



THE TENNIS CHAMPION'S LAST MATCH

She was married to a strange man, thought Elina as she cut off a piece of fried fish and dipped it in the sauce. She was at a quite and pleasant Chinese restaurant together with her husband, the famous tennis player Thomas Lennartsson, and it was late on a Monday evening. But she wasn't happy even if perhaps she should have been. After all, not every young girl could go to a luxury restaurant on a weekday and drink the most expensive wine with her food. However, Elina's thoughts were on other things. She wanted to move from the city to the country and she wanted children. But, above all, she wanted Thomas to finish with tennis. She was tired of flying everywhere; it was unnecessary and pointless. Sweden was, in any case, the best and most beautiful country in the world.

She hated sitting in a hot tennis stadium pressed together with a lot of fat Americans while Thomas played. And she never liked living in a hotel. She wanted to sleep in her own bed as she found it unpleasant to be in a bed

where other couples had slept. Her husband had promised to finish with tennis when he was twenty-eight, but he would soon be thirty and his schedule was as full as ever. Elina felt increasingly bitter when he smiled and filled her glass. Did he think he could keep her quite by just giving her alcohol? For two years he had failed her and deceived her.

Thomas, who was sitting beside her, began to paw her in a way that she loathed. He pressed his hand up her naked thigh under her skirt until he reached her panties. That was quite enough for her. There were two older gentlemen sitting at the table beside them, who saw everything and showed by their lecherous looks they wanted to do exactly the same with her.

This time she would make Thomas regret he had publicly disgraced her. She scratched his arm and brusquely removed his offensive hand. He looked with astonishment at his pretty wife and couldn't understand why she was boiling with anger. Her dark blue eyes flashed with anger and she leaned towards him filled with hatred.

"Don't do that again," she whispered in his ear.

"Don't do what again?" He said in a loud voice, which everybody could hear.

Elina felt she could scratch his eyes out, the damned rogue.

"You know what I mean," she said.

"I have no idea what you mean," said Thomas with a cheeky, oily voice which made her mad, and she hissed like a wildcat.

The two older gentlemen continued to stare at her in the same repulsive way and Elina could have killed them both.

"Don't paw me in the way you did just now," she said.

"So that is what you meant."

Thomas pretended to be surprised.

"Why can't you lower your voice? Everybody is looking at us."

"I can wait until we get home sweetie," he roared.

"But then you won't escape when I take you in every exciting way and more!"

He had still not lowered his voice. This was unbelievable, but Elina realized it was even more unbelievable that she had ever been in love with such a repulsive swine.

Sometimes, when Elina was extremely upset, she did things she later regretted. If she made a scene in this restaurant it would soon appear in every

gossip magazine in Sweden. However, everything between herself and her husband was destroyed so she could just as well let the worst happen.

“I want to talk seriously to you, Thomas,” said Elina in a high piercing voice.

“And I don’t care if we are in a restaurant.”

“Talk seriously about what, sweetie? We have nothing to talk seriously about; we are rich and happy.”

She raised her voice even more so that she almost screamed. The journalists could write whatever they damned well wanted. She was hysterical with anger.

“I shall now tell you what I want to talk seriously about. It concerns the whole of our life together: tennis, children and broken promises.”

Thomas went red in the face and that frightened her. It could mean physical violence. True, he had never hit her in public, but he had really hurt her at home and in hotel rooms. Several times she had been compelled to see a doctor for everything from facial bruises to broken ribs. And now when she thought about these incidents she realized she should have left him a long time ago.

“How can you talk about broken promises?” he bellowed.

“You have promised many times to be my support before important matches. It is you who have failed me and not vice versa.”

Strangely enough, Elina’s attitude towards him began to soften slightly, but she knew that at any time she would have another outburst which he would punish as usual by hitting her on the nose.

He was a tennis champion but he was also a common criminal. It was a violation of Swedish law to hit her. However, he was an extremely obnoxious thug.

“Listen to me now Thomas. Don’t you remember you promised me we should move to the country as soon as you were twenty-eight? You said you would finish with tennis and instead devote yourself to me and we should have children.”

Elina trembled with fear. Her mind seemed to be unbalanced. She was determined to leave him and yet she talked as if she wanted to continue. She didn’t understand herself. It felt as though there were two duelists in her head who wanted nothing more than kill each other.

“Do you want a child?” said Thomas sarcastically.

“But that’s no problem. Let’s go home and have a fuck.”

“Stop torturing me!” begged Elina desperately.

“You have no reason to use bad language, you only do it because you enjoy seeing me suffer. Try to listen seriously instead. On our first wedding anniversary you promised you would finish with tennis at twenty-eight. You have already won most of the top tennis titles and you won’t win any more. Nobody does at your age. Please Thomas, for my sake, finish with tennis.”

“Never! I have not yet won a Davis Cup with Sweden. And I am not going to fail my country and all my Swedish fans.”

This enraged Elina.

“You are mad,” she screamed.

“You are a stupid idiot!”

Everybody in the restaurant now looked at them and he immediately began to assault her.

A minute later a tough Chinese waiter separated them. Her nose was bleeding and she was determined everybody in Sweden should know what tyrant their idol really was. The swine would be compared with Hitler and Stalin, not with Björn Borg and Mats Wilander. But as Thomas was the champion, people would of course take his side. Supporters love their idol even if he does assaults. The very idea of having a child with him was insane.

Elina didn’t know anybody in Stockholm. All her friends and relatives lived in the north of Sweden. However, if she plucked up all her courage, she could go to the person on duty at the place for women who had been assaulted.

But she couldn’t do it. Instead she went with Thomas to their large apartment in Stockholm and gave her body to him. She was afraid to stop the swine despite her strong feelings of self-contempt. This evening there was no limit to her willingness to dishonor herself. What have happened to her? She, who was once such a proud and brave steelworker’s daughter, had become a browbeaten slave. However, she came to a firm decision. Now she would let him know. He slept, but she woke him up.

“Thomas, listen to me!”

“What is it?” He muttered.

“I am going to leave you and I want a divorce.”

He sat up at once. His face was redder than Elina had ever seen it and she was really scared.

“Do you know whom you are talking to?” He said.

There was a gruesome tone in his voice.

“Of course I know.”

“You are talking to Sweden’s greatest tennis player ever.”

“No, you aren’t. Björn Borg was greater than you and you have treated me horribly. Our relationship is over and I am going to get a divorce.”

“Do you know what you need? I think you need a good hiding. What you got at the restaurant was not enough. You need to take another look at your own blood.”

“Don’t you touch me!” Screamed Elina.

She fled into the kitchen. Then a change came over her. Thomas was going to see his own blood instead. She took the sharpest knife out of a drawer.

Without suspecting anything Thomas rushed into the kitchen with his fist clenched ready to hit her mouth but she sidestepped and he missed.

He barely saw his young wife’s furious lips before the knife entered his eye and he was blinded for ever. Blood poured out of the terribly injury.

“Come and look at this all of you. Your tennis idol wants to take part in the handicap Olympics,” she giggled hysterically.

Elina had however decided to send him to the souls championship in Hell.

As she had already gone this far, she felt she could easily continue to the end of him. Furthermore, she wanted to know how it felt to kill a tyrant. Very few women in the world had ever experienced the sensation.

While Thomas writhed on the slippery blood covered kitchen floor and cried desperately for help, she gave him ten deep stabs in his chest and belly.

He gradually became quite, but just as he was dying, a treacherous smile came on his lips.

“You have finished dancing with the tennis champion,” his fading voice whispered.

“But there will be quite another dance for you with the tennis ball. My very last ball.”

“What damned tennis ball?” Cried Elina.

Thomas didn’t answer. He was dead.

Elina staggered into the bathroom and in the shower she began to cry inconsolably. Despite all the horror she had endured she was satisfied with herself. She knew she had done the only right thing. If Thomas had lived he would soon have found a new girlfriend and begun to hit her also. She had

saved some unknown girl from a similar tragedy; she was a benefactress, not a murderer.

Suddenly, Elina felt extremely tired. She lay down to rest. It was impossible to sleep. Later on she would have to do a lot of housework including the removal of several litters of blood from the floor.

She went into the kitchen to drink a glass of milk and to look at her dead husband. But the corpse and all the blood had disappeared. Elina screamed with horror.

There was just a single tennis ball on the kitchen floor. Slowly the ball rolled towards her and began to bounce. The laws of physics seemed to have drowned in a sea of black magic.

She fled to the stairs and then down to the cellar, but the ball followed her like a wolf chasing its prey. She couldn’t get rid of it.

Later, when they found her dead body in the cellar, a tennis ball had been forced deep into her windpipe. She had been killed by suffocation.

Elina was a victim of tennis.