

The Heart of the Advocate

by Angela Costi

'One word can change a truth into a lie.'

With some help, she was able to turn her story into an affidavit. However, the story is fighting to escape the format of the form. The sequencing of events needs to focus on dates and times. Each and every word uttered, gesture made, sound heard, visual cue should be documented as if it were an inventory. What did he say to her, how did he put his body into hers, when did she say No, how did she say No, did she say No, how long for? His Word. Her Word. His Body. Her Body. Their Body. No Body. No. Yes. No. And *if* he did, what were *her* motives?

'One doubt can change a truth into a lie.'

She is 31 years old. Her middle name is Haralampo, which is her father's first name. She wanted to be a lawyer before she became an Assistant Manager at IGA. It wasn't her manager. It wasn't her boyfriend. She was a professional soccer player eight years ago. Her father coached her. She kept a diary. She set her diary free in a fire, when she left home. Her older sister is not talking to the family and lives somewhere in Sydney. Her mother is beginning to forget the ingredients for spanakopita. Her middle name is Haralampo, which is her father's first name.

'Justice must not be confused with law.'

When the story first arrived in my office, it was pent up with years of outrage and guilt. It was the feral cat, the wild horse, the charred koala. Taming, containing, coaxing the story towards the malignant law is difficult when the client is clinging to hope. And it's painful when my heart whimpers with the strain of upholding a library of outdated words.

The story is now confined to the form. The document lies passively on my desk as I reach over with my pen. This pen will have her sign the document imprisoning her truth. But



This text is reproduced with permission of the author for use in the SF3/Spineless Wonders Microlit Film Award 2022. Not for distribution. Copyright held by the author.

there's a problem. She is sitting across from me, daring me to look into her eyes. Not picking up the pen.

'Betrayal is harder to compensate than rape.'



This text is reproduced with permission of the author for use in the SF3/Spineless Wonders MicroLit Film Award 2022. Not for distribution. Copyright held by the author.