

Death by Desire

Julian Winter

508-904-8319  
PO Box 331  
Framingham, MA 01704  
[www.julianwinter.com](http://www.julianwinter.com)  
[julian@julianwinter.com](mailto:julian@julianwinter.com)  
∞

FADE IN:

Massive ocean waves wash ashore. The waves recede and resolve to a calm water's surface revealing a face a few inches below.

A hand inserts a pencil and snags fish line choking the neck.

INT. A CONDO, THE BATHROOM - DAY

RIKI SANTANA, 38, detective, ice cold Latin looks, left arm in a sling, long raven hair tied back, lifts the pencil pulling the face to the surface.

The MEDICAL EXAMINER(ME), 60, seen it all, bends beside her to peer at the victim, as Riki lifts the head above the surface.

ME

Fish line, huh? Pretty effective restraint. Struggle, you cut your throat, do nothing, you drown.

He notes the folding chair beside the tub.

RIKI

They stayed to watch.

ME

Thorough or to enjoy it?

RIKI

Both.

INT. A DARKENED ROOM - NIGHT

SOMEONE types at a keyboard. JACK VALANCE'S photo, late 50s, appears on the screen.

INT. COUNTRY ESTATE, THE GARAGE - NIGHT

Riki enters a ten stall garage to find the ME and TEAM working on JACK VALANCE, seated in a Ferrari, windows up, hands tied to the steering wheel.

ME

Carbon monoxide suffocation.

Riki notes Jack's head gash from banging against the window.

RIKI

But not suicide.

The ME nods.

INT. CITY MORGUE - DAY

Riki watches the ME work on the drowned man and Jack. The ME rubs a white swab over their nostrils, which turns black.

RIKI

Chlorofoam?

The ME swabs a second swab which turns yellow.

ME

Yes, and this is smelling salts.

RIKI

Rendered unconscious, then awakened to experience their death?

ME

Looks that way. No robbery, no clues. Pure murder seems to be the objective.

Riki notes the drowned man, then Jack.

RIKI

Drowning, then suffocation. Any connection, message?

The ME shrugs. Riki selects a black credit card from Jack's personal effects. It contains no numbers or markings.

RIKI

What's this?

Another shrug. She peruses the drowned man's personal effects and locates a black business card with nothing other than an embossed lemniscates ∞ .

She places the two cards beside each other, eying them.

INT. POLICE HQ, RIKI'S DESK - NIGHT

Riki sits at her desk contemplating the black card and the black business card. The CAPTAIN, late 50's, steps up. He notes her arm, still in a sling.

CAPTAIN

How's it?

She flexes her fingers.

RIKI

Better.

CAPTAIN  
It's a bit slow finding a new partner.

RIKI  
I'm in no hurry.

He notes the black cards.

CAPTAIN  
Anything?

RIKI  
Nothing in common except these.

He nods and walks away. She snaps her finger and strides off.

INT. POLICE HQ, COMPUTER ROOM IN BASEMENT - NIGHT

NED, 34, nerdy, pudgy, sits at his grimy keyboard, leering at a dating site. He notes Riki striding toward him. He wipes a forearm across his mouth to straighten his appearance.

RIKI  
I have a favor, Ned.

Ned's hands shake a bit over his keyboard as he gulps. Riki eyes the dating site. He glances to Riki, then averts his eyes.

NED  
Whaddya have in mind?

RIKI  
Can you cross-reference the cell phone records of the last two murders?

He cracks his knuckles.

NED  
Can I.

He starts a timer.

RIKI  
What's that for?

NED  
Three minutes.

Ned displays a map on his monitor as he types on the keyboard.

LATER

The timer still shows about a minute of sand. Ned notes a cross-hair on the map.

NED

They both made calls from one location.

He scribbles an address on a dirty scrap of paper and hands it to her. He opens another bag of chips.

RIKI

You're a peach, Ned

Ned munches chips as he watches her stride away.

NED

Sorry about your partner.

She continues away without comment.

INT. A DOWNTOWN LUXURY OFFICE TOWER - NIGHT

Riki walks up to a bored SECURITY GUARD playing chess on his computer. He doesn't take his eyes from the game.

SECURITY GUARD

What can I do you for?

Riki slides her badge into his line of sight. He jerks upright.

SECURITY GUARD

Sorry, Officer.

RIKI

It's Detective. I'm looking for something, but I'm not sure what.

He eyes her askance, as a very-well dressed couple catches her eye. They disappear around the corner.

RIKI

That may be it. Where are they going?

SECURITY GUARD

You can't get in there.

RIKI

(noting her badge)

Really?

SECURITY GUARD

I mean I don't have access to it. It's a special entrance.

Riki show him the lemniscates business card.

RIKI

This?

He nods. Riki follows the couple's trail, stopping at a black elevator door with no call button. A white lemniscates straddles the doors.

SECURITY GUARD

See what I mean. We have no keys for it.

Riki contemplates, then notes a card key reader. She extracts Jack's card and slides it through the reader. The doors open splitting the lemniscates in half.

The interior has no floor buttons, just a pristine interior. She glances to the guard, his jaw hanging open. She enters.

RIKI

Queen to bishop's four.

GUARD

What?

RIKI

You're playing white?

GUARD

Yeah.

RIKI

Queen to bishop's four sets up mate in three moves.

The guard stares dumbfounded as the doors close.

WITHIN THE ELEVATOR

ELEVATOR VOICE (FEMALE)

Good evening, Mister Valence. I hope you're well. The usual table?

RIKI

(pause to think)

Uh huh.

ELEVATOR VOICE

And preferred cocktail as well.

RIKI

Uh huh.

ELEVATOR VOICE

You have interest from two females, one heterosexual, one bi-sexual and

ELEVATOR VOICE (CONT)  
one male... homosexual.

They're in attendance. Shall I alert  
them to your arrival?

RIKI  
No.

ELEVATOR VOICE  
Feeling alright, Sir? You sound a  
bit under the weather.

RIKI  
(mumbled)  
Fine.

ELEVATOR VOICE  
Well, we're here. Enjoy your evening.  
May your hunt be productive.

The doors open to an absurdly elegant club. The club logo, a  
snake in the shape of a lemniscates, swallowing its tail hangs  
on the wall with the club name, 'The Pythos Club' below it.

A lovely HOSTESS greets her. She wears a choke collar around  
her neck with a light chain connecting it to a wrist manacle.

Jack's photo is on her computer.

HOSTESS  
(confused)  
Oh... Miss Santana. Must be some mistake  
in our computer.

Riki flashes her badge.

RIKI  
VIP pass.  
(pause)  
How do you know my name?

Before the hostess can reply, DALUS, mid 50's well-maintained,  
suave with a dark edge, appears beside Riki from behind.

DALUS  
Might I help you?

RIKI  
Looking for someone in charge.

DALUS  
That would be me.

Dalus looks her up and down.

DALUS  
Interesting attire.

HOSTESS  
Miss Santana, may I log you in?

Dalus waves off her request and guides Riki through the crowd. The patrons are drop-dead gorgeous and brutally handsome. Some wear overt expressions of their dom/sub orientation.

RIKI  
How did your hostess know my name?

A stunning woman beside them makes eye contact with Riki as she strokes her cleavage. Dalus leads Riki to a mirrored wall.

DALUS  
You showed her your badge.

RIKI  
It was before I flashed my badge.

Dalus ignores her comment. He presses a tiny device in his hand which opens the wall to an elevator.

IN THE ELEVATOR

Dalus eyes her sideways, a blend of curiosity and familiarity.

DALUS  
I give you points for creativity.

Riki fixes him with a stare.

RIKI  
Do we know each other?

Dalus begins to speak, then stops.

DALUS  
Of course not. Detective, you said?

RIKI  
Yes, Homicide.

Dalus notes her handcuffs.

DALUS  
Ever have to use those?

Riki narrows her eyes, but ignores the question. He smiles.

IN DALUS' OFFICE

Dalus' office overlooks the club. Riki looks onto the scene from the one-way glass as Dalus sits at his desk, eying her.

Riki notes the variety of overt sexual orientations.

RIKI  
What goes on here?

Dalus stares at her, as if trying to figure her out.

DALUS  
What do you think?

Riki eyes him in the glass' reflection.

RIKI  
Murder, apparently.

DALUS  
I beg your pardon?

Riki turns now to face him.

RIKI  
Jack Valance.

DALUS  
Why do you have his membership card?

RIKI  
He won't need it any longer.

Dalus eyes her puzzled. She extends Jack's morgue photo to him.

DALUS  
Is this a role play game?

RIKI  
(noting photo)  
Does this look like a game? I'd like  
some information on Mister Valance.

DALUS  
I'd like to see your badge, Detective.

Riki hands it to him. He examines it, then returns it to her. He eyes the morgue photo, the reality sinking in.

DALUS  
He's really dead.

Riki nods.

DALUS  
So you're a Detective investigating  
his murder?

RIKI  
Is this too hard for you?

DALUS  
Our games never get this serious.

Riki hands him photos of the drowned victim.

RIKI  
Game?

Dalus eyes the photo, eyes registering concern.

RIKI  
Another member?

Dalus nods.

RIKI  
If this is your idea of a game,  
it's gotten out of hand.

DALUS  
Who killed them?

RIKI  
I'm hoping you could tell me.

DALUS  
Did you kill them?

RIKI  
You may find this amusing, but I don't.

DALUS  
On the contrary.

Dalus punches up the member profiles of the two victims.

RIKI  
I'll want their profiles and  
anyone they've had contact with.

DALUS  
That's impossible.

Riki eyes the crowd again through glass.

RIKI  
I'll ask again, what goes on here?

DALUS  
The wealthy and bored comprise our membership. We provide excitement. Games of intrigue, role-playing.

RIKI  
Murder?

DALUS  
Never.

Riki stands pensive, ready to leave. Dalus notes her arm sling.

DALUS  
Line of duty?

RIKI  
Occupational hazard.

DALUS  
And the bad guy?

RIKI  
Not comin' down for breakfast.

ON THE CLUB FLOOR

Riki meanders through the crowd. A HANDSOME GREEK MAN catches her eye. He has a nice smile. She measures him with a glance, then looks away, up to the glass of Dalus' office even though nothing is visible therein.

She strides to the exit under the curious scrutiny of several men and women.

BACK TO DALUS' OFFICE

Dalus observes Riki's exit. From the shadows,

LILITH (OS)  
What was that about?

DALUS  
I don't know.  
(pause)  
Is she toying with me?

LILITH (OS)  
She seemed authentic enough.

DALUS  
Too authentic.

LILITH (OS)  
Were those two involved in a Hunt?

Dalus nods.

LILITH (OS)  
And now dead?

DALUS  
Apparently. I'm not sure.

LILITH (OS)  
I am.

From the shadows the Tarot card for Death drops to the floor.  
Dalus glances to it.

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LUXURY OFFICE TOWER, STREET LEVEL - NIGHT

Riki pauses to consider Jack's black membership card, then  
glances to the moon.

INT. POLICE HQ, COMPUTER ROOM IN BASEMENT - NIGHT (LATE)

Riki steps up behind Ned, surfing porn, oblivious to his  
surroundings.

RIKI  
Anything interesting?

Ned jerks around, startled.

NED  
What are doing here this late?

Riki hands Ned the lemniscates black business card.

RIKI  
Another favor, Ned.

Munching a potato chip, he takes the card with a grimy hand.  
Riki's feminine presence intimidates him.

NED  
What you got in mind?

RIKI  
Can you hack this site? I need  
information on the two victims.  
Seems they were members.

NED  
What kind of a club?

RIKI  
Sex. Should be right up your alley.

Ned's anxiety is palpable. He eyes Riki.

NED  
I'm not a pervert.

RIKI  
What you need is a real woman. One night with a flesh and blood female would cure you of this for good.

NED  
Easy for you to say. You could get anybody with your looks.

RIKI  
You think I'm attractive, Ned?

They've veered into uncomfortable territory for Ned. He turns attention to the black card.

NED  
I'll call you when I have something.

Riki raises her eyebrow and freezes Ned with a stare.

RIKI  
Please do.

Riki receives a page on her beeper. Reading it,

NED  
Best be quick, Ned. Looks like we have another one.

EXT. A HOUSE PATIO - NIGHT

A WOMAN is tied to a wrought-iron patio chair. A heavy-duty extension cord is plugged into an outlet, then spliced to the metal chair. The crackle of electricity still runs through the victim's body.

Riki, the ME and FORENSIC STAFF examine the scene. ONE covers his nose at the stench of burnt flesh. Riki pulls the cord from the outlet. The victim's body relaxes.

RIKI  
Electricity. Does that count as fire?

The ME notes her observation.

RIKI  
Feels like the other two doesn't it?

ME  
Yeah, that unhurried, almost relaxed  
sense of murder.

Riki notes a chair facing the victim.

RIKI  
They enjoy this.

The Captain arrives, clearly roused from sleep.

CAPTAIN  
Number three?

RIKI  
Appears so.

CAPTAIN  
That makes it serial. What do we know?

ME  
They're very tidy, leaving us nothing  
to go on. Renders the victim unconscious,  
sets up the murder, then revives them  
to experience their death.

CAPTAIN  
(to Riki)  
Thoughts?

Riki picks up the electrical cord.

RIKI  
Each death is different... first  
water, then air and now... fire.  
All elements. What's the next element?

ME  
Earth.

INT. DOCTER THEO MAURTINO'S OFFICE - DAY

THEO, mid-40's, cerebral, works at his desk. Via intercom,

THEO'S RECEPTIONIST (VO)  
A detective to see you, Doctor.

THEO  
Did I have one scheduled?

THEO'S RECEPTIONIST (VO)  
She says it's important.

He looks up from paperwork. He opens a desk drawer to view a monitor of his lobby. He squints at Riki's image.

THEO  
(into the intercom)  
A detective...?

THEO'S RECEPTIONIST (VO)  
Santana.

Theo leans back in his chair, contemplative, then looks back at the monitor.

THEO  
Send her in.

AT HIS DOOR

Theo opens the door to greet Riki. He eyes her intently as she takes a seat. He reclaims his chair.

THEO  
You're a detective?

Riki eyes him.

RIKI  
Homicide.

Theo picks up a dagger-style letter opener and holds the end between each index finger, contemplative.

THEO  
Interesting.

RIKI  
How so?

THEO  
No matter. How may I help you  
Detective— Santana?

RIKI  
You've worked with the department  
to create perp profiles?

He nods. Riki places the case file on his desk.

RIKI  
I need a profile of a killer.

He sets the letter opener down and pulls the file toward him.

THEO  
Anything I should know?

RIKI  
It's all in the file.

She stands up to leave.

THEO  
Do you paint, Detective?

RIKI  
No.

THEO  
Appreciate the arts?

RIKI  
Not particularly.

THEO  
A pity.

He motions to a painting on the wall with the letter opener.

THEO  
I would've appreciated your opinion.

Riki glances to a painting, eerie in its beauty, eyes staring from thunderclouds.

RIKI  
Melancholy.

THEO  
I'll be in touch.

He watches her exit, then turns to contemplate the painting.