

It Wasn't Me

by Lawrence Allan

Brad snorted. "First, I want to be clear. It wasn't my fault." He shrugged. "I'm not to blame. I didn't do it."

He was thirty-three, white, and believed most people thought he was handsome. His expensive suit fit well because he had a great metabolism and good genes. He sat alone at an aluminum table in the interrogation room at the Santa Barbara Police Station, having confidently waived his right to his attorney being present.

A pair of detectives sat opposite. A mid-career, no nonsense Latina woman on the left, and an almost at the end of his career, white man on the right. Each had a legal pad in front of them and a pen in their hand.

Brad straightened his red tie and went on, turning up the charm. This was going to be just like presenting to his team.

"I may have participated in *some* of it. But, what I'm saying: I'm not the one who should be blamed. Sometimes there's a confluence of events that overwhelms a situation." He looked back and forth between the detectives and the mirrored glass on the wall. "In other words, shit happens." He smiled. That should explain it.

The detective on the right nodded, unsure just what the hell this Brad guy meant. He scribbled a note.

Brad's smile faded as he continued making his case. "No one has to be *blamed* for the shit happening. That's the point. No one is at *fault* for the shit happening. Because... shit happens." He fiddled with the can of Diet Coke they had given him. "While I was there and I

may have done some shit. I wasn't the only one. And because I want it out there, it wasn't my fault he died."

Brad shifted. The metal chair squeaked.

"Mostly."

He shrugged. "Let's be honest. Harrison was old. It was bound to happen sooner or later. He wasn't healthy. He wasn't living optimally. He drank. He smoked cigars. He fooled around with younger women." Brad leaned forward, conspiratorially. "Women that were way too young for him." He sat back. "*One* of those things was going to kill him. It just happened that, while we were out on the boat celebrating his birthday, he died."

He took a drink. The detective on the left had a follow-up question. Brad put up a hand, answering before she even had to ask. He loved anticipating people's needs.

"The drugs. Yeah." He took a breath. "We were *all* doing drugs." He paused. "I *may* have been the one to suggest that someone bring coke. But — " He put up a finger, emphasizing his honesty. "I'm not the one who brought it. It's one of those shit happens things. I suggested it at work and, shit happens, there's a bunch of cocaine and hookers."

Brad paused. Bit his lip.

"I did invite the hookers. That's on me."

Not believing her good luck, the detective on the left nodded and made a note.

Brad took another drink, surprised at how dry his throat was. "It was a tragedy. We all feel bad for what happened." He considered what he just said. "Well, Harrison probably felt the worst. While it was happening. He didn't feel bad for... long." Brad attempted a smile, but then thought better of it. He nodded, instead, looking to commiserate with the detectives.

The one of the right took another note.

Brad smiled, frowned, and remembered why he was there. “Harrison, the old man, he meant so much to all of us who were on the boat.” He paused. “Except for Gary. Gary was there because, you know, he’s a climber.” Brad tutted. “It’s wrong, you know? Gary wasn’t there to celebrate a life. He was there because he thought Harrison could ‘help’ his career. Sure, Gary’s family, he’s his grandson, but Gary’s really the worst sort of family, amiright?”

The detectives stared at Brad, wondering where this was going.

He pointed at them. “If we’re talking about the confluence of events, what led to the tragedy that night, we should really look at Gary. Gary shouldn’t have been there.” Brad tapped the metal table and it rang each time. “Gary may have been the one who brought the coke.” He leaned back, crossing his arms. “I’m just putting that out there. You’re welcome.” He hesitated. “Sure, I didn’t see that he brought it. But it could’ve been him. You should be talking to Gary.”

The detectives looked at each other. The one on the right took a note while the other studied Brad.

He licked his lips. “It was epic. The party. I’m not going to deny that. Out there on the water. On a big yacht. An open bar. Everyone fucking everyone. Cocaine. Pills.”

The detectives looked at Brad. The one on the left raised her eyebrow.

“There *were* pills besides the coke. Some people think coke is old-fashioned. I used my connections to get pills.” He put up a hand, defensive. He looked at the mirror. “I got them because I wanted *everyone* to have a good time and not feel left out. I won’t apologize for it.”

The detective on the right sucked his teeth while the detective on the left gestured with her pen, impatient.

Brad got the hint. “As we watched the Old Man choke on the pills, it was a nightmare. His face turned bluish, and we were all, you know... We didn’t know what to do, or even if we should do something.”

The detective on the left raised both of her eyebrows.

Brad explained, “*He* was the one that took a handful of pills. We tried to warn him. *I* tried to warn him. I’m almost certain that I said something. You can ask... uh...” He couldn’t remember who. “You should ask around. Someone said something. But, Harrison, you know how he was, how he could be all, you know, full of himself.”

The detectives shook their head. They didn’t know how Harrison could be. They had never met the man.

Brad pushed on. “When he grabbed all those pills, we said, ‘woah, woah.’ *He* said he used to do it all the time in the Eighties.” Brad snorted. “I didn’t know what that meant. I wasn’t alive in the Eighties.” He shook it off. “Anyway. What were we supposed to do? Shit happens.” He looked the detectives in the eye. “If you’re really looking to finger someone for this, I mean...” Brad looked at the two-way mirror. “It’s *his* fault he died.”

Satisfied, he grabbed the Diet Coke, leaned back and crossed his legs.

“And it definitely wasn’t my idea to throw his body overboard.”

The End