Impatiently she looked around. Where was he?

And then she saw him.

Lying on the floor behind the large working table. Very still, his body slightly twisted. His eyes stared into emptiness glassily. There was a lot of dark stuff around his head.

Blood. Dead.

She backed away from the lifeless body in horror.

And suddenly it came rushing back. His snide remarks - *maybe I should have stayed with Nicole since you've become so bloody tedious - ever-nagging drunk, nasty and bitter* – yes, bitter, after all his infidelities and insults which would have made anyone bitter, the bastard! - his sneer full of contempt, her fury exploding -

She had snatched a massive metal sculpture and hit him. He had cried out in pain and grabbed the table.

She had turned and fled.

But she had thought she had just given him a slight wound and a headache, just a bruise for the bastard – and she had staggered upstairs to sink into resentment, more alcohol, bitter sobs, exhaustion - and then the sleeping pills...

And now it turned out that he had died, died from the blow she had dealt him– she had killed him – oh god, she had killed Marvin. And now he was dead.

Angela just stood there, frozen to the spot, her arms hanging down limply. Tears started trickling down her face.

There was a noise at the door. And then Consuela's merry voice: "Good morning, Marvin, great day today, isn't it?"

Consuela stopped: "Oh, Angela! You're down early – nice dressing gown – Angela? What is it?"

The cleaner's scream at the sight of the body was extremely shrill. But even that scream could not pierce the thick wall of glass that seemed to have closed around Angela.

She didn't react when Consuela exclaimed: "We'll have to call the police!"

Then Consuela was swearing in Spanish ending up in a wail: "My phone! I left it in the charger at home!"

She looked at her employer for help but Angela just stood there motionless staring ahead unseeingly.

Then it occurred to Consuela: "The land line in the hall!"

She looked at Angela searchingly: "Are you okay for a moment? Or do you want to come with me?"

Still no reaction from Angela. After a moment Consuela shrugged and hurried away into the hall.

A couple of minutes later Consuela was back in the workshop.

She looked at Angela who still stood in the same spot, motionless. A thought seemed to occur to her, and with fear in her eyes she asked: "Did you - was it you -?"

Angela shook her head vehemently: "I just came down - and I found him - lying there..."

It was true - and it was a lie. But Consuela lapped it up gratefully and nodded, satisfied:

"Yes, of course, it must have been a burglar. There are so many burglaries these days..."

She took Angela into the kitchen and made some coffee.

Sipping at the coffee Angela vaguely noted it was very strong, but somehow the caffeine didn't seem to reach her numbed brain.

Then the police arrived. There were two detectives, Fisher and Perez. They immediately homed in on the heavy metal sculpture lying not too far away from Marvin's body. It had blood on it, and fingerprints.

The next hours went past in a blur.

It turned out the blood was Marvin's, and the fingerprints were Angela's.

So Angela found herself under arrest. She kept saying tonelessly: “I didn’t kill him. I didn’t kill him.”

After some talk of Miranda rights there was a lawyer. He looked at Angela solemnly and asked her to tell him everything that had happened.

But Angela just couldn’t. She kept repeating like an automaton: “I didn’t do it.”

The lawyer tried talking to her some more but she didn’t understand what he told her, she felt so numb and exhausted.

And then she was lying on her back in a prison cell, staring at the dirty greenish ceiling in desperation.

She thought she wouldn’t be able to sleep at all.

But after just a couple of minutes she fell into a deep dreamless sleep.

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

Slowly she opened her eyes.

October the first. Still. Again. Whatever.

So it had all been just a dream – such a nasty dream, Marvin lying dead in his workshop – and it had been her who’d killed him - and she had been arrested by the police...

Her head hurt and she felt sick but she was relieved that all that had not really happened after all. She decided to tell Marvin about her stupid dream. So she reached for her dressing gown and went downstairs slowly.

The workshop was very still.

Cold fear grabbed her heart as she looked – looked behind the work table -

And there was Marvin. Lying there, dead, with all that blood around his head...

So - had she dreamed about this, like a kind of premonition, and now it had really happened?

Oh god, what should she do?

She heard a noise at the door. And then Consuela's merry voice: "Good morning, Marvin, great day today, isn't it?"

She stared at Consuela in horror.

"Angela – Angela, what is it?"

Silently Angela gestured towards the dead body.

As Consuela shrieked Angela stared at her, completely bewildered. Was it all repeated like yesterday – was yesterday today, again -

Thoughts whirled round her brain quite frighteningly so she didn't react to the cleaner's suggestion to call the police.

Consuela complained about having left her phone at home and went off to the hall.

Angela thought of what had happened - yesterday? The last time?

Police – prison – no, she didn't want to end up in prison for this!

But her fingerprints were on the bloodied sculpture -

Her gaze fell on the large tub in the corner, the acid bath containing some extremely corrosive stuff which Marvin used to treat the surfaces of metal sculptures. She rushed over there and removed the lid – yes, the tub was filled quite well and big enough to hold the bloodied sculpture.

But there was a noise – Consuela was returning. Angela quickly sprinted back to where she had stood before. She turned her heavy breathing into loud sobs.

Then the police came. They found the sculpture with the blood and the fingerprints.

Eventually they arrested her, and then there was the lawyer, a Mr. Fisher.

This time Angela took a closer look at him, a slim elderly guy looking reasonably competent.

Should she tell him the truth, or not?

After some deliberation she opted for the truth. She wanted to know where she stood.

She could barely get out the words – it was so horrible – the nasty argument, her battering Marvin – her voice faltered, sometimes even failed. But eventually she managed to get it all out.

He looked at her thoughtfully. “But from what the officer said you have denied killing your husband?”

Angela frowned. “I just feel that I - well, I didn’t want to do it, and I didn’t know he had died, and I wish I hadn’t, and I – I don’t know, somehow I feel I’m not a murderer...”

“It would be manslaughter, probably, you had been provoked, you say, and if you make a full confession -”

The lawyer saw the stubborn look on her face: “But you don’t want to make a confession?”

When Angela just shrugged he sighed and shrugged himself. “Okay. If that’s what you wish we’ll try to get through somehow. But with the evidence of your finger prints on the murder weapon, and no other prints -”

Angela’s face was still stubborn, so he sighed again and thought for a moment. Then he said:

“But we have to be prepared. We will emphasize the provocation. And you say you were very drunk yesterday. If we are lucky the jury may consider that. Did they measure your residual blood alcohol?”

Angela shook her head slowly: “I don’t think so.”

She thought he was planning the strategy as if she hadn’t told him she would not plead guilty.

But she felt too deflated and too tired to protest.

“Then I’ll arrange for a test.”

Angela was tested and then led back to her cell.

Eventually she fell asleep.

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

October the first again.

Without much thinking she staggered downstairs to look.

Yes, there was Marvin lying behind the work table, dead.

A sob escaped her. This was not going away.

She remembered what she had pondered yesterday – the last time: the tub with the acid bath into which she could sink the sculpture to destroy all fingerprints, or any traces of DNA.

She heard Consuela’s merry voice at the door: “Good morning, Marvin, great day today, isn’t it?”

Then she went through the motions with the cleaner, coiled like a spring.

The moment Consuela had left the workshop for the hall Angela sprang into action. She grabbed the bloodied sculpture and rushed over to the acid bath.

As she was about to remove the lid of the tub she remembered just in time that this would leave prints on the lid. So she quickly slipped on some work gloves lying close by, opened the lid and threw in the sculpture. She closed the lid again and sprinted back to where she had stood.

At the very last moment she thought of the gloves, tore them off her hands and threw them over onto a table where they landed as Consuela was already entering the workshop.

Angela’s heart pounded. Had Consuela seen her throwing away the gloves?

But the cleaner just told her that the police were on their way and then she and Angela went to the kitchen.

This time the police didn’t find the weapon so quickly.

While the others were searching for the weapon officer Perez asked Angela if she had heard anything during the night.

She told him truthfully that she had been out cold after the wine and the tablets, she wouldn't have heard anything even if a hoard of elephants had stomped through the workshop. He seemed disappointed but perked up when his colleagues discovered the sculpture in the acid bath.

As Angela had anticipated the corrosive stuff had burnt away any trace of her touch on the sculpture's surface. So there was nothing on the weapon linking her to the crime. Actually, they could only guess that this *was* the murder weapon until the pathologist confirmed their guess.

Nevertheless, when officers Perez and Fisher joined them in the kitchen they looked at Angela with a hint of suspicion in their eyes. Perez asked her: "Who knew about that acid bath – your husband, yourself, who else?"

Angela could tell them quite truthfully that everyone who had been to Marvin's workshop probably knew about it. This meant lots of customers and gallery owners and suppliers, and simply guests. She also mentioned there had been several articles and programs in local TV about Marvin's work that had included a reference to the acid bath.

So the police officers gave up on this line for the moment – too many possibilities. But there was still suspicion in their eyes when they looked at Angela.

"Was the workshop locked this morning?" Fisher asked.

Angela gestured towards Consuela who told the officers that it had not been locked.

Fisher looked at the cleaner sharply: "Didn't that surprise you?"

Consuela hesitated: "Well, I just thought that he must have forgotten to lock up – maybe he was too tired, or too drunk."

"Did that happen often?"

Consuela shrugged. "Now and then. Not very often."

Fisher looked at Angela now: “Who had a key?”

“Marvin, me, and Consuela. But what does it matter when the door was open anyway?”

“Someone might have wanted it to look like an outside job“, Fisher said slowly. “So the door might have been unlocked deliberately to make it seem like it wasn’t an inside job.”

“But this is crazy”, Angela objected. “Instead of these convoluted assumptions, why don’t you accept that it was quite simply left open because Marvin was still at work when he was killed? He would only lock up when he was finished and went upstairs to the flat.”

Stiffly Fisher said: “In the majority of cases we find that the murderer is someone close to the victim. Especially in cases like this which don’t look like a robbery. We found your husband’s wallet lying on one of the tables, with a couple of hundreds in cash and several credit cards. And his rather expensive phone was left untouched as well. Would you come over to the workshop with us, please?”

In the workshop Perez asked her: “Has anything been stolen?”

“I don’t know, really”, Angela said with a helplessly sweeping gesture, indicating what Marvin used to call “my creative mess”.

“Do you keep anything valuable around here?”

Angela pondered. “His work, of course. During the last years most pieces have gained in value.” She could not – and would not - suppress a sob when she thought of all the wonderful things Marvin could have created if he had not died...

Then she shook herself and swallowed hard. “But as far as I can see everything is still there.”

As soon as the words had left her mouth it occurred to her that this hadn’t been very clever. If nothing was stolen it weakened the case for an outside job. So she came up with: “Some of the tools, they cost quite a lot of money. Maybe some of them have gone but I wouldn’t know.” She could give them at least that little bit.

“Any jewelry, or cash?”

Angela hesitated: “Marvin is a watch freak, old watches. He has quite a collection, and I think some of them might be worth a bit now.”

As soon as the words were out of her mouth she regretted them. She shouldn’t have pointed their noses in that direction.

But it couldn’t be helped now. While she was leading the officers to the large locked cabinet at the back of the workshop her brain worked in overdrive. Actually, she could turn this to her advantage.

She made a show of her fingers trembling horribly and fumbled around with the key although she had actually opened it very quickly. At last she acted amazed: “Oh, it was open already! That’s why I couldn’t open it.”

She wasn’t quite sure whether her little magical trick had worked or not.

Perez cursed under his breath. So he did have his suspicions and now wished he hadn’t let her open it but had done it himself.

But for the moment this was good enough. She looked at the tidy rows of watches – and the large gaps where some were missing.

Fisher pointed at the gaps: “Had he reserved these spaces, or were there watches before in these spaces which are missing now?”

Angela tried to make her frown convincing as she lied: “Last week all the watches were still in place.” For good measure she added: “Like I said, Marvin was really obsessed with his watches, he would check them every couple of days at least.” This was an even fatter lie but it was a good one because they couldn’t disprove it.

Angela stood back as the officers inspected the cabinet and then hailed a forensics guy.

She stayed calm because she knew they wouldn't find anything. She had worn gloves and a protective suit because she had been helping Marvin with some rough stuff. When he had slunk off to smoke a couple of cigarettes outside she had quickly snatched some of the watches. That had been before he had finished with Nicole, and Angela felt the need to build up a nest egg in the background. So if a divorce did come at least she wouldn't have to worry about money. And she could always blame burglars for the missing watches. She had thought vaguely about staging some little incident with a broken window.

And now it seemed to fit in quite well. If she was lucky there were lots of fingerprints from friends or customers whom Marvin had showed his collection at one time or the other.

"So the burglar went straight for these watches", Fisher mused. "And they have taken only some of them, probably the most valuable ones, or the ones that can be sold easily. So they must have known about them." He turned to Angela. "Did many people know about them?"

She nodded quickly. "Again, lots of people. He was quite proud of his little collection and would brag about it whenever he could, and show people the watches. And sometimes he forgot to lock the cabinet afterwards." This was another lie, Marvin had always been very particular about locking the cabinet properly. But again they couldn't know, and could certainly not prove, that this was a lie. And in combination with her little fumbling trick on the lock it hopefully told them that this needn't be an inside job.

It kind of worked for the moment, the officers left eventually. Their curt goodbye nods told her that they were undecided if she was a poor widow to be pitied, or a husband killer to be apprehended.

But when the officers returned in the afternoon she saw from their darkened faces that the balance had shifted. They took her to the police station.

Perez confronted her: “We have traced some of the watches and found that they have been sold several weeks ago. By a woman which one of the dealers managed to describe, and the description fits you quite well. Any comments?”

Angela stared at her hands and thought feverishly how she could best put her story. Slowly she said: “Marvin was rather mean about money. I wanted to buy some designer clothes, some beautiful shoes. He had lost interest in the watches, like he lost interest in most things eventually. Before long he would have sold off his collection anyway. So I thought I’d just sell a few of them for some nice quick cash.”

Perez stared at her slyly: “Ah, so he was mean with money, your husband. You resented that, did you?”

Angela stared back defiantly: “Yes, I did, but on the other hand it didn’t trouble me that much – I found ways around it, like you seem to have found out.”

Perez looked slightly disappointed, but then charged again: “And your husband found out about that and you had a huge row?”

“No, he didn’t find out. And even if he had he would have just snorted angrily and called me a few names, and that would have been it. Like I said, he had lost interest in the watches, and although he was mean with money he had more than enough. So he wouldn’t really have been that bothered.”

This was actually the truth. Yet ironically Perez didn’t believe her, she saw it in his face.

He threw another question at her: “You are the sole heir?”

“I don’t know”, Angela told him truthfully. “But I guess so. We don’t have children, and Marvin’s parents and his brother are dead, they died in a car crash several years ago.”

Perez stared at her darkly.

“I guess that the value of your husband’s works will rise now that he is dead. And such a violent death will push it up even further – macabre, but that is the way the world works.”

“Yes”, Angela said flatly, “that is the way the world works. I might be a fairly rich woman now but I have lost the love of my life.”

Perez stared at her but didn’t pursue this any more.

He eventually let her go home. But he made it clear to Angela that she was the main suspect, and she would hear from them soon...

She realized that it had been a bad idea to lie to them about the watches. Now they thought of her as a lying, cheating, stealing wife who had been at odds with her husband over money matters. This made her a prime suspect, even if they didn’t have any other clues.

She caught herself thinking: *I’ll do better next time.*

She shook her head. This whole crazy situation, these weird repetitions of the day she found Marvin’s body...

Was it all a dream, or rather an even crazier dream in a dream of a dream -?

Or was this some mysterious opportunity sent from the universe, to get things right? To improve her actions so that she was able to remove even the last sliver of suspicion in the officers’ mind?

Or, quite the opposite, was this her punishment for killing Marvin? To find him dead over and over again, to be thrown into this never ending cesspit of grief and regret, desperately struggling to stay ahead of the police...

It definitely felt like the latter.

Angela was utterly exhausted. She staggered up the stairs and fell into her bed.

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

While she walked down the stairs Angela remembered what Mr. Fisher had said about the alcohol, that it might be seen as a mitigating circumstance. And if she wanted to increase the alcohol level in her blood it would help to drink some more alcohol now.

She pondered if nowadays they could find out when she had actually drunk the alcohol. But then she decided she'd find out soon enough. Right now, she would go for the vodka bottle in the corner of the workshop.

She didn't really feel like drinking more alcohol while she was still grappling with the nausea and headache caused by the red wine she had drunk on the night of her argument with Marvin. That fatal quarrel that had made her lash out at him -

She started sobbing when she thought that Marvin might still be alive if only she hadn't drunk so much -

But his accusation that she was a habitual drunk was unfair, and untrue. She drank less than a lot of people she knew, and certainly less than Marvin himself. There were many days when she didn't drink any alcohol at all. But that evening she had felt really low. And it hadn't been just the alcohol, it had also been Marvin's nasty words, his taunting, his sneer -

No, she didn't want to rot in prison for this, and since it might help if things went wrong she would do it. She snatched the half-filled vodka bottle from the shelf in the corner of the workshop and put it to her lips. She forced herself to drink quite a lot before she pushed the bottle away in disgust.

A warm feeling spread from Angela's gut. When Consuela arrived she greeted her with a smile and started babbling all kind of stuff.

The cleaner stared her, slightly baffled, then saw Marvin's body and screamed.

When she realized that she didn't have her phone with her she went off into the hall eventually.

Angela did remember hazily that she had to throw the weapon into the acid bath now. She fumbled with the metal sculpture and finally managed to pick it up. But when she tried to sprint to the acid bath she was tripping over her own feet. She found that very funny and started giggling.

When Consuela returned she dropped the sculpture quickly.

But the officers found the blood and the fingerprints on it, and Angela was arrested.

Sobering up in her cell Angela swore to herself that she would never touch a drop of alcohol again.

This is like a lost day, she thought sadly. But then all days are – lost, now...

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

Angela put on a more elegant dressing gown – not pink and fluffy, but black and sleek. Then she went down the stairs slowly.

She knew what she would find there. But the sight of Marvin's body still gave her a jolt, and her throat tightened. Oh Marvin...

Then she swallowed hard and concentrated on the day ahead. She wondered if she should tell the police about the watches at all – but they would probably find out eventually, and then it would look doubly bad.

She decided to come clean, sort of. She would admit what they might find out anyway and lie about the rest. She'd tell them that she had sold off some watches because she and Marvin wanted to go on an expensive holiday. So he had asked her to sell the watches. Yes, that sounded good, her and Marvin planning a holiday together.

She thought of their last holiday together, last year, before Nicole, a wonderful little hotel in Grenada...

The noise at the door told her Consuela had arrived.

She shook herself: *Right, let's start the show.*

Everything went smoothly.

Eventually, the way Fisher and Perez looked at her was almost friendly. Fisher asked her:

“How long has your cleaner been working for you?”

“Oh, for ages, at least a dozen years or so. She is very reliable, and very thorough, she even cleans in the remote corners, she's very conscientious.”

Fisher asked her more questions about Consuela, about her background, her family.

Angela answered them as best as she could wondering why he didn't ask Consuela herself.

Or maybe he had, and just wanted her to confirm things?

Suddenly she realized: They suspected the cleaner of being involved in Marvin's death!

Panic hit her. No, this mustn't be!

She started fighting Consuela's corner desperately. She stressed how honest the cleaner was, how they trusted her implicitly, she had always had a key and not the tiniest thing had ever gone missing.

But when the officers left she felt that Consuela was high up on their list of suspects.

This was horrible. Angela didn't want to go to prison herself but if suspicion fell on her loyal cleaner – no, that was something she had to prevent.

So how could she deflect the police's suspicion of Consuela?

Other suspects, she decided, she needed to feed the police other suspects. Unfortunately she had told the police herself that Marvin didn't have any enemies, that everyone liked him, that no one had any reason to kill him. Which was true but now she needed someone -

Nicole! Of course, Nicole.

A mean smile spread on Angela's face.

Then the smile faded away as she realized she had to tread very carefully there. This was very much a two-sided sword. So far the police knew nothing about Nicole – and that wasn't such a bad thing seeing that the existence of a love rival would give Angela a motive. After all jealousy was one of the oldest and strongest motives for someone murdering their spouse.

On the other hand it was just too irresistible, casting suspicion on Nicole, maybe even getting her arrested. And if she didn't give the police any clues they would start snooping around and would get to Nicole sooner rather than later anyway. After all, the affair between her and Marvin had been pretty public. The break-up had been fairly public, too, with Marvin making his great emotional speeches to friends and relatives all around. This had happened just a few weeks ago so the police would assume – and not quite wrongly – that all this was still pretty fresh and raw and a potential source of emotional upheaval.

But Marvin *had* come back to her. So it was Nicole who had a motive for being angry with him, maybe so furious she would kill him. And Angela herself was, as far as the world knew, happy to be back together with Marvin.

Would he have stayed with her? Or maybe gone back to Nicole, as he had hinted in their argument? She would never know now...

"Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!"

Again in her elegant black dressing gown, Angela played the usual scenes in front of Consuela and the officers.

And then the questions came for which she had prepared herself: "Did your husband quarrel with anyone during the last days? Do you know of any bad feelings people might have

harbored towards him? Did he have enemies, people who resented him in any way, privately or professionally?”

Angela made a show of hesitating, then shrugged angrily.

“Nicole”, she said slowly, “Nicole Fynmore.” With a reluctance that was quite genuine she explained that Marvin had had an affair with Nicole which he had ended a few weeks ago.

With carefully concealed satisfaction she saw that Perez noted down the name, and she gave him Nicole’s phone number as well.

The question about professional bad feelings had given her an idea. For good measure she threw in Harry, Marvin’s biggest rival, as bait for the investigating officers.

It was quite true that Harry envied and resented Marvin thoroughly, and also the other way round. They had had several fights which had left them both looking the worse for wear. To be honest she didn’t think that he would ever consider killing Marvin. In a way this even meant that Marvin got one over Harry since his death would make him more famous, and his pictures more sought after. But for the police Harry was a great suspect, as far as she knew he even had a criminal record thanks to his foul temper and quick fists.

So with two likely suspects keeping the officers busy she could lean back and relax, couldn’t she.

But she couldn’t. Nicole might be a bitch, and Harry an old troublemaker, yet she felt bad about having thrown them to the wolves.

Restlessly she paced the lounge, then went outside for a long walk.

She ended up at the police station and realized that she had to ask how things were with the two suspects. Since she feared they might not be too keen to share the information with her she cobbled together some lame story about being afraid that she might be killed as well if Harry, for instance, was a murderer.

Perez seemed very tired and just shrugged. “Couldn’t have been him, apparently he is away sailing among some tiny islands somewhere in the Caribbean, lucky guy. Has been there for a week now.”

So he had an alibi.

“And Nicole couldn’t really have done it, could she”, Angela fished cautiously.

Perez shrugged tiredly again. “Yeah, Ms. Fynmore has an alibi, too.”

Angela felt a mixture of disappointment and relief. She told herself that she would have felt bad if the police had really arrested Nicole, or even sent her to prison for a crime that she had not committed. Stealing husbands might be a crime but not of that kind. And Marvin had come back to her in the end.

But this meant that her suspects had all fallen flat, so to speak.

“So most likely it was a burglar whom Marvin disturbed,”, she said to Perez watching his face.

“Maybe”, the officer shrugged wearily. At the moment he didn’t seem inclined suspecting her, or Consuela. But after a good night’s sleep this might change.

Walking home she reflected that she’d better think of a few more suitable suspects. There had been this guy who owed Marvin quite a bit of money. Or the gallery owner who had tried to cheat Marvin and had only given in when Marvin threatened to sue him. Those things didn’t really amount to strong motives for a murder but together with Harry and Nicole it would be enough to keep the officers busy for a while.

And, overworked as they were, they might give up sooner rather than later, chalking it up to just another burglary gone wrong.

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

After Angela had trotted down the stairs she did everything which she now knew worked best.

Eventually the officers left, apparently satisfied.

Angela looked at the cleaner: “You can go home now, Consuela. When the police are done with the workshop I guess I will look for a professional crime scene cleaner. It is really a revolting mess.”

Consuela nodded, looking relieved.

Angela went on: “So there is no need for you to come back until next week. Thank you so much for making coffee, and for your moral support.”

Consuela seemed slightly embarrassed. She hesitated, seemed about to speak, was quiet again.

“What is it?” Angela asked apprehensively. Did the cleaner want to give notice because of this gruesome experience? She hoped not, the big house with the workshop – well, she would eventually move to a smaller place, she had no use for the workshop. But meanwhile she needed a cleaner and Consuela had always been really good.

Now Consuela did start speaking: “I’m sorry, Angela, but I couldn’t help noticing -”, she looked down at her hands. “When I first saw – Marvin this morning - that metal sculpture which was the weapon – it was lying close to his body. But when the police arrived it was gone, and then the officers found it in that bath...”

She looked at Angela with a question in her eyes.

The shock almost made Angela stutter: “I – yes, I threw it away because I was so – shocked, I just wanted to get rid of it, it was stupid of me...”

Consuela looked at her sadly. “It’s okay, I won’t tell the police. But why did you do it, Angela?”

“I didn’t!” Angela cried. “It was just a – a stupid reflex!”

She realized that this could mean the killing as well as the impulse to get rid of the weapon and added in a low voice: “I would never murder Marvin.”

She saw a lingering doubt in Consuela’s eyes but the cleaner nodded silently. She hugged Angela and told her again she was so sorry for her loss, then left.

A wave of anger hit Angela. She thought how she had fought for Consuela when the officers had suspected her yesterday – the day before – whatever. And now that ungrateful bitch was accusing her -

Then she calmed down. The cleaner had assured her that she wouldn’t tell the police.

Although, she couldn’t be sure of that – if Consuela needed money some time in the future then she might think of blackmailing Angela with her knowledge.

And it rankled, somehow. Angela felt caught out and unjustly suspected – which was absurd because she *had* killed him. But she was angry and found herself considering if this time she should let the police suspect and maybe even arrest Consuelo.

But then she realized that it would be dangerous for her if Consuela found herself under pressure. She would probably keep quiet about the sculpture like she had promised. But if the police were putting pressure on her, treating her as a suspect, Consuela might well want to deflect suspicion from herself to Angela by telling the police she had seen the murder weapon before she left Angela alone in the workshop. Angela didn’t know if the police would believe Consuela but she’d rather not risk it.

Tomorrow – or the next time today? - anyway, she would make sure that Consuela didn’t see the weapon.

And maybe she could improve on a few other things as well. Maybe she should smash one of the windows from the outside so that it looked quite clearly as if someone had tried to break in.

On the other hand if the door had been unlocked this wouldn't have been necessary, a burglar could have walked right in. So smashing the window would be kind of an overkill.

But then, would a burglar have tried the door at all? Wouldn't they have gone straight to the window?

She racked her brain which would be the most convincing scenario.

But then the thought hit her: *It doesn't matter anyway – whatever I do or don't do today – tomorrow it will start again...*

She felt extremely weary.

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

The next morning Angela had played through the whole program without a fault.

Yet she felt that the officers were still quite suspicious.

She overheard Perez say to Fisher: “She doesn't seem overly touched by her husband's death.

I know that grief hits people in different ways but somehow she seems just to – go through the motions.”

Fisher nodded. “Yeah, like she's just playing the grieving widow but she doesn't seem to be really emotionally engaged.”

Angela bit her lip. She realized that by going through the same day again and again she had become jaded in her responses. The officers were right, her heart wasn't in it. It wasn't that she was not grieving for Marvin – she was, and very much so. But on the other hand she had been grieving for days and days now, and it seemed such an endless loop...

It was emotionally exhausting to find Marvin dead again and again. She knew it but still -

And it was that emotional exhaustion that made her act dully and seemingly bored.

Angela decided that tomorrow – the next time - she would really ham it up as the grieving widow. Of course she mustn't overdo it but she had always been a rather good actress, there had even been a time when she had considered acting as a career.

Although – did it really matter? Whatever she did she would wake up the next morning to find Marvin dead... again, and again...

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

It wasn't too difficult for Angela to put on a really good show as a grieving widow. After all she did feel bereaved, she did feel desperately sad and sorry. She *was* a grieving widow.

So this time the seesaw between sympathy for the bereaved wife and suspicion of the potentially murderous partner had clearly come down on the former quite quickly. The officers had expressed their sympathy again and left.

When the scene of crime people had left, too, Angela had sent Consuela home and was alone now.

Alone. No Marvin to love and hate and help and quarrel with. No excited shouts to come and have a look - *is that okay or shit, Ange?* And her treading on eggshells; if she implied ever so cautiously she didn't like it he might throw a fit - but on the other hand he might rage at her for praising something which was so obviously absolutely shitty...

Yes, it had been bloody exhausting sometimes. But then she hadn't married Marvin to have an easy life. She had married him because he was such a unique person and because she was in love with him.

The workshop was very quiet.

A wave of sorrow washed over her.

Marvin. Who had been such a bastard, but also such a wonderful lover, such a fascinating human being. And a great artist. Despite all the hype and the craziness that made the art world such a confusing and bizarre place she knew there had been something in him, a true artistic spark, a creative genius.

And now he was dead and could not create anything any more.

She started crying, quiet tears at first, then desperate sobs.

What a waste.

And it was her fault...

“Good morning Angela, it is 8:30 on this warm and sunny morning, October the first!”

She went through the motions again: concealing the weapon from Consuela, discreetly disposing of it when she went to the hall, being open and honest to the police about the watches, giving the officers plenty of suspects to work on.

She seemed to be very convincing as the grieving widow today since the officers behaved towards her with respectful compassion. There was no hint of suspicion in their eyes when they left.

Now my routine is really perfect, she thought sadly. There is nothing left to do.

Yet there was something nagging at her.

Angela sat in the silent workshop for hours.

Then she knew that there was one thing left to do for her.

She went to the police station and asked for officer Perez. And she told him calmly: “I want to tell you what really happened.”

October^{2nd}, 8:30

The officer shook his head, baffled. People would never stop to amaze him.

The fact that someone found themselves in a prison cell on an October morning would have depressed anyone, he would have thought.

But this one -

When he peered into her cell he saw her sit up, and heard her murmur to herself delightedly:

“I’m still in the prison cell!”

She started smiling.

When she saw him at the door she asked: “Is it the 2nd of October?”

And when he confirmed that her smile widened until she positively beamed at him.

People...