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Darkness Within:...

Alan James Rocca

Just One of the Many Stories Behind the Murder of Kitty Genovese

March 13th, 2004

Sixty years—sixty years have passed since that day, and in all that time I have made no reference of that dark night until now, not even to myself, leaving that demon to linger in my mind, forever reminding me of the darkness that dwells within me. It is my 89th year of life and I can feel my old heart slowing. I have put it off too long. If I'm going to tell it, now is the time. I will not take this darkness with me to my grave.

I am a killer, a murderer, as guilty as the man who drove the knife. I could have called, I was right next to a phone, but I couldn't do it...no, no more lies. The truth is I didn't want to. I wanted to listen to her scream, wanted to watch as the last of her precious life blood flowed onto the street, washing it anew. How could it be that I, a beacon of high law and justice, would find in myself such a dark longing?

Even in my old age, as the decades have eroded my memories into mere wisps, I can still recall that night as vividly as if I had just lived it. It was late, fifteen minutes past the fourth hour of the morning. I was up in the second floor of the tower and had just finished scribing an interpretation of the Transubstantiation doctrine for review by my superiors. I yawned heartily, tired but content with the long day's work. I moved to flick the switch that would cease the artificial light dangling precariously above my head and end my long night. Before I could however, I heard the slam of a car door and the steady click-clack of a woman's heels strutting across the pavement. I looked out my open window to see who could be making such an arrogant racket so deep into the night. It was none other than Kitty Genovese.

I had known Kitty to be the eldest daughter of a good, moral family who had moved to Connecticut almost 10 years earlier to escape the crime in New York. Kitty was the eldest daughter of the family, and its black sheep. She lived a sinful life style, overstepping the natural bounds God has set for women, but such was not terribly uncommon for that day and age. I simply frowned and shook my head wondering how a girl sown into such a wholesome setting could fall so far.

It all seemed to happen in slow motion. From the darkness came a man in a brimmed hat and dark overcoat, the glint of steel in his hand. He sprinted after young Kitty and soon, that grey-silver protrusion was thrust deep into her back, emerging splattered with her crimson blood before diving in again, the assailant wrenching the hilt of the blade slightly with a sinister flick of the wrist before again withdrawing it. Kitty let out a scream that screeches with the same agonizing clarity now as it did back then. "Oh my God, he stabbed me! Help me!"

I simply sat in bewilderment and horror, half-questioning if this was some ill-

usion, some dream brought on by the late night's work all the while knowing that something of such wretched grasping lucidity could not be conceived even in my greatest of nightmares. Before the murderer could finish his dark task, light filled a previously darkened window adjacent from me and a figure emerged from it shouting down demanding the killer leave Kitty alone. Like a demon sprayed with holy water, the dark figure slinked back into the shadows, apparently fearful of the exposure of his wretched ways. Kitty fell to the ground and crawled away to her apartment, blood flowing freely from her open wounds, the light of her savior from the adjacent window extinguished soon after. For a moment, I thought it was over. I thought that I could fall to rest and wake up the next morning and continue on with my life and in time forget the evil, which I had just witnessed.

I was proven wrong, as soon after the assassin re-emerged from the darkness, searching for his victim with the same frantic intensity and tenaciousness as a mother does her lost child. I looked to the phone to my left and reached towards it. I had picked up the receiver and was about to dial when I hypnotically hung up and resumed my role as the secret voyeur to the dark deed. Faintly in my head, I heard the desperate pleading of all that I knew to be right to pick up the phone, but it could not penetrate the soft whisper resonating throughout my conscious commanding that I sit and observe. I watched the man search for Kitty. It was not long before I heard her scream one last time and I could almost feel the knife plunging into my own heart as it had just done hers. I felt shivers run down my spine as the dark figure emerged from the building moments later, his coat splotched with a dark burgundy red.

Right before he escaped into the back alleys, home to all manners of sinister creatures both man and beast, he looked up at my window. I stared directly into that empty blackness that was his hidden face. He tipped his hat to me before exiting my sight for the last time. I slowly made my way over to the switch, and flicked off the light, allowing myself to be consumed in the darkness.

I denied any knowledge of the event when questioned, claiming to have fallen asleep mere moments before. Over the past sixty years, I've attempted to live as if I were ignorant of the event, but not a day has passed that I have not wrestled with this demon. I know not the judgment God passed on Kitty, all I know is that if I should see her questioning face or her imploring eyes upon entering the pearly gates, I shall have no choice but to swiftly turn around, for I can never explain to her the darkness inside me that permitted for her demise.

God have mercy on my soul,

Father Jaravel