

t was a stormy night in the small town of Valenzuela. The wind howled through the empty streets, and the rain battered against the windows of the dimly lit diner where Detective Oliver Gaspar sat, nursing a cup of black coffee. The case he had been working on for weeks had hit a dead end—until tonight.

The body of a local businessman, Richard Goma, had been discovered in an alley, his throat slit cleanly. No signs of struggle. No witnesses. Nothing except the chilling sound of rain. The police had no leads. No suspects. And yet, Gaspar couldn't shake the feeling that something wasn't right.

He had been called to the scene earlier, and now, in the warmth of the diner, he reviewed the facts in his mind. He hadn't spoken to everyone involved yet. That's when Sergeant Mark Marcos walked in, his uniform soaked through, his face grim.

"We got a witness," Marcos said, sitting across from Gaspar.

"A witness?" Gaspar raised an eyebrow. "Why didn't they come forward sooner?"

Marcos's eyes darted nervously. "She was too scared. Said she saw the whole thing but couldn't bring herself to speak. It wasn't until she saw your name on the case that she decided to talk."

Gaspar nodded, understanding. Some people were just afraid to get involved, especially when they thought their lives might be in danger. "Where is she now?"

"At the station. We can go now, but I think you should talk to her alone. She seems... uneasy around cops."

Without waiting for Gaspar to respond, Marcos stood up and headed for the door. The detective followed closely, the night air sharp against his skin. They arrived at the police station, where a young woman named Lilibag sat in a small room, her hands nervously twisting a tissue. She was no more than twenty, with wide eyes and trembling lips.

"Lilibag?" Gaspar began gently, taking a seat opposite her. "I understand you saw something. Anything you can tell me would help."

Lilibag looked up, her eyes filled with fear. "I saw him," she whispered. "The man who killed Richard Goma."

Gaspar leaned forward. "Tell me what you saw."

She took a shaky breath. "I was walking home when I saw him—Goma. He was arguing with someone in the alley. A man in a dark coat. I couldn't hear what they said, but the man... he looked angry. Then, just before Goma could run, the man pulled out a knife and—" Lilibag paused, her eyes welling up. "He killed him. Just like that."

"And did you see the man's face?"

“No.” Lilibag shook her head vigorously. “It was too dark, and I was too far away. But the man... I don’t think he was alone.”

“Why do you say that?” Gaspar asked, intrigued.

Lilibag glanced at the door nervously before speaking in a low voice. “I think the policeman, Sergeant Marcos... he was there too. He was standing just outside the alley. Watching.”

Gaspar felt a cold chill run down his spine. Sergeant Marcos? He had been the one who’d arrived at the scene with him, the one who had assured him everything was under control. Could it be?

Before Gaspar could respond, Lilibag’s voice quivered again. “Please... I don’t want to be involved anymore. I’m scared.”

Gaspar stood, his mind racing. Could this be the break he needed, or was it just a desperate woman’s imagination? As he walked out of the room, he couldn’t shake the nagging feeling that the truth was closer than he thought, and it might be hiding in plain sight.

The storm outside continued to rage, but in Gaspar’s mind, one thing was clear—the real murderer might just be sitting in the next room.