

1. THE LAST TRAIN

Jeffrey Carlson was a good man: a decent¹, goodhearted and hardworking man. He had always been loyal to his friends, his family and the life-insurance company he had worked for as a salesman for over fifteen years. No one would ever have imagined that he was able to commit a crime. But one day, he decided to take a young woman's life.

Her name was Becky James. She was twenty-three years old, and she had just begun to work as a sales assistant at his insurance company, Pro Life Insurances. Jeffrey had been there for twenty years and Becky, a college graduate, had been assigned² to work with him. She was supposed to learn from his experience, accompany him on his door-to-door sales rounds, make notes and organize his busy schedule. Jeffrey's boss would later state that he had been delighted to have some company on his travels and had been eager³ to pass on all his knowledge of becoming a life-insurance salesperson.

Jeffrey and Becky had been working together for little over four months when he pushed her in front of an incoming subway train on July 22, 2015 in Greenwich Village, New York.

After Jeffrey's wife, Jill, had received news of his arrest, she reported to the police that they had been struggling to make ends meet⁴ during the previous couple of months. They and their two children had been forced to move to a smaller apartment outside of Brooklyn by the end of that month and

- 
- 1 decent – *rendes, becsületes*
 - 2 to assign sb. to sth. – *kijelöl, beoszt valakit valamire*
 - 3 eager – *készséges, mindent megtesz valamiért*
 - 4 to make ends meet – *kijön a fizetéséből*

to sell their car. But she told the police that Jeffrey had not shown any signs of stress over their lack of¹ income or their growing debt. He had remained positive, at least on the surface, repeatedly assuring her that there had always been ups and downs in his line of work and that everything would soon be okay again. She had believed him and swore to the police that this must be a misunderstanding and that he was not capable of such a crime.

“That’s not my Jeff, not my sweet Jeff...,” she kept saying.

Detective Dan Stevens had just got home from a fourteen-hour shift when he received the call from his former partner, Detective Gonzales. She informed him about what had happened and asked him to come to the precinct to get Carlson to confess, as he had not said anything since his arrest. Gonzales had been trying to get Carlson to talk and to get a full confession for the previous six hours, before realizing she needed help.

Stevens possessed a gift. He knew how to get suspects to talk. He never knew why they would open up to him as willingly as they did, but he accepted it without analyzing how his approach differed from that of others.

After his long day at work, he was in dire need² of some sleep and was not willing to take on another case, but he was coaxed³ into coming in anyway. He still liked Gonzales more than he wanted to admit and had difficulty saying no to her. They had stopped being partners five years earlier after their affair had nearly ended his marriage. His wife, Aimee, had given him an ultimatum – either Gonzales or her. Stevens had been transferred to a different station. He had never regretted his choice, except for those rare occasions when he had been in the same room as Gonzales.

1 lack of – hiány

2 to be in dire need of sth. – feltétlenül szüksége van valamire

3 to coax sb. into doing sth. – rábeszél valakit valamire

Stevens carefully stepped into the bedroom and kissed Aimee on the forehead. He whispered that he would soon be back, but she did not hear him. She was fast asleep. He hoped to be in and out of the station in less than an hour.

As Stevens drove down the interstate¹, sipping the rest of his afternoon coffee, he was already thinking hard about the case. There were two things that troubled him. First, the surveillance camera had been shut off. The transit police officer had stated that there had been technical difficulties with this particular camera that day. Second, there had been no witnesses² except for a blind and nearly deaf homeless person who had been seeking shelter³ from the rain. An unusual coincidence – no camera, no real witnesses – Stevens thought while parking his car at the police station.

After the incident, Carlson had remained at the crime scene. He had not moved from the platform, nor resisted his arrest. He had just kept looking down onto the tracks in front of him, saying over and over that he was sorry. One of the passengers of the incoming train had reported that he had looked like he was “zoned out⁴” or “somewhere else” – like in a daydream.

As Stevens entered the police station, he felt his heart beating faster. He forced himself to calm down and to take some deep breaths.

“Don’t let her see you’re nervous,” he told himself repeatedly.

The station itself was relatively calm. A handful of officers were on their computers typing reports and drinking their umpteenth⁵ coffee. There were two arrests waiting to be processed and one victim who was reporting her incident.

On the other side of the room stood Gonzales with a file in one hand, talking to a young officer – probably a recent recruit.

- 1 interstate (AE) – autópálya
- 2 witness – tanú
- 3 to seek shelter – menedéket keres
- 4 zoned out (AE) – nincs magánál
- 5 umpteenth – sokadik

Gonzales. She looked in Stevens's direction and waved him over. She seemed nervous and impatient.

"Hi," she said, handing him the file.

"Hi," Stevens replied somewhat surprised by her brisk welcome. Just as he was about to ask if everything was okay, she was already leading him into the interrogation room² in the back, while giving him the latest update on the case.

"So his prints came back clean – no arrests, no drink-driving, nothing. He's as clean as a whistle. They ran a round of tests on the victim and found a high level of alcohol in her blood. She had multiple brain hemorrhages, a severe skull fracture, internal bleeding and organ failure. You can imagine the body was in a bad condition after being hit by the train."

"Okay," Stevens mumbled while glancing over the case file.

"You okay alone in there? I have to make a phone call. If you need me though, I can stay," Gonzales offered, noticeably³ in a hurry to get away.

"No, no. I'll be fine. I'll be done here in a minute anyway," Stevens replied, realizing that this statement sounded a bit too boastful⁴.

"Alright, then. Thanks for coming in. See you soon – probably at Mitch's party?"

Gonzales gave him a pat on his upper arm as she walked past him. Stevens wanted to respond, but she had already left the room. Stevens was not planning on going to some officer's party, and she knew that. He stood there for a minute, file in hand, thinking about their weird encounter⁵. The young officer next to him started to yawn.

"Sorry sir," he quickly apologized when he noticed Stevens's angry look.

1 **brisk** – nyers

2 **interrogation room** – kihallgatóhelyiség

3 **noticeably** – látható, észrevehető

4 **boastful** – dicsekvő, hencegő

5 **encounter** – találkozás

"You need sleep? Then go get some, kid."

"No sir, I'm fine, thank you. My name is Davidson, Malcolm Davidson, sir."

The young officer wanted to shake his hand, but Stevens handed him the file instead and began to study Carlson through the mirrored glass; he was sitting quietly, his hands folded in his lap. The paper cup with water next to him seemed untouched. He had been arrested at 5:30 pm and now it was 11:30 pm. Stevens inquired¹ if he had eaten anything yet. Officer Davidson said he had not.

"Did he have a cup of coffee or tea or anything?"

"No, nothing sir," the officer replied, unsure of what Stevens was aiming at².

He was just about to ask, when Stevens asked him to bring two sandwiches – one cheese, one ham – and two cups of coffee. "Black. Four packs of sugar. Two spoons."

Davidson quickly wrote down the order and hurried out of the interrogation room. Stevens grinned after him, wondering where his own enthusiasm had gone throughout the years at work.

Rubbing his chin, he kept studying Carlson: pale skin, slightly overweight, a receding hairline³ and a permanent puppy-eyed expression on his face. And he appeared so trustworthy. Stevens knew he needed to approach him with caution. Men like this tended to suppress⁴ their inner demons to the point where they could suddenly snap. And so he knew he would probably need to lure⁵ Carlson's inner demon out to get a full confession. He hoped to get enough time with him to do so.

1 to inquire – érdeklődik

2 to aim at sth. – célzó valamire

3 receding hairline – kopaszodó fej

4 to suppress sth. – elnyom valamit

5 to lure sth. out – előcsalogat valamit

Without waiting for the officer's return, Stevens took the file and entered the room next door. As Stevens shut the door behind him, he let out a big yawn.

"Oh, I'm sorry," Stevens said, covering his mouth. "What a day. Honestly, what a horrible day. But what am I saying – yours must have been worse." He extended his hand to shake Carlson's and noticed that it felt moist and fleshy.

"Listen," Stevens began as he let the closed file drop onto the table, and sat himself down opposite Carlson. "I know you haven't said much since your arrest..." and he opened the file, pretending to look for a particular line, "... except for, and I quote: 'I'm sorry, so sorry.'" He looked up at Carlson, whose eyes began to fill with tears, and whose chin started to quiver¹. Stevens was not convinced. The soft and sensitive Carlson would never admit to what he had done.

"Listen man, I'm here to help you. Seriously. I know you're a decent guy. I know you love your family and your job. You wouldn't hurt a fly – at least that's what everyone in your life has said."

Carlson looked up, unable to hide a slight² grin. Stevens noticed it and felt confident that there was an entirely different person behind the shy appearance. Stevens continued, feeling he was on the right track.

"Soon, your appointed lawyer will come in here to release you on bail³ until you get to court for your hearing. But you will probably not be able to pay it because..." and he pretended to look for another specific line in the file "... you are in deep debt."

Stevens looked up at Carlson who was staring right at him. "Correct?"

Carlson swallowed hard. "Yes," he replied uncomfortably.

1 to quiver – remeg, reszket

2 slight – kicsi, halvány

3 on bail – óvadék ellenében