

THE SOLAR MURDER

A close-up, profile view of a young woman with brown hair, eyes closed, and a serene expression. She is in a bathtub filled with white bubbles, with her head resting on the edge. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

by

Stan Daneman

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Dedicated to my wife and daughters,
Anita, Taryn and Lauren
with all my love

About the Author

Stan Daneman was born in South Africa. He is a graduate of the University of South Africa obtaining a B.Com (Accounting) and a postgraduate Hon. B.Com (Business Economics). He also holds a diploma in Organization and Methods and is a certified management consultant.

He is a past president of the institute of management consultants of South Africa and was awarded fellowship of the institute.

During his business career he held senior management positions as a management consultant with professional firms and Director of Education positions in the IT Industry.

Mr Daneman has published five books. His three books of poetry were published in 1987, 2002 and in 2013. In 2009 he published a book on the positioning and measuring of learning in an organization. His two previous books through The Endless bookcase were; 'From my hilltop – a living history of South Africa' (a unique look at the changes in the country as narrated by a tree) and 'Reflections of heaven' (2013).

Mr. Daneman immigrated to Canada in 1995 and resides in Richmond Hill Ontario. He is married with two adult daughters. This book is dedicated to his wife and daughters.

This is Stan's first novel.

CHAPTER 1

The post verdict statement to Reporters and TV Stations was always a blur. The lights, focus of attention, basically inept or plain stupid questions were certainly not where Greg Winters got his most favorite moments. In truth he loathed the experience.

But it was a necessary evil that he unfortunately had to deal with. And one that he had dealt with so many times before. Like all of the other high profile cases that he had won for his clients he knew that statements of satisfaction with the verdict, a relief for his client and the families and confirmation in the justice system, were all processes that he had to go through. He would have preferred to have slipped out of Court and gone home to rest. When you are Greg Winters, the most successful Defense Lawyer of high profile clients in the State and if not in the Country, then it is not possible to just slip away from the limelight.

Over the years he had realized that his best advertisement for his next high profile murder case is the post verdict interviews. He usually took a long break between cases but he understood that the limelight of a recent successful verdict was like melting gold. One had to take advantage of it before it just evaporated away. Standing in front of the TV cameras outside of a Court House was not in his natural character comfort zone but he knew that it had to be done.

This case had been different. All cases were different.

This one was different because he knew that it was his last.

He had applied himself and made demands on his team like he had never done before. He was a driven man once he took on a case and he drove his associates to the point of self-destruction. Just as he drove himself - to the very end of his abilities. He had not

always been successful. In the early years he was involved with the law – a highly acclaimed student but more interested in his life style than in his career. Somehow his mind set was that the profession owed him something. His ego had got him into trouble with clients, with the partners of the Law Firm that had recruited him and with the staff that worked with him. It was only after he was encouraged to seek alternative career opportunities outside of the firm that had spent so much on recruiting him that he finally began to settle into his own boots. The over-sized boots that he thought were a perfect fit began to feel uncomfortable and were eventually discarded. He now became committed to the law instead of just being involved with it. Mind you his assignments were to have his clients found not guilty so in a way he used the law as opposed to only being committed to it.

He had started his own practice and began to function as a lawyer worthy of his outstanding academic achievements. It took a long time – and maybe he never really outgrew his ego or sarcasm but he became a highly sought after defense lawyer. He was not only gifted with a genius IQ but with a mind that could almost see into the complex and sometimes disturbing thoughts and actions of his clients. He could almost “feel” if they were guilty or innocent of the murder charges brought against them right from the time that he first interviewed them. What he felt was besides the point as his sole job was to have his client found not guilty. His reputation came to the fore after he successfully defended a famous Host of a TV Morning Show charged with murdering his wife. That case gained national and international attention – and vastly increased his fees for taking on a case. There had been over a dozen equally as high profile cases since that milestone one some twenty five years ago now.

As he had heard the most recent set of NOT GUILTY verdicts been delivered in the Court House he had become distracted by just how he was now becoming also disengaged with the actual process of the reading of the verdicts. He was so convinced that his case was sound, that he had all but destroyed the arguments and evidence provided by the Prosecution that he just expected

what would be the outcome. He had picked up these danger signals some time back and each of the last few cases forced him to keep total focus right to the very end of the case, including the reading out of the verdicts. His distraction this time was more of a self-farewell than one of disinterest.

Greg counted himself to be the luckiest guy in the world when he met Mary.

He had never really had any serious relationships with anyone prior to meeting the bouncy five foot four brunette who simply stole his heart at their first meeting. To his utter amazement she said that she fell in love with him from that very first time too.

Being romantic was not in his nature but just being with Mary made him feel free and excited about life. They married about a year after meeting – a meeting that friends swore was just a coincidence and had never been planned. Neither Greg nor Mary believed them. Greg was almost thirty when they got married and was in the process of branching out alone at the time. There was not much work around in the first year or two and financially things were pretty tough. But Mary never complained. She was the light of his life and never stopped being positive about the future. To a large degree she helped him find that pair of shoes that fitted him. How he developed as a lawyer and how he began to use his skills was all because of one Mary Winters. She would never have agreed with his assessment that she was the change in his life.

They put off having children for several years until they felt that they were becoming financially stable. Unfortunately by that time it was too late as Mary had been diagnosed with cancer.

Mary had always wanted a cabin in the country overlooking a small lake and with a village near-by so that she could walk around and enjoy the local wares. While Mary was well enough they started searching for a weekend cabin that would match her dream location. Finally they found it. Well, they found the land and had a cabin built. It was just off of the I80 near Alpine Meadows, not far from Reno and just inside the Nevada border with

California. They designed the cabin themselves and had it built in record time – but only after the endless delays due to local town red tape. It was during this time that Greg had met the local Sherriff, Norm Wilson who became his dear and personal friend. Whenever Greg was in town he would take Norm for a coffee and they would chat about fishing or the local mountains that Greg and Mary had fallen in love with. They never spoke about Greg's cases. Norm somehow knew that Greg was in Alpine Meadows to "detox" from the extreme stresses of his profession.

They moved into their cabin early one spring and experienced the full bloom of mountain wild flowers and the early morning hazy sunrises over their small lake. The cabin was only a mile from the main road directly through the bush. It was a difficult terrain and one that could take an hour or more to navigate through. To drive was an extra five miles as the road had to cut around dense brush and other small lakes. The village was seven miles away and that gave Greg and Mary their personal space but also to be close to town if they wanted to pop in for groceries or just to walk around. They spent two months there that year and it was sheer bliss.

By late summer Greg had taken on another case and his time was very limited over the next eighteen months. They did drive up to the cabin several times but Greg needed to be in the city and these visits were not that relaxing. Finally the case came to an end and Greg obtained a NOT GUILTY verdict. He was exhausted from the ordeal and could think of nothing better than moving into his cabin for several months. He had become so absorbed in the case that he had not noticed that Mary's health was deteriorating. Even with such a small frame he should have seen that she was loosing weight. She had never complained and even stayed out of his way for several weeks as the trial was underway and gaining national headlines. She had volunteered to go up to the cabin and make it ready for their stay – Greg had mumbled his approval and a few days later he recalled that she was leaving that morning. He was fighting hard on the case and he felt distracted when they said goodbye.

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They spoke briefly each of the first few days but he'd forget to call until it was too late at night and he knew that she would be asleep. She was only several hours away but it seemed like the other side of the world to him right now.

He could not wait for the post verdict interviews to be over so that he could wrap things up and pack and drive to the cabin.

When he arrived late the next day he was horrified to see what Mary looked like.

She had refused treatment and had sworn her doctor to silence.

Greg had won his case but lost his wife just two weeks later.

She was his soul mate and his one and only love. She had asked to be buried near their beloved cabin and it took some negotiation with the Town Authorities for this to be allowed. Sherriff Norm Wilson was like a brother to Greg for the next few months. He could not have asked for a better friend in life.

It took a full year before Greg returned to his office in the city and began the process of looking for a new client. With his reputation it did not take long.

That was over twenty years ago and now he stood outside of the Court House thinking that the road was now over and that he could retire.

He was wrong.