

Dreamless | Bobby Gibler

I hadn't slept, but my doctor told me that's normal. He knew that he wouldn't be able to prescribe me the right medicine to make me sleep, much less treat my pain.

It's only been four days. MaryAnn told me she'd have nothing to do with the investigation. She'd never wanted to help him. But even though our brother Shane had been murdered, there was nothing in her face. Not even the smallest bit of sadness.

"What are we gonna do?" I asked. My hands shook with anxiety. I wiped my cheek with a tissue and continued, but tears filled my throat. "He... he did everything for me."

"Heh... Maybe we can use all that money he stole from us to plan this investigation," she said. "You knew that money was for dad's surgery."

"Oh, don't be stupid!" The lump in my throat was suddenly gone. "The doctor told us it was too late for him."

"Those doctors... Can't trust 'em," she said. Her monotone voice seemed to drown me. "Then again, who can you trust? Whatever. I'm goin' back to researching. Shouldn't be long 'til we find somethin'." The tension in her voice lingered.

I can't say much about my sister other than she's never liked me. As a kid she'd always try to explain how much better she was than me; even the simplest "accomplishments" like winning a spelling bee (as if spelling the word "reprehensible" is really an achievement anyway) were enough to make her feel high and mighty. For years she seemed to have wanted nothing more than to get out of the family.



She especially seemed to hate Shane, though. For some reason, they seemed to never be able to find common ground. Perhaps it was just her argumentative personality, but Shane was gentler than the stereotypical fly: totally harmless. One time he even let MaryAnn give him a dirt-pie sandwich (her childhood name for face planting him straight into mud) just so she'd leave him alone. How anyone could hate my dear brother, I just don't know.

But I had already scheduled a meeting with a private investigator; Carlos was his name. MaryAnn knew him a long time ago; supposedly he was once her English teacher who had a change of heart and decided to pursue something... very different. He was supposedly the best P.I. in town, whatever that means. We live in Beachwood, New Jersey and the only crime that happens here is the occasional shoplift by little kids. And there was never any noise on the highway, and not even on the streets.

It was 9:30 in the morning as I drove up to his one-story office building. It was so tired and old I swore I could blow on it and it'd fall over. The bricks were cracked and the masonry between them seemed to be crumbling. His black van was parked in front; the only car in the whole place.

Why he had a van I had no idea. I knew investigators could be sleazy; maybe he wanted to sell me something in addition to making me pay for the search for the murderer. Typical. At least he only knew me as MaryAnn's sister, and nothing more.

He twiddled his thumbs as I entered his office, quickly combing back his greasy black hair.

"Hello, miss," he said with a toothy half-smile. "I hope I can be of assistance."

I knew he was as sleazy. "I hope so too, sir," I said, slinking into a red, velvet seat near his desk. I made sure to keep my eyes on him. "I want to catch this... this... well, person – and put him away forever."

"Allow me to evaluate this situation properly," he said, lighting a cigarette and leaning back in his velvet armchair. "When exactly did this situation take place? What was the time of day? Do you remember anything specific? What occurred that seemed unsteady or seemingly unusual?"

I must've looked like a real deer in headlights at that point. I was only a 16 year old girl, and had just experienced the first – and only – real trauma of my life. I struggled to recall the happenings of the night.

"I... don't 'member exactly," I said. I scratched my head really hard, thinking of where everyone was. "Well, sir, I know MaryAnn, my sister, had left the house to go get gas for the car. We're always runnin' out, especially with how much we've had to drive around to finalize my dad's funeral. It was 'round 8 in the evening, probably. Shane left before that, but I don't know if he came back. I was studying for a test."

"How has your sister reacted to all of this?" he asked.

"She seemed sad at first, but now it's almost all gone," I said. I looked at my sneakers as tears welled in my eyes. "She was really close to my dad, and he just died from cancer. She thinks Shane stole money from him, but he didn't! He needed it to get through college! Daddy had only one or two real friends in the world that he could trust with money, and he'd never be so selfish as to keep it from his family!"

"All right, sweetheart," he said. "Calm down. It's going to be fine."

"Well what are you gonna do?" I asked. Tears freely streamed down my face.

"I'm going to file an investigation for your sister," he said. "Based on your story, she seems like the most likely culprit."

Night fell hard that evening; the darkness filled my mind with feelings of contempt. I couldn't imagine my sister doing this. *What kind of sick problem could she have with our own brother?*

Quietly, I finished the dishes as an old Western rerun played on TV. Shane's favorite. I mindlessly felt myself becoming hypnotized by it, as if I became part of the show itself. I pictured myself as The Lone Ranger, riding atop my valiant steed. I even had a fancy gun to boot; you know, the ones all the good guys in TV shows use.

"Hi-yo, Silver, and away!" I imagined myself yelling, maniacally firing my gun into the air with utmost glee. "Hi-yo, Silver, and away!" The gunshots repeated. "Hi-yo, Silver, and away!"

"A fiery horse with the speed of light, a cloud of dust and a hearty 'Hi-yo Silver' – the Lone Ranger!" The narrator cheered me on.

"Help me! Oh, God, help me!"

"Hi-yo... Silver, and away!"

"Help me! Please, somebody help me!"

I snapped back.

"Help me!" MaryAnn desperately screamed to me from the back yard. "Some-one!"

I flicked on the porch light and saw MaryAnn sprawled out on the cold ground, screaming in agony while holding her side. Blood formed a deep red pool in the mud.

"Get the police, hurry!" she shrieked, desperately pointing at her attacker.

I looked up to see a tall man with greasy black hair. His half-toothed smile shimmered with the half moon's gleam. He looked up and tipped his black leather hat to me.

"Oh dear, I've made quite a mess." He twirled his pistol in his hand, then slunk back into his black van and sped off.