

Another One Gone

by

Lucas Padilla

1. INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Fading in from credit sequence, we open with a large shout from the impending victim.

JAMES SLOAN

Jennifer!

JENNIFER SLOAN

Why don't you listen?!

SLOAN

Don't give me any of that, I want you out.

James sloan turns away from her and takes a drink, looking frustrated and angry.

JENNIFER

So that's it, isn't it? You're just going to give up after three years? After agreeing to be your trophy, your prize, your possession?

SLOAN

Don't give me that lip, you have a helluva lot of nerve to give me that.

JENNIFER

Why don't you listen you big brute!

Jennifer slaps him

During this argument, we see shots of the two children of Sloan eavesdropping.

James walks towards a window, and leans against a wall, taking another drink.

SLOAN

You think I don't know about Stan? Or Bill?

Jennifer raises her arm, biting her finger

SLOAN

Divorce is inevitable, my sweet.

Jennifer exits the room, down a hallway. She runs out to a phone. The person on the other line picks up.

JENNIFER

He's on to us...

We close in on Stan looking concerned.

STAN

I'll be right over.

Scene fades to black.

2. EXT. ESTATE

We get several shots of the property during the evening, everything is calm and peaceful. Camera pans to window, lights turn on and we hear a scream. Fade to black.

3. INT. NOVA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

We fade into a shot of a Newspaper stating the killing has occurred. We see our protagonist, Nova, getting ready for her day. She seems tired and weary as she leaves her home.

4. INT. NOVA'S OFFICE - MORNING

Nova enters her office. She puts her coat on a chair.

NOVA

(Tiredly) Good Morning Parker.

PARKER

Morning... uh.

Parker, excitedly leaps up from his chair and walks over to her before she enters her office.

PARKER

Nova, you hear about the Sloan killing?

NOVA

Yeah, bunch of the usual bull if you ask me.

PARKER

Yeah, but hear this.

Nova turns around interrupting.

NOVA

Parker, I'm sorry, but I'm not interested in focusing on a ridiculous murder case involving money grubbing motives. It makes me squirm. If you ask me, no wealthy person ever died of "natural causes".

PARKER

Then you probably need a drink before you see this invoice.

Nova takes the invoice, looks at it, and sighs.

NOVA

They asked me to investigate the case.

PARKER

Yeah. You gonna turn it down?

NOVA

Even I can't turn down the sum they're offering. They're probably asking a small time Private Eye like me to keep their precious name out of the papers.

PARKER

Well, sounds like that will be a joy. When do they want you out there?

NOVA

5:30...

Cut to next scene.

5. EXT. DRIVING TO SLOAN ESTATE - IN CAR

We get a shot of Nova sitting in the back of her car. We see the outside which is filled with trees and winding roads.

NOVA

It certainly taking us a while.

She looks back and forth.

NOVA

Wake me when we get there.

We see the car pull up to the large gate. Nova stares at the sight of the lavish estate. The car drives up to a police officer waving.

OFFICER SCHULTZ
Well, hello Miss Vallance!

NOVA
Hello Schultz

The two greet and shake hands and hop onto a golf cart.

NOVA
How bad's the damage?

SCHULTZ
They're a bit shaken, but I'm sure they'll be worse by the time you're through with 'em.

NOVA
The report said that no house workers are under suspicion, is that right.

SCHULTZ
It was the servant's night out, and all of their alibi's check out.

The two drive up the long driveway revealing the large house on top of the hill.

SCHULTZ
There it is!

NOVA
I guess I'd be lucky enough to be able to afford the doormat.

6. INT. MAIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM

Nova is standing before the suspects, she stands with with an intimidating posture.

NOVA
Alright, my name is Nova Vallance, and I will be the private investigator for the remainder of the case. I have been hired by Jennifer, whom I understand is

the one who discovered the body, am I right?

Jennifer lowers her head, looking curious if she made the correct decision in hiring her.

JENNIFER

Yes.

NOVA

Right. I hope it is clear that you all no longer have private lives. Anything you hide will be discovered, and everything will be searched.

Everyone is quiet, with the exception of Emerson Sloan, who is smirking.

NOVA

So who's first?

7. INT. STUDY - NOVA QUESTIONS JENNIFER

Nova questions Jennifer. Jennifer is pacing frantically.

NOVA

Are you sure the two of you were happy?

JENNIFER

It was like any marriage.

NOVA

But what exactly does that mean?

JENNIFER

We fought, occasionally. But I didn't kill him.

NOVA

Uh-huh. I spoke with your husband's lawyer, he was planning on divorcing you. Were you aware?

JENNIFER

I didn't realize...

She stalls looking concerned

JENNIFER

Things between us were bad at the moment, but I didn't think he was going to go to those lengths...

NOVA

Okay...

Transition to Nova questioning Ashton. Ashton appears nervous, but it is unclear whether she appears to show grief or guilt.

NOVA

Do you know of anyone who would want to kill your father?

ASHTON

(timidly) Well, everyone. He was a bastard.

NOVA

How so?

ASHTON

He basically removed every ounce of contact from our mother. He used money as a threat. It was scary. One minute you think you have a roof over your head, the next you're fearing that the old man is gonna throw you out without a dime!

NOVA

You resent him for it?

ASHTON

Of course. I desperately want out of this place, at times it feels like a prison.

NOVA

Do you think your stepmother did it?

ASHTON

They did have an argument the night before. I was listening from the hallway. It was muffled, but all I heard was that dad was planning on divorcing her.

Nova makes a look, knowing the Jennifer has lied to her, and nods. We fade to next interview with Emerson. He is standing at a mirror shaving.

NOVA

I'm told that you didn't get along with your father.

Emerson comes into the room and sits down close to Nova.

EMERSON

Well, you know, what kid gets along with their folks 100% of the time!?

Nova cracks a small smile.

NOVA

It says here that you were, at a time, cut from your allowance?

EMERSON

He did that a lot, it was his way of discipline. But that rarely, if ever bothered me. After a while you get used to it.

NOVA

Now you don't live here on the estate, so what was the main cause for your visit?

EMERSON

Checking in on Ashton. I hate the way the two of them treated her. He tried pulling the same with me.

NOVA

So you weren't asking for any money?

EMERSON

What does money bring? Corruption and greed. I can make it on my own. Plus, I'd rather get it from anyone but him.

Nova looks at him, charmed.

8. INT. LIVING AREA - OFFICER AND NOVA

Nova exits room

SCHULTZ

So how'd that go.

NOVA

It's an interesting bunch. Could I take a look around?

SCHULTZ

Sure.

Nova begins with the bedroom where the body was found. She rummages through the closet.

NOVA

Sloan was killed with a blunt object. Where's the object?

SCHULTZ

We don't know.

NOVA

Too big a property, eh?

SCHULTZ

We were thinking that you..

NOVA

Yeah, yeah, leave it to me, since gentlemen are very seldom good at finding the milk in the refrigerator.

Shultz raises his posture silent.

9. EXT. PROPERTY - NOVA SEARCHING

Outside, Nova gazes at the property.

NOVA

Who's houses are those?

SCHULTZ

Guest and Servant housing. They all check out.

NOVA

I'd like to check out the sports grounds.

Scene dissolves to Nova and Schultz on Golf cart, she spots something on the bridge.

NOVA

Stop!

The golf cart comes to a complete stop. Nova Jumps off and looks out.

NOVA

You see that?

SCHULTZ

What?

NOVA

It's a wrench!

Nova goes down the creek and eagerly stepping over rocks finds a wrench.

NOVA

Blood.

Cut to next scene.

10. INT. NOVA'S OFFICE

We cut to Parker's reaction.

PARKER

Did the DNA check out?

NOVA

It did, and get this, they found a small speck of blood on the kitchen floor of the guest house. The labs are testing it now.

PARKER

So where exactly was he killed, if there were remnants all over the property?

NOVA

That's what I'm trying to figure out. Whoever did it is trying to get us off

track by planting evidence in different places. Being sloppy on purpose.

We hear the office door open. It's Emerson.

EMERSON

Hello Hello! Was I interrupting something important?

NOVA

As a matter of fact, we were talking about your father's killing.

EMERSON

Ah, yes, the old battle axe.

NOVA

Why are you here?

EMERSON

There are a couple things I need to confide in you. I hate police, and my quote-unquote stepmother? Dear lord.

Nova gives a look to Parker indicating that she want him to leave. He nods then vacates the room. Emerson walks up to the desk.

NOVA

So what is it you want?

Emerson sits on the desk.

EMERSON

Want? Nothing. I just wanted to give you some extra information.

NOVA

Please get off my desk.

Emerson obeys

EMERSON

You see, the night of the murder, there was an argument between my father and his beloved.

Nova looks intrigued.

EMERSON

They were arguing about the impending divorce, and that there was another man in the picture.

NOVA

Who?

EMERSON

My father's business partner... Stan Jacoby.

NOVA

Interesting.

EMERSON

Yeah! Another rich person scandal involving adultery. And get this, after the argument, I saw her go straight for the phone, probably to call, you know who.

NOVA

That's Goddamned wonderful. Can you testify to this.

EMERSON

Just as long as Jennifer gets what's coming to her.

NOVA

Not a fan?

EMERSON

Ew, God!

NOVA

I'll take that as a yes.

EMERSON

Well, makes just as much sense as you not being a fan of us.

NOVA

You know, for being born with a silver spoon in your mouth, you certainly resent that lifestyle.

EMERSON

It comes with being the poster child of capitalism. What's your reason.

NOVA

Growing up in poor town, and literally having to grapple, cheat, and steal your way to the top, it makes you resent the people who never had to try.

EMERSON

What was it like?

Nova gives a look, realizing that he is the first person ever to ask about her past. She is humbled, but frightened about opening up.

NOVA

You better get going. I'll report Jacoby and your stepmother.

EMERSON

Fair enough. It was great talking with you Miss Vallance.

Emerson stands up and walks to the door.

EMERSON

Say Miss Vallance, would you care to join me for dinner Friday night? As a celebration to the end of this case?

NOVA

(playfully) Get out of here.

Emerson shrugs and walks out. We follow him out to the hallway. Nova comes out of the door.

NOVA

Hey Emerson. Where on Friday?

EMERSON

How about Jay's Italian on third?

NOVA

It's a date.

They part ways. Nova reenters her office, Parker gives a chuckle. To which Nova takes a newspaper and hits him on the back of the head. She walks to her office and calls Schultz

NOVA

Schultz? Yes, take Jennifer Sloan and Stan Jacoby into custody.

11. EXT. SLOAN PROPERTY - BY POND

Schultz and Nova stand by the gate of the property, sometime after apprehending Jennifer.

SCHULTZ

So that about does it.

Nova nods. We hear a voice from behind.

ASHTON

Miss Vallance?

Nova turns to reveal her.

ASHTON

May I speak with you?

NOVA

Of course!

The two begin walking around the perimeter of the pond.

ASHTON

I have something to confess... I-I killed my father.

NOVA

Is that so?

ASHTON

I was tired of his bull. And him not letting me see mother, so... I killed him.

NOVA

Who are you trying to protect?

ASHTON

But?

NOVA

I don't for an instance believe that you did it.

ASHTON

I just can't believe that Mr Jacoby did it. I don't want anyone else getting hurt.

NOVA

Look, murder is tripe. It's messy, and you don't want to be stuck within it. But here's the thing, I know you have a good head on your shoulders, and you can get through this. Take it day by day...

Ashton tilts her head up and looks relieved.

ASHTON

There is something else.

We get a wide shot of them looking up at the house, then we cut.

12. EXT. STREET CORNER - THE DATE.

We see Nova standing outside on a street corner, early evening. She looks eager, happy, and somewhat nervous. We get a feeling that she has not had an evening like this in some time. A car drives up, it is Emerson. She waves and gets into the car.

13. EXT. RESTAURANT - THE DATE.

We cut to the server at the restaurant placing food on the table. He walks away to reveal Nova smiling. She looks relieved and invigorated, as if this is the first time she has been away from her work in years.

EMERSON

Hey, thanks for coming tonight, I can't tell you how much I appreciate it.

NOVA

No, thank you. I mean, it's rare that someone involved with work asks me out. It's an interesting, but nice change.

EMERSON

So what is it you do?

She gives a "no duh" look.

EMERSON
I mean, when you're not being
civilization's vigilante?

NOVA
Honestly... Nothing.

They both chuckle.

NOVA
My life is my work. You know, when you
find something mildly satisfying, and
you're good at it, you kind of stick
with it.

EMERSON
Yeah... Uh, sir!

Server comes over.

EMERSON
Could you please get me a 07 Dal Forno?

The server nods and walks away.

NOVA
Expensive much.

EMERSON
Eh, why not?

Nova begins to look peculiar at him.

14. EXT. LATER THAT EVENING

Dissolve into a little later in the evening. The sever delivers
the check to the table.

NOVA
Let me help out.

EMERSON
It's fine.

NOVA
Let me see it.

Without a response she grabs it and sees that it is exceptionally expensive.

NOVA
This is over \$100, please.

EMERSON
Seriously, money grows on trees, give it back.

The slight sternness generates a very different reaction from Nova. Emerson is distracted as pulls \$100 from his wallet.

NOVA
I'll be right back, I'm going to use the restroom.

She gets up and walks around the corner, she leans against the wall and calls someone. We see a shot of Emerson waiting. Nova comes back.

NOVA
(sighing) That was great!

EMERSON
Shall we go?

Nova nods with a slight smile. And they leave.

15. INT. EMERSON'S APARTMENT

They enter the living room of Emerson, Nova is surprised at it's size.

NOVA
I thought you said you lived in a apartment.

EMERSON
It is!

NOVA
This is a house.

Emerson chuckles as he grabs a vinyl record.

EMERSON
Cool with some music.

Nova nods, Emerson puts the record on. It's old 40s music.

EMERSON
May I have this dance?

NOVA
Sure.

The dance starts normally.

EMERSON
You fascinate me

NOVA
Why is that?

EMERSON
You hate wealth, but why are you here
with me?

NOVA
I could ask you why you asked out a
lower-middle detective, couldn't I?

The two gradually pull closer to one another.

EMERSON
The odds were against me, but I
thought, what the hell!

NOVA
You're lucky that in my profession, the
odds are never what you expect.

EMERSON
You should tell me more about it.

The two kiss. The scene implies that the passion is real. Towards the end, Nova reveals sadness. The kiss ends and the two embrace. Close up on Nova's face shows the emotion of what she is about to say next. We see her lips move close to his ear.

NOVA
(whispering) I know you killed him.

Emerson pulls away.

EMERSON

What?

NOVA

You killed him.

EMERSON

Is this some kind of joke?

NOVA

No, but you were joking when you told me about your hatred for money. Someone who can live without his allowances wouldn't be able to go out and drink Del Forno. Or pay for a meal as expensive as tonight's. You killed him because he was going to cut you off entirely from the family fortune. Your negligence towards finishing your education angered him. He saw that you were using his money for expensive apartments, and elegant nights out, instead of its intended purpose. So he finally decided to drop you into the real world. Wasn't that why you were visiting? Not for Ashton, but to persuade him otherwise. Then when he refused? You were in luck because of your father's intent to leave Jennifer. You overheard their argument, and took that as your chance. You have lied to me about many things, your love for money, your "protection" of Ashton. But you didn't lie about your hatred for your father and Jennifer. So why not kill two birds with one stone? You killed him in the guest house, but not to make it too obvious, you disgustingly sprinkled evidence all over the property. Some blood here, a weapon there. After which you dumped his body in his bedroom. And then to put the icing on the cake, you come to me to give your "vital" piece of information. Well, I'm not gonna play the sap for you any longer. I mean, why should I worry about you? You're on top of the food chain, so even if I arrest you, you'll probably slither yourself out of

it. Buy yourself freedom? You wealthy people are all the same. Living the life with you fancy champagnes, while we scrape the surface to be able to afford a one-bedroom apartment on the rotten side of town. I'm just sorry that I actually thought you were something different, but you're just like all the others. Greedy, corrupt, and ruthless. And you used me... Fuck you!

Emerson, angered, moves towards her, she slugs him. Just then Schultz breaks in.

NOVA

Arrest him! (sternly and upset)

Schultz grabs Emerson and takes him outside. Nova slowly cools. And stands in the center of the room almost motionless. Schultz walks back in.

SCHULTZ

So Vallance, the tests for the blood in the guest house came back, turns out it was beef blood. Are you sure it was him?

NOVA

There's enough evidence, just... please, get him out of here.

Schultz nods and leaves the room. We hold on a couple shots of Nova looking around in this empty, large room. She looks sad, as if the feelings she had for emerson were genuinely true, or even as if she made a terrible mistake.

THE END