

[Transcript] Sword and Scale Nightmares / Not Recovering

In a small town near Amonville, New York, senior citizen Dwight Powers was minding his own business, sitting at his desk on a Zoom call. On this day the sun was streaming through the window near his desk and he was thoroughly enjoying the camaraderie of others on the call. But in the background, viewers detected movement behind him. They could hear the door opening and see a man creeping quietly across the room. They could never, in their wildest imaginations, know who or what was coming for Dwight. Welcome to Sword and Scale Nightmares, true crime for bedtime where nightmare begins now. Amonville, New York is a village that's located on the south shore of Long Island. Its origins date to the turn of the century. At that time it was touristy and wealthy with lots of large homes. Annie Oakley, a famous early American sharpshooter, visited a lot. It was also home to gangster Al Capone, but people now likely associated with a famous house where an entire family was killed. And when a new family moved in, they were allegedly haunted by ghosts or demons still living there. A popular movie was made in the 70s called The Amonville Horror. In 2020, another more realistic horror occurred. On a sunny day around noon, Marine Vietnam vet Dwight was sitting in his bedroom at his desk. The cozy room was especially luminous and warm due to the rays of sunshine streaming through a nearby window, and outside the skies were perfectly blue. It was a gorgeous and clear day, and Dwight was trying to maintain his established routine, even though he no longer left the house much. Like a lot of veterans, unfortunately, this man spent years struggling with an alcohol problem. So on this Thursday, May 21st of 2020, he was attending a virtual Alcoholics Anonymous Zoom meeting with about 20 other people. 72-year-old Dwight was really proud he had a whopping 45 years of sobriety under his belt and had earned his 45 coins as a reminder of this accomplishment. Not many recovering alcoholics can say that. Dwight had seen so many members come and go, and seen so many of them go back to drinking and relapse, which is extremely common. Dwight was single, so he needed the support of his AA friends more than ever, and he needed to be sure he kept in touch with a sponsor. He knew the importance of keeping up with the program, especially during COVID, when everybody was on lockdown and shut inside their homes, doing all the things that recovering alcoholics shouldn't do. This was New York City, Long Island, the epicenter of the virus, and the dangers of catching it were real and high. Everything was shut down, including facilities that hosted these much-needed sobriety meetings. The Zoom call started, and the leader went through the rituals as usual, with members introducing themselves by first name and taking turns to share their stories or current difficulties, as well as helping new and ongoing members with their troubles.

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Participants were doing just that, and the meeting was rolling along nicely. Everyone in the comfort of their own environments drinking coffee, a staple of recovering alcoholics, and some were eating lunch or donuts. Then, in the middle of someone's share, Zoom participants noticed a figure coming into the picture. It was easy to see him approaching, but his intent was far less clear. It seemed odd to them that someone else could just barge into a private meeting. Typically the attendants would find a calm space and shut their doors. That's what AA is all about, taking space and letting skeletons out of closets in complete anonymity. This intruder is clearly not one of them, and his clothing is even more curious. In fact, he doesn't have any on. His nudity, along with baldness, presents quite the visual of Caucasian flesh behind Dwight, a naked bald man stealthily getting closer and closer. The naked man looks angry, and Dwight doesn't even know that he's there. But what he does notice is the shocked faces of each person who is now witness to the scene in Dwight's background. The man's expression changes from anger to rage. Dwight is just engaging in the banter when he starts to wonder what everyone is looking at. One by one the chatter stops and the jaws drop in an incredulous gaze. Suddenly the man starts violently pulling Dwight out of his seat. It's kind of hard to tell what's going on because the screen is only showing bits and pieces, but it's obvious his fists are pummeling Dwight. The last thing some of his viewers see are bed sheets being ripped from the bed by the naked guy with a tattoo on his left arm. Then it looks like he's using them to cover Dwight, who is now apparently on the floor. Of course, the witnesses in the meeting were terrified, shouting in chaos through their microphones and wondering who this naked man was, where he came from, and what just happened to Dwight. Dwight Powers is lying on the floor with sheets over him. While the rest of the supporters in the AA group are stunned as they quickly converse in confusion. One caller starts pressing the 911 keys just after the nude intruder notices him and the rest of the faces on the computer. So he immediately covers up the camera and panic. The frantic man calling for help decided it was up to him to make the call, otherwise everyone would be trying to get help and would be talking over one another. It was already confusing enough as it is, because this was Long Island and there were so many participants, not everyone knew each other. People are constantly coming and going from support groups, and even the regulars may not know each other's last names due to the policy of being anonymous. People in the meeting were now looking at each other's faces on their monitors, loudly talking in excitement and trying to figure out details to help emergency responders

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find the address to the right house.

But no one actually knew where Dwight lived.

That was a problem for police, because now they had to find the address where this attack was occurring, and they had to find it fast.

The fallen man described in the Zoom call was probably injured, and they had no idea where the attacker was at this point.

Emergency vehicles were ready to respond, but they needed a definite address.

After about ten minutes, police tracked down the location of the incident.

They arrived shortly after, but when they get there they see that the townhouses all look the same.

Every single home was a light shade of red brick with a green door, and the numbers were large but difficult to make out at first glance.

Squinting their eyes to read the number they find, ten Dixon Street.

They're surprised to see this is a calm street in a middle-class neighborhood, but then again, nothing ever really surprises them anymore.

They surround the house, and during the time it took responders to get there, the killer was inside, figuring out how to clean up the crime scene.

Dwight is already dead, and covered with a now blood-soaked bedsheet.

The floors and the walls are covered in cast-off blood spatter.

The killer searches the house for a mop, a bucket, and garbage bags.

He shoves the bloody sheet into the garbage bag and takes the mop and bucket into the bathroom to fill it with water, but then here's a knock on the door.

A spontaneous reaction is to answer the door.

He throws on a random pair of pants, heads down the steps, and opens the door to the barrage of police officers, who are loudly announcing themselves and trying to push their way into the house when the killer slams the door in their faces.

He runs through the house desperately looking for a way out.

He runs to the back door, but it's also blocked by officers.

Realizing he's trapped, he scrambles back up the steps.

Time is running out.

He has to get out of there, and the options are dwindling, so he sees a large window and decides there's no other way.

He poises himself on the ledge with dangling feet and leaps.

The killer has jumped and fallen to the ground.

He was injured, but not enough to keep him from fleeing the scene.

Residents of the area couldn't miss the bloody bald man with no shirt or shoes, walking, running, looking shady as he tried to escape and come up with a plan.

Cops were in pursuit, so he didn't have much time.

Desperate, he storms into the first convenience store that looks appropriate.

He would have to rob them, but robbery was much better than getting caught for the bludgeoning and stabbing he had just committed.

The shirtless killer walks right into the store, and you would think he's going to take some water to clean off the blood, but instead, he quickly spots beverages near the front of the store, so he grabs three plastic bottles of Dr. Pepper.

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Next, he rushes out, finds a relatively quiet spot, and starts dumping Dr. Pepper on himself to rinse away the blood spatter.

It's possible that he knew almost all carbonated soft drinks contain carbonic acid, which can be useful in breaking down enzymes and blood stains.

It's also possible that he believed the fable of police actually carrying large containers of Coca-Cola in their vehicles because they never know when there will be an accident, where they need to dump it on the road to get rid of blood stains.

Meanwhile, the police were about to storm the scene of the crime with their guns ready, since they assumed the killer was still inside waiting.

Each officer was in stance, with guns aimed forward.

Careful to check every room, every corner.

When they reached the second floor and entered Dwight's bedroom, they found him on the floor dead.

Not only savagely beaten, but brutally stabbed 15 times.

This looks like something personal, maybe a rage killing of some sort.

They noticed the mop and broom in the bathroom, and they also noticed that there are numerous knives lying in plain view.

The sheer number of knives is a sight in itself, and when they inspect more closely, they see that the blades are bent on all but one knife.

The mysterious and naked intruder obviously had trouble getting the first knife to do its job, so he went for a second, and then a third.

It was obvious at the scene that he had left the room and returned with an assortment of knives, auditioning each one to see if it was a better fit for the job.

The other knives left on the floor were bloody, but impaired from being too weak to stab into tough cartilage and bone.

Entering the bathroom, police also saw the killer's feeble attempts to clean up evidence.

This was overkill and sloppy.

At this point, police find no one else in the house, but they do see the open window and can't believe their eyes.

He jumped.

The fugitive is easy to track down and quickly apprehended within an hour because, at the end of his barefoot journey, he ends up running onto the grounds of a nearby hospital.

He has a twisted ankle and is covered in a sticky, bloody mess.

After being put in handcuffs, he is seen at the hospital where he is found.

And now cops want to know what the hell this guy was doing in another man's house, nude and broad daylight, butchering the perfectly innocent man who lived there.

The killer's injuries may have been minor, but Dwight's injuries were fatal.

It's because the stabbing was so visceral and the killer was so bloodthirsty in his intent to kill.

The medical examiner of Suffolk County would find that Dwight sustained multiple stab wounds to his chest and back and was almost decapitated from the deep slice into his neck.

At the hospital, police were anxious to ID the suspect, and when they finally did, they would discover something even more disturbing.

It's 2020 at the peak of the global pandemic.

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New York is overwhelmed with cases of the virus, and everyone is on lockdown.

Dwight Powers, a resident of Amonville, is viciously attacked in his own home, and the seemingly crazed killer launches himself from a second-story window to escape.

Finally, he's seized at a nearby hospital, treated for minor injuries, and IDed.

Actually getting his ID would have proven to be challenging if the killer wasn't in the system already or refused to speak and disclose his identity.

They already knew this killer may not be the smartest guy, or the sanest one, but there it was.

He already had records involving minor offenses, and he readily announced who he was. Thomas Powers, Dwight Powers' son.

Dwight and his son, Thomas Scully Powers, had been living together for some time.

Fairly reclusive, they didn't seem to have any close relatives or friends to explain the relationship.

One neighbor spoke on his behalf, calling Dwight a straight-up guy.

Other neighbors gave the only insight they had, which was saying that once in a while the father and son clashed.

A woman living close by reported that Dwight and his son sometimes had their little fights, but she was in shock when she saw it on the news.

She added that Thomas was a good son and would carry up the groceries.

But another nearby resident said Dwight was generous to a fault toward his son, giving him a home, a car, and a credit card.

But one person had a bit of a different opinion, and observed that Thomas seemed a little off and wouldn't give any greeting, not even a high, when they came across each other.

Obviously, something went wrong in the relationship between Dwight and his son, and no one quite knew what that was.

So Thomas himself provides some details to officers shortly after being apprehended.

He not only confesses to cops that he is the killer, but he also claims that his dad raped him with a pistol recently.

He added to it that his wrists were cut by his dad and holds up his wrists to prove this.

The police inspect the wrists and decide the cuts are nothing more than scratches that don't corroborate Thomas' claims.

For a while, Thomas more than cooperates.

He describes being filled with such fury that when he begins attacking, he realizes he needs to make sure his dad is actually dead.

He tells police that he kept breathing, so in his words, I had to keep stabbing.

And then he alleges that his dad was using drugs.

The first two statements about being raped and cut would turn out to have no basis that anyone could determine.

The third justification just didn't make sense.

People who have 45 years of sobriety understand that they need to avoid all mind-altering substances.

Of course, some break this rule, but Dwight was not found to have any drugs in his system.

So why did Thomas flip out and kill his own father in a fit of rage?

He admitted to the police that he did it, but gave flimsy and inflammatory explanations

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that were never to be verified.

When he was lawyered up and brought in for an arraignment, wearing a walking boot for his twisted ankle, he had already changed his mind and entered a plea of not guilty.

Thomas was charged with second-degree murder, and the Suffolk County District Court judge remanded him without bail.

According to a neighbor, Thomas was a good son, and she didn't think anything like this could ever happen, but added that you never really know what happens behind closed doors. You truly do never know what evil lies behind the cozy, comfy facade of middle-class homes in a middle-class neighborhood.

Sometimes the nightmares lie in wait, unnoticed, lurking, waiting for something to let them out.

And there's no way to see them coming, to predict their assault until it's too late.

According to the judge in this case, this was one of the most disturbing cases you'd ever seen.

Thomas Scully Powers is being dragged through the court system and has been for three years now.

He could spend 25 years to life in prison, when convicted and sentenced.

As for Dwight Powers, I'm sure it's safe to say that on that day he had no idea.

He would join the saga of Amidaville horrors.