

Game-Set-Match

By Michael Danese

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A ringing phone spoils the serene setting of a woman lazily sunning herself alongside her pool. “Hi, this is Luann...yes, I’ll be there at three o’clock for my lesson...thanks for calling!”

She hung up the phone and tossed it onto a small table. She took a sip from her glass, re-tied the top of her bikini then reached for a towel.

Luann Dawson is money, from her meticulously coiffed shoulder-length blond hair, her perfectly sculpted body to her long legs and carefully manicured nails. She glanced at her watch then headed towards the house. I guess you could still call it a house. It isn’t quite San Simeon, but close. She walked towards the large French doors near the pool building. Over her shoulder the waves of the Atlantic gently tickle the bright white sandy beach. She navigates through the first sitting room, then the next. She climbs the wide marble staircase and is greeted by her two poodles. She stops to pet them on their heads. “Hello my little loves! How’s the dog business today!”

The dogs follow her upstairs past the first of seven bedrooms. “Hey, Mrs. D. Hot out there, ain’t it?” said the housekeeper from one of the bedrooms.

“Hot it is, Maria, but you know that’s how I like it!” she replied as she passed.

She entered the master suite and turned on the water in the bathtub that could easily seat six people. For dinner! She poured herself some red wine from a decanter, shed her clothes then slipped beneath the water. She gazed out the window at the ocean for a few minutes, then she took a sip, shut her eyes and blocked out her world for several minutes.

Her phone rang breaking the relaxing spell. She saw it was from Carol and her face lit up. “Hi there sunshine? How’s Los Angeles? ...I’ll bet it is...no, nothing at all going on here...all alone, as usual...yes, he’ll be back tomorrow...when are you coming back?...oh, that’s way too long to wait! I need to get out and have some fun!...okay, tell your mom hi for me...love ya back!” She hung up and slid under the water.

About 90 minutes later she was refreshed and dressed in a white tennis outfit. Her hair was pulled back and as she raced her red Ferrari convertible north on Route One towards the country club in Key Largo. As she approached, the valet greeted her by name, grabbed her tennis racket from the car, handed it to her and took her keys. She made her entrance like she owned the place, and everyone treated her that way. There were choruses of, “Hello Mrs. Dawson!” “How are you today Mrs. D?” as she made her way to the lavish gym area.

In the locker-room lobby, she filled a goblet with ice-cold cucumber water, and within seconds the attendant greeted her and said they were ready for her lesson.

“Mrs. Dawson, this is Tony, our new instructor,” said Lisa, the attendant.

“Hello Tony, I’m pleased to meet you,” she said. “Sorry but, where is Gloria? I’ve been working with her for over a year, and I’ve made some real progress with her.”

“I’m so sorry, Mrs. Dawson,” said Lisa, “but Gloria is no longer with us. In fact, she left quite suddenly. Something about family problems on Marco Island. Tony is from Chicago and has incredible credentials, and I’m sure that you’ll excel with his training.”

“Well, I hope all is well with Gloria. It’s just that someone should have let me know,” said Luann.

“Of course, you’re right,” said Lisa.

“I’m sure Tony and I will get along just fine,” Luann said quickly, almost cutting her off.

“Shall we get started,” Tony said while flashing a wide grin.

Luann nodded and smiled. She wasn’t disappointed to meet Tony. He was about six foot three, with curly dark hair and a bit of a stubble. He was perhaps 32, which was about five years younger than her. He was wearing white tennis shoes, white shorts, and a white shirt. In the heat of the Keys, white is always a good choice. Needless to say, she thought he was quite dapper.

“So, Tony from Chicago, who are you, and how’d you get here, and who were you before you got here?” she said in an almost flirty tone, which was her way.

“Wow, so many questions!” he said through a smile. “Well, I came here for the job! My old college coach and I stayed in touch, and I mentioned to him some time ago that I always wanted to move to The Keys. I was here for a few weeks after college and fell in love with the area. He heard about the job, I called, and the rest you could figure out for yourself! So, shall we play some tennis?”

“Well, that’s why I’m here!” said Luann.

They took to the court and spent the next hour playing and trying to size up their respective opponents. Luann was bent on proving to him that she was a worthy adversary. She was able to handle almost everything that he threw at her. She felt that he would take the lessons much more seriously if he saw her natural ability and how it has been refined over these many years. She certainly didn’t want him to think that she was just another rich trophy wife looking to pass the time away. Tony was obviously impressed with the strength and finesse of Luann’s game. Several times during the last thirty minutes or so he stopped, made some small adjustments to her stance or timing and she saw some improvements. He also wanted to show her that the money she was spending with him was worth it.

At the end of the hour they both grabbed new towels and large goblets of ice cold water.

“OK! I’m impressed!” said Tony while trying to catch his breath. “I can see that I’m going to need to stay on top of my game with you, which is a thrill for me. I’m already looking forward to next week!”

“Thanks, I’m glad too. I think you’ll be able to help me improve my game. Gloria was fine, but we reached a bit of a plateau, and now I see some progress in my future,” she said. “Thanks, Tony, but I gotta run. I’ll see you next week.”

Tony smiled and waved, and soon another woman was ready for her lesson.

Luann had a new spring in her step. Tony's warm smile and deep dark eyes remained on her mind and the next week couldn't come fast enough.

The second lesson went even better than the first. They had long sets and truly competed. Tony could actually see Luann's game improving. They went a little long and Tony's next student was waiting. She was about seventeen and had been watching them for several minutes. "So sorry, he said to her. I lost track of the time. I'll be right with you," he said.

Luann felt like she was just getting started. "I'm so sorry!" she added.

"Really, it's not a problem, in fact I enjoyed watching you. You're both so good," said the student."

"Well, you'll be good too if you keep working with Tony!" said Luann. "I'll see you next week!" she said as she sat courtside and poured some water.

The third lesson also went well. When they were done, Tony had some free time, and they sat outside together. "I don't think I ever met a Luann before," Tony said.

"It's an old fashioned name for an old fashioned girl!" she replied with a smile.

"So you know my story, now tell me how you got here," he asked.

"Pretty simple. My husband and I used to live in New York, and the bigger his firm got, the bigger his job got. Soon his job was global. He's always jetting off to here and there. I told him that if he was going to be on the go all the time, there wasn't any real reason to live in New York. I too always wanted to live here. I never really liked New York all that much

"You seem like you would fit right into New York..." he said.

"I didn't say that I didn't *fit in*, I said I didn't like it much, besides, why live there when you can live in paradise?" she said through a smile.

"I hear ya! But, for the most part, people like you..." he added.

"People like *me*!" she interrupted.

"You know what I mean, *rich* people, you're usually snowbirds, only here when it's freezing up north." He continued.

"Well, I like the heat year-round. We still have the apartment on the Upper West Side," she said.

"So your husband..." he said.

"Blake...yeah, he doesn't like the heat so much," she said.

"Blake, sounds like a big shot," said Tony.

"That about sums it up. Anyway, I don't mean to get too personal," she said quickly changing the subject, "but I've been thinking about something, and, I want to run it by you..."

"Go on," he said.

Luann continued, "Well, are you at all interested in...freelancing? I mean, I live down near Islamorada, and we've got a lovely court on the grounds," she asked.

"And?" he replied.

"And, I'll pay you twice what you get here," she added.

“And? he repeated.

“And, it could be in the evening, when it’s a little cooler. And, I won’t have to make this drive. And, just say yes, God dammit!” she exclaimed with a giggle.

“Okay, okay! Shall we say next Wednesday at 7:00?” he asked.

“Perfect!” she said through her smile. “You won’t regret it, I promise!”

“I’m looking forward to it!” he said. “I better get going, the manager has already looked over twice, and they don’t like us to fraternize too much with the members. You remember what happened to Gloria...”

“No, I don’t. What happened with her?” she asked.

“Well, I don’t know exactly, but apparently a member’s wife caught her husband and her...you know...” he said sheepishly.

“Oh, not good! Gloria was a bit of a flirt, but a good kid...” she said.

“So, please, let’s keep the freelance arrangement just between us!” Tony said under his breath.

“Of course! I don’t want to get you in any trouble!” said Luann as she waved goodbye.

When she got home she was surprised to see Blake’s Mercedes in the drive. She entered the house to find him on his laptop and talking on the phone. On the table next to him was a tumbler filled with ice cubes and some Hennessy.

Blake certainly filled the chair. He was about six feet tall, a big-bone guy, and the extra 30 pounds he was carrying put him at about 250. He was in his late 50s with gray hair, at least on the sides where he still had some hair. He was still wearing his shirt and tie, with his “trademark” large Windsor knot.

“No, that won’t do. You tell that SOB that if he doesn’t honor the contract we’ll put him and his business and his entire family out in the streets! Just make it happen!” He hung up the phone and saw Luann standing there. “Hi, I was wondering where you were, then I remembered something about a tennis lesson.”

“I didn’t expect you until tomorrow,” she said.

“Surprise! My meeting in London was postponed, so I decided to come here today. Tomorrow night I’m getting the red eye. Drink?” he said holding up his glass.

“Maybe later, after my shower.” She said.

“I’ll bring one up for you,” he grinned.

She was pretty sure what that meant. She was worn out from her tennis lesson, and she decided to make this an extra-long shower and make him wait for it. When she finally emerged and finished toweling off, she wrapped a new large towel around herself and went into the bedroom. Blake was on the bed, wearing only his boxers.

“I was wondering if you were ever coming out!” he said.

“Well, you want me all clean and fresh, right?” she said through a fake smile in her “little girl” voice.

He unwrapped her from the towel then handed her the drink. “Special delivery!” he said.

In a few minutes he rolled off of her and onto his side of the bed. He reached for his drink as his phone vibrated. Luann grabbed her towel and headed for the bathroom. The past few minutes didn't bother her as much as usual because her mind was sharply focused on Tony the entire time.

"Talk to me!" Blake barked into the phone. After listening for a minute he said, "Good!" then he ended the call. "I'm going out for a cigar," he yelled to Luann, still in the bathroom.

"Okay, I'll probably be asleep when you come in. I'm exhausted!" she replied, relieved that he was going out.

Blake chuckled to himself, obviously thinking that he wore her out. "Oh, hey, next Friday we're having a little dinner party, there will be three other couples, the Katzes, Morleys and the Gordons. Set it all up, wouldya doll?"

"Ugh, that Mark Katz is such a perv! If he isn't trying to look up my skirt he's looking down my blouse!" she said in disgust.

"Well, then wear a short skirt and a low cut top! The firm makes a fortune offa him, which benefits you too!" he ordered as he walked away.

"Asshole," she muttered under her breath as she rolled her eyes.

The days seemed to drag on as she looked forward to her lesson with Tony. Finally she heard the buzz at the gate and she smiled as she looked at the TV monitor. There he was sitting in his car smiling. She pushed the button that opened the gates and his Mazda drove up the circular driveway and stopped at the front door. She opened the door as he got out of his car. "Well, this is quaint," he remarked as he grabbed his racket.

"Come on in," she said, as she handed him a glass of water with lemon and ice. "The tennis court is out back," she said.

"Thanks!" he said. He walked slowly through the house, taking it all in. Luann was several steps in front of him. He also enjoyed that view. He was amazed by the large living room, the marble stairs, the hallway then finally the rear doors. He stopped for a second and took in the view of the pool on the right and the Atlantic in front of him.

"Over this way," she said as she took a left turn. When they entered the tennis court, she flipped on the lights. Although there was still sunlight, it would be dark in an hour or so.

The lesson went very well. They played for the next 90 minutes. Luann mentioned that she was thrilled to not be governed by the clock. He got the feeling that she was just glad to be able to play against someone, anyone, even if she had to pay.

When they were done she handed him a fresh towel and grabbed one herself. From the courtside bar she poured two tall glasses of cold water. They quickly drank the water. "Beer? Wine? Whiskey?" she asked.

"Cold beer, please," he responded.

She grabbed two bottles, opened them with the mounted opener on the side of the bar and handed him one. She motioned for him to follow and then headed back towards the house. On the way she killed the court lights then flipped on the pool lights. The pool glowed in a heavenly soft blue. "How about a swim to cool us off?" she said as she took his hand.

“Come on, Luann, I don’t have a bathing suit...” he said nervously.

She laughed as she slowly took off her clothes and dove into the water. He quickly did the same. Once they were in the water she swam up to him and whipped her hair back over her head. She threw her arms around his neck, then she wrapped her legs around his waist. “Now, that’s better, isn’t it?” she said coyly.

Tony knew there was nothing he could do but enjoy the moment. He already knew that he was falling for her, and he also knew how wrong it was, on so many levels. They made love in the pool, then again in the poolside cabana. Soon a wicked heat-fueled thunderstorm erupted and they ran naked and laughing into the house.

Luann made cocktails and they ended up in the bathtub. “You do realize that I’m not paying you for the lesson, since you took advantage of me and all!” she joked.

“Well, I guess this one’s on me!” he shot back. “So you’re all alone in this castle?”

Yeah, pretty much, at least all summer,” she replied. “The maid comes three days a week to clean up and bring groceries, and the pool guy comes once a week. There are also landscapers that take care of the grounds every other week or so, but for the most part it is just me. In the fall there is an endless flow of out of town guests and locals that always seem to be around. That lasts until about Easter or so.”

“Blake...?” he asked.

“Like I said, he travels a lot, and he prefers New York in the summer. He comes down a few times a month. He’ll be here for a few days next week. He planned a little dinner party. I think it’s his idea of giving me something to do...” she said.

“Listen,” he said pulling her face close to his. He spoke eye to eye, “I...I don’t want to complicate things for you, but I sure do want to see you again...”

“Well, I feel the same way! I’m here every night!” she whispered.

“But, this is important, it must remain our secret. I don’t want to lose my job!” he said.

“Of course! And you must also promise not to tell a soul, any co-workers, your old coach, your best friend, tell no one! Blake can be brutish, and I’m scared of what he would do to me. And you!” she warned.

“It will be our little secret,” he said as he leaned in and kissed her. “Besides, if he *ever* hurt you...”

The nightly trysts continued and a pattern of tennis, swimming, sex and deep discussions developed. The following Wednesday they took a hiatus because Blake was due back on Thursday.

When he returned the focus was sharply on the dinner party. Luann arranged for the best caterer in the Keys, which included a bartender and two servers. The guests arrived promptly at seven and enjoyed cocktails by the pool, at least for a while, as Mrs. Gordon chronically complained about the heat.

“No problem, we’ll just move everything inside!” said Luann through a fake smile. “Whatta bitch!” she whispered as she passed Blake. He shot her a glare to show that he didn’t appreciate the remark about his guest.

The group then feasted on lobster, swordfish, filet mignon and grilled vegetables. The alcohol flowed freely and everyone was well lubricated. At the end the Crème brûlée was presented and everyone made a fuss. Blake was pleased and he proposed a toast, “To my beautiful, talented wife, who knocked herself out to make all of this possible! To Luann!”

“To Luann!” they all parroted as they raised their glasses.

The servers poured coffee and after-dinner cordials. Soon the table was cleared and the dishes were stacked and placed in the catering van. The conversation was all about the usual highfalutin subjects, business, the economy, new car models, who is going where on the next exotic vacation. Soon the men went to the parlor for cigars and brandy. The conversation then turned to favorite shoes, restaurants and which celebrity was wearing which designer. Luann was bored to death.

She excused herself and went into the kitchen and poured herself more coffee. Almost immediately Mark Katz followed her in. She could almost feel his eyes on her ass.

“More coffee Mark?”

“Nah, I don’t want to dilute the brandy!” he said laughing at his own joke. At least he thought it was a joke. “I’ll tell ya, Luann. That Blake is the luckiest guy I know!”

“And why is that...” she asked, playing along.

“Cause he’s married to you!” he said as he ran his hand down her back and on her rear.

“Mark, you’re a lucky guy too – Sheila is lovely!” she replied pulling away from him.

“Yeah, but *you*...” he said as he ran his hand up the inside of her thigh.

“Mark, no!” she said as she shoved him away.

He tried again and Luann slapped him hard across the face while yelling, “No!”

The ladies in the dining room heard her yell. Mark burst out of the kitchen and said, “Come on Sheila, we’re outta here!”

Sheila tried to be gracious, thanking Luann. Now the other guys came in to see what was going on. “You better learn to control your bitch, Dawson!” said Mark as he hustled his wife out the front door.

Blake glared at Luann nastily. The other guests felt the sudden chill in the room and quickly made their exit with comments of, “Oh, look at the time!” and “thanks for a lovely evening!”

As soon as they left Luann went into the kitchen. Blake stormed after her. “What the Christ were you thinking? You *hit* him!”

“He put his hand up my skirt! Twice! He woulda raped me right here in the kitchen!” she pleaded.

“I would have rather he did that than you hit him!” he said as he grabbed her arm hard and threw her into the table covered with glasses. “You probably cost me millions! Not to mention the embarrassment! Now clean this mess up!” he yelled as he stormed out of the house.

She heard his car roar away. She lay there in the glass shards for several minutes. She thought her arm might have been broken, but it was just badly bruised. It was already black and blue. She had a few pieces of glass stuck into her side, her arm and buttocks. She made her way to the

bathroom and locked the door. Luckily she was able to get all of the glass pieces out. She dressed her wounds and applied bandages. She then went into the bedroom and locked the door, then collapsed into her bed.

The next morning Luann slept in. She rolled out of bed and examined her cuts and bruises. She wrapped herself in a long white robe that covered her to her ankles. When she came down she found Maria cleaning up the glass. “Oh, Maria, please don’t bother with that! It was my fault, I’ll clean it up!”

“No bother Mrs. D.” replied Maria.

“Thanks! You’re a saint!” she said as she poured some coffee. She took it outside and sat on the patio near the pool and stared into the ocean.

A few minutes later Blake came out and came right over to her. “Hey baby, you okay? Did I hurt you? I’m so sorry!”

She turned her back to him.

“Really, I’m devastated. Please forgive me! I was so drunk. I’ll make it up to you, I promise! Next Thursday is our anniversary, how about if I take you to Emilio’s? You love it there! Right?” he pleaded.

“Sure, Emilio’s sounds great,” she said with absolutely no emotion. Gentle readers, if you could hear the tone of her voice, you would have guessed that this certainly wasn’t the first time this type of apology has played out. And you would be right. She turned to face him. “Sounds great!” she said with as much fake enthusiasm that she could muster.

“Great! Besides, Katz called me to apologize, so there are no hard feelings,” he said.

“He called *you* to apologize? Was his hand in *your* panties?” she quizzed.

“He ask me to relay his best wishes to you, he’s *real* sorry! Can’t we just put this behind us, please?” he begged.

“I guess we already did...” she said, almost in a whisper.

“Great! Thanks! So next week – Emilio’s! You won’t be disappointed!” he said as he came over and kissed her on the forehead. “Listen, I gotta get ready to go to the airport, but I’ll be back next Wednesday and we’ll talk some more, okay?”

“Wednesday then,” she said.

That night Tony arrived and brought flowers and a bottle of wine. She opened the door and threw her arms around him. “I’m so happy to see you!” she exclaimed before kissing him. She was wearing a light blue sweater that covered her arms.

“These past few days have been murder!” he said before he kissed her back hard and hugged her tight, and she winced a bit.

He loosened his hug and looked into her face, “Everything okay?”

“Yeah, fine, come on. Let’s open that bottle! How about a swim?” she said.

“Sure, I’ll open it!” he said, not convinced.

Tony opened the wine then poured two glasses. He followed her to the pool where she quickly disrobed and dove into the water. He put the glasses on a table then dropped his clothes and dove in after her. He swam up and went to give her a hug. Then he saw her arm. He took her arm and held it up. "What the...!"

"It's nothing, really," Luann lied.

"My ass! He did this, didn't he, I'll kill him!" he snarled.

"No, you won't! He would win, he always does..." she said as she began to cry.

"I'm sorry, you've been through enough," he said holding her close.

"Come on, I'll tell you all about it," she said.

As she was climbing out of the water Tony saw the other wounds and got more upset.

They each grabbed towels and sat at the table. Thunder cracked loudly and they decided to go inside. They sat in the living room as the storm hit. Luann told Tony the entire story, right down to the apologies.

"You can't go on like this. I won't let you! Why not just divorce the bastard? He's rich for Christsake!" said Tony.

"I can't. Believe me, I want to! He would kill me, or have me killed. I'm pretty sure he's done that before...and the money, that doesn't even matter. Besides, he made me sign a pre-nup. If I leave and live, I get squat," she said.

"I don't give a shit about the money, I just want you outta here!" he said.

"I know, so do I, but I don't see how..." she said.

"I do. I'm gonna kill him!" he said.

"Don't be silly. You could *never* get away with it!" she protested.

"I'm gonna break into the house and kill him during a robbery!" he said.

"No! I won't let you! Besides, this place is more secure than Fort Knox!" she said.

"Emilio's!" he said with a flourish.

"You can't kill him in a restaurant!" she said.

"You're right, and I won't!" he said. "but, in the parking lot...a robbery at gunpoint in the parking lot!"

"What?" she asked?

"Yes, it will work just fine..." he said, then he took a minute to sort it all out in his head.

"This is crazy!" she said.

"Just listen...here's the plan...this time of year Emilio's is pretty much dead. The place will likely be empty except for you two. You drive...tell'em you wanna drive so he can have a few drinks and relax, so you can, you know, fool around when you get home...make a late reservation, like 9:00, and make sure he has a few drinks before dinner too...park in the far corner, under the light, you know where I mean?" he asked.

“Yes,” she said as she slowly came around to the plan, “yes, I do.”

“Then after dinner you come out to the car, stop and kiss him, and then I’m gonna come out from behind the wall to rob you. Then I’m gonna kill the bastard. Twice! I’ll grab his wallet and watch and disappear, and you run into Emilio’s screaming bloody murder!” he said with a snarl. “Then you’ll be free, and we can be together!”

“Yes...yes, this could work!” she said as she threw her arms around him.

“It *will* work!” he assured her as he began to kiss her.

“Later that night he sat up in her bed, “You okay with this?”

“Yes, I feel free already! This is the best I’ve felt in years!” she said.

“What about his will, life insurance, is all of that in order?” he asked.

“Yeah, almost everything goes to his two loser kids. I get a little money, not much...but it isn’t about the money, right lover?” she added.

“Right. As long as you are free and we are together!” he said as he leaned over and kissed her.

A few nights later the plan was set into motion. Luann was dazzling in her short teal dress and heels. She had her hair and nails done special. Blake wore an off-white linen suit and looked quite dapper. Any guy would with Luann on his arm. They had a few cocktails at home, then Luann drove the Ferrari to Emilio’s. It was a sultry night, so they kept the top up.

At the restaurant Blake kept his promise. They got a small private table in the back that was lit by just a few candles. Everything was perfect, the wine, the food, the service, it was a magical night. Luann even had their waiter take a few photos of them smiling and kissing.

They were the last people to leave the restaurant. When they got to the car Luann stopped to give Blake a kiss and a hug. Then all of a sudden a shadowy figure emerged and hit Blake over the head with the butt of a gun. He fell back against the car and the guy shot him in the head and chest. Luann screamed as the guy reached in and took Blake’s wallet.

Luann screamed again as she quickly took a snub-nosed .38 from her purse and emptied it into the bandit. He looked into her eyes as he died. She ran screaming back to the restaurant, where the remaining staff had gathered on the porch. The first shots alerted them, and several witnesses saw Luann defend herself.

Luann sat crying on the steps, shaking and unable to talk. An ambulance brought her to the hospital where she was treated for shock. Soon she was able to answer the questions of the detectives.

“Yes, it’s my gun, I have a permit. My husband travels a lot...my husband...my...” she trailed off.

“It’s okay Mrs. Dawson, please just take your time...” said the first detective. He was in his mid 50’s, short and stocky. His tie was loose at the neck, and he was wearing a short-sleeve white shirt. He was sweating profusely, even though they were in the air conditioned office. The second detective was a woman in her early 30’s. She was a little taller than her partner, and much thinner. She had short brown hair, and was wearing a blue suit. Both detectives were a bit skittish. They mainly handled traffic or accident investigations, and the occasional drug bust. Neither had ever worked a situation like this.

“He’s dead, isn’t he?” asked Luann.

“Yes,” said the second detective.

“And the robber?”

“Yes, I’m afraid so,” said the first detective.

“I’m very sorry for your loss. Is there anyone you want us to call? Does your husband have any other family?” asked the first detective.

“No, no one, it was just me and him. How will I live without him?” she said through her tears.

“I’m so sorry, we’ll get you some counseling. The social worker will be here soon,” said the second detective handing her a glass of water.

“Oh, thank you ever so...yes it will help to have someone to talk to. I’m always alone in that house, that’s why I had the gun. My beloved husband insisted on it, made me take lessons and everything,” she said.

“Well, it probably saved your life. I hate to do this, but can you please look at this picture?” said the detective.

“Is...is that the man that...I killed?”

“Yes”

“I don’t want to see it...please don’t make me...” she said.

“It would be very helpful to us, Mrs. Dawson. Please take just a quick look?” the detective pleaded.

“Oh...okay, a quick one,” she said.

She took the photo and looked at it for a second. “No, sorry...”

“Take one more look please...”

She glanced again then the look of recognition overtook her face. “Tom, no...Tony. Yes...Tony, I...I took a tennis lesson or two from him at the country club several weeks ago.

“Tony, do you by any chance know his last name?” asked the detective.

“No, I’m sorry, we barely spoke...” she said.

“Okay, I see how this went down, I’m sure he got your information from the country club, pretty wife, rich man in a big house, probably been stalking you for weeks. Figured you would run away screaming and he would be home free. I guess you surprised him!” said the detective.

“I...I’m sure I did...” she added.

The next week she was sitting by the pool when she heard a familiar voice, “Surprise!” said Carol with a big smile. She was in her late 20s with short brown hair. She was thin and fit, wearing a yellow tank top, white running shorts and flip-flops.

Luann sprung to her feet and hugged and kissed her friend, “My love! Thank God you’ve returned to me! I’ve missed you so much!”

Carol kissed her deeply, “And I’ve missed you too! I can’t believe you actually pulled it off! I’m so proud of you!”

“I did it for you, my love, for us! Now it’s all ours, forever and ever!” Luann said as she removed her clothes and jumped into the pool. Carol quickly followed.

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