

Out of the Storm *by Russell J. Perry*

Brendon Wilson was a light sleeper; it was a symptom of his condition. He was overweight and in fact would be considered, by medical standards, to be obese. This caused him to suffer from "Sleep Apnea", a disorder affecting his breathing while he slept.

Unbeknown to him, he would wake many times during the night to subconsciously correct his breathing, his condition rarely allowing him to fall into a deep sleep. So when the drop of water hit the side of his face, he woke immediately. In that instant a searing pain filled his head, but then as quickly as it came, the pain was gone.

Was he dreaming? It was hard to tell. He felt alert but everything unfolding around him was surreal. He was observing the scene from above, looking down at a body lying in the bed. A rain soaked stranger stood over the body holding a pistol, fitted with, what Brendon presumed to be, a silencer attachment on the barrel.

As he watched the strange scene unfold, he saw a rose of blood emerge from a single entry wound at the temple, and trickle down the face of the body on the bed. It was then that he became aware that it was his face, and it was his body that he was observing.

The blood ran down his cheek to join the remnants of the splash of water, which only moments ago had awakened him, having obviously dripped from the stranger's wet hair. The trickle of blood continued down through the corner of his mouth, to pool on the pillow supporting his head.

He suddenly came to the realization that he must be dead, and that he was experiencing what happens to a soul after death. He wasn't alarmed or dismayed at what was happening to him. Instead, of the many emotions he was feeling, the strongest was curiosity, and as he wondered at what might happen next, he had an overwhelming urge to leave the scene and drift further away. However the curiosity kept him there and he knew instinctively that he was in control of where he wanted to be, and chose to linger with his family.

He found that he could watch his killer, as the dark figure quickly, but silently, left the room and padded down the hall, wearing only sodden socks on his feet and leaving wet footprints on the dirty, wooden floor, as he moved stealthily into Brendan's father's room and across to his bed.

As the stranger pointed the gun at his father's temple, Brendon tried to shout a warning to the old man, however he could not make himself heard and he rushed at the intruder, only to pass right through him without contact as the killer pulled the trigger.

Ffutt! Ffutt! The gun flashed as his father's body jerked and then was still.

The old man was suddenly with him in the ether, looking at him in complete confusion. Brendan pointed as the stranger in wet socks move down the hall to Brendon's twin

brother's room, and they watched helplessly as the gun flashed twice more and Grahame met the same fate as had befallen them.

The three of them were together now, drifting upward until they were suddenly outside and above the old house. It was raining heavily and the dark thunder clouds hung low in the night sky. The old man was in a rage, he screamed incoherently at the night, and rushed back to the house. He wasn't ready to leave.

As the twins watched their father approach the rear of the house, the intruder appeared on the back porch. Warren Wilson flew at him screaming, and tried to smash into his killer as he emerged from the back door, but he passed right through him. The killer didn't flinch or deviate, totally unaware of the apparition as he retrieved his rain coat from where he had discarded it on the way in.

The brothers felt detached from the reality of what was unfolding around them. They calmly watched the killer begin to pull on his rain coat, and then pause as another dark figure emerged from the shadows, pointing a shot gun at his chest. They watched unmoved as the firearm was discharged at point blank range, and their killer slumped back against the door in the throes of death.

This carnage erupting around them seemed unimportant to the twins. They turned from the scene with disinterest and looked to the heavens as a soft light became visible through the darkness. They moved toward the light, feeling a calmness they could not remember experiencing during the short, angry lives they had lived until this moment.

They were 37 that year and had been raised for 30 of them by their abusive, drunken father. Their mother had walked out when they were seven, never to be seen again. Increasingly isolated from mainstream society, and lacking in any emotional support from their bitter father. They had relied on each other for everything that a mother and father should have provided; security, guidance, and love. Their life had been tough but each had the other; they owed their father nothing and each other everything, and now they would remain together. Even death wouldn't keep them apart.

That same night as the tropical storm lashed the North Queensland coast, and some twenty-five minutes before the killer, Giovanni Puglisi was to carry out his deadly contract at the Wilson farm house, Dr. Geoff Brewer was dashing from his car in the doctor's car park, to the front entrance of the Cairns Base Hospital. The umbrella he attempted to hold aloft was close to ineffectual, as the rain sheeted down almost horizontally and lashed at his rain coat, soaking his shoes and the bottoms of his trousers.

As he passed through the hospital foyer, he saw by the wall clock that the time was 12:25am, and although his extremities were soaking wet, Dr. Brewer was his usual jovial self as he strode into the labor ward, at his customary *busy* gait.

After shaking off his umbrella and shedding his rain coat at reception, he gave a cheery greeting to the nursing staff as he approached their station.

“Good morning Janet.”

He hailed the senior nurse on the ward, a Sister he had worked with for many years.

“How are you this fine morning my dear?”

They both chuckled at his reference to the weather.

“Good thank you Dr. Brewer, looking like a nice day outside, huh?”

Sister Janet Gordon continued with the irony as she returned his greeting.

“For ducks maybe.”

He chuckled again then shook his wet hair like a Labrador.

“It’s coming down in sheets out there. Life in the tropics, uh?”

Janet handed him a towel before giving him his patient reports, and as she tapped them with her finger, she added an observation.

“It looks as though you’ll have a juggling act on your hands this morning.”

She liked Dr. Brewer, he was a very good doctor with a pleasant, jovial demeanor and they had always worked well together. She had been at the hospital for about 30 years and he had been tending his patients there for about the same amount of time. Neither could be confident of who started there first, but they had developed a comfortable friendship and always looked forward to working together.

“Yes,” Brewer replied, “initially anyway. I have Mrs. Payne and Mrs. Faulk both in labor; they could very well deliver at the same time. In that case I might need a hand darlin’.”

In the end it *was* touch and go; Justin Faulk was born approximately three minutes before Ryan Payne, with Dr. Brewer moving adroitly between births with significant help from Sister Gordon and her staff. The mothers were happy and well, and babies were healthy and perfectly formed.

The only extraordinary thing that Dr Brewer had noticed was that both boys had a similar, small birthmark at the left temple, just beneath their hair line. The marks were about the size of an entry wound from a 9mm bullet. However, although he found the marks strange, there were no medical consequences to them, so he dismissed them as a coincidence of no significance, and thought no more about it.

The End

