

## **Chapter One - Working Late**

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Sammy was tired. She looked at the clock on the wall, and it was already 09:43 pm. Where had the time gone? "These reports are due tomorrow, and I'm not even done yet!" She said to herself. All her fellow employees had gone home already, she was the only one left, as usual. Sammy was a Financial Administrator, it was month end, and there were endless reports to do. She always hated this time of month. She thought to herself, contemplating whether to sit it out and finish it, or pack up and go home. Eventually, after much deliberation, she decided on the latter. While packing up her laptop, and her piles of paperwork, she phoned John. "Hey, honey," was the reply on the other side. "Are you on your way home yet?" Sammy's husband was a policeman, working for the Crime Investigation Unit. He was a Lieutenant, Head of the Crime Investigation Unit. His many years of experience had assisted in his early promotion. He definitely was a force to be reckoned with. He was the love of her life. They had been happily married now, for almost 4 years. There were no children yet, as they both wanted to enjoy their time together, before settling down to have children, and their jobs were also much too demanding to have kids.

"Babe, I'm leaving the office right now. I'm still not done, but I'm going to bring it home with me, and see how far I can get. Are you still at the scene?" John had been called out to a murder scene a few hours earlier. This was the third womens'body found at these mine dumps, and was possibly part of a serial killers'spree. He was still stuck there, with the usual mundane tasks and procedures that were involved with such a scene. Waiting for photographers to come, busy with paperwork, waiting for the mortuary, the usual. "Yip hon and it looks like I might be a while. You know how it goes. Just please be safe, and give me a call when you get home, so that I know you are okay. I love you babe!" "Okay, will do. I love you too."

It was now 10:00 pm, and as Sammy looked up, she saw it was full moon. The moon had never looked that bright, and beautiful. The cold bit through her jacket like a rabid dog, seeping into her skin and penetrating her bones, sending chills down her spine. She looked anxiously around the parking lot, which was now deserted, except for a security guard, who was fast asleep, and a stray cat, that was looking for something to eat in the garbage. She clutched her handbag, laptop bag, and her paper work, as she made her way to her car, trying to shy away from the icy wind that was blowing through her.

She bundled everything into the car, jumped in, and immediately put on the heater, and also the radio, to break the awful sound of the howling wind. For some or other reason, she felt very paranoid, as if someone was watching her. As she looked into the rear view mirror, the guard was still fast asleep, and the stray cat had made a run for it. There was no one else around, but why did she feel so scared? She started to turn the key, and the engine of her old Palio, slowly started up, and idled... the cold was not doing it much good. As she waited for the engine to heat a little, Sammy sent John a message, telling him that she was in the car, and almost on her way, and that she loved him.

After that, she put the car into gear, and was finally on her way.

"Mr Grober, this is Officer Langley, he's the photographer." "Mr, Langley, thanks for coming out, and sorry to bother at such an hour. I have already cordoned off the scene, so you can go in and take the photos you need, no one will disturb you." with that, John looked down at his phone. Sammy's message had come through. He was always worried about her working late, and having to drive home at night alone. Being a policeman, he knew how dangerous the streets were, but his wife was not bothered about such things. She always says that everything happens for a reason..... She was one of the strongest, most independant women he knew. And he was proud of her for that. But before he could reply to her message, his attention was quickly diverted from Sammy, as the officer called him.

"John, this looks an awful lot like the previous murder last month. All the pieces are starting to match up. All the victims are female, to start with, all have long brown hair, and when we find them, each of them has a piece of their body missing, and a yellow daisy next to them?" Brad was always a very observant person. That is one of the reasons why John had him promoted, he had a brilliant future with the police, with his skills and knowledge. "I know, Brad, but we can't let the media get a hold of this information, it might send out unnecessary fear... we have to be certain of our facts here. Yes, all the pieces link, but there are small differences. For now, just write up everything you see, and do the rest of the paperwork, and I will see you in the morning. I'm calling a meeting first thing to discuss this. We will have a debriefing, and will map out all the information we have to date, and link evidence.

Sammy's on her way home, so I will see you in the morning." "Sure thing, boss, see you then."

John arrived home, to an empty, dark apartment. Sammy was not home yet. Strange, but he didn't think anything of it. She probably stopped off at the garage for something to nibble on.

He kicked off his shoes, and made himself comfy in front of the TV, waiting for Sam. He had missed her particularly a lot today, he didn't know why. He was flipping through all the channels on dstv, but couldn't really find one that interested him. His mind was too busy. He was thinking of tonight's' murder, the murder last month, skimming through evidence and important information in his mind. Somehow there were small things that looked very familiar to him, small things that were bothering him, which he just could not figure out. The yellow daisies.... His mother used to love yellow daisies they were her favourite flower. His father would even buy her bouquets of yellow daisies on the odd occasion, when they were still happy, and before she made the decision to leave them.

John's mother, Evelyn, had left him, his brother Brad, and their father, Patrick many years ago. Evelyn was always a good mother, although their fathers 'bad ways had eventually led her to flee. He was a gambling addict, gambled most of their money away. He was also an alcoholic. She, on the other hand, was always loving, and caring, would even read them bed time stories from time to time when they were younger. When their father would come home in one of his drunken stupors, upset that he had lost all their money again, she would always bake cookies and cupcakes, with the hope of mending broken hearts with her pastry delights. John could still remember the day she left. It played over in his mind as if it was yesterday.

He and Brad had just come home from school. It was a hot summers' day, the 12th of November in fact, 2002. They came home to the sweet aroma of cookies, and cupcakes. He can remember when he smelt that sweet delicious odour, something was wrong. Their mother was in the kitchen, sobbing. They had walked up to her to greet her, and when she turned around, she was covered in blood!! Their father had hit her, again. She held onto them, and through the tears, told them how much she loved them, but that she couldn't do this anymore. She told them that she was going to leave, but that she promised she would come back for them.

He remembered how Brad had grabbed onto her, and begged her not to leave them. Shortly afterward, their father came bellowing down the stairs, and pointed his 12 gauge shotgun at her, threatening to kill her. She calmed the situation as she always did, and eventually their dad passed out in the lounge on his couch. Their mom took them upstairs quietly, tucked them in, and told them how much she loved them. The next morning when they woke up, she was not there. Her cupboards were empty, except for a note, saying that she loved them dearly, and that she was sorry to leave them. They never did hear from her again. Their father did not take long to get a replacement for their mom. A haggard looking woman called Susan, not interested in two little boys, or their welfare. Drunk most of the time, never cooked or cleaned. They always thought her only reason for being around was to please their father.

She didn't do anything else.

Their father continued with his alcoholic ways, his gambling and his aggressive nature only got worse with time. It was always Brad that suffered under their father. He would beat Brad with sticks; lock him in the cupboard for days, without food and water. John would sometimes try and sneak food to his brother, but being 9 and 12 years old, they did not know how to cope with this type of anger and aggression. They coped the only way they knew how, and that was to stick together.... The new girlfriend, Susan, did not help much either. They had hoped that with her being there, she might help, might stop their father, but to no avail. If anything, she would look at what was happening, and in her drunken state just smile, and walk away, and retreat back to her room, where she spent most of her time only coming out to fill her glass again.

With that, John realized that he had not heard from his brother in years. He started wondering again how Brad was, what he was doing, where he was living. They lost contact after their big argument. John had started doing odd jobs to generate some kind of income when he was around 17. And at one point he had managed to save up about R 2000-00, which was a lot of money. John wanted to use this money for his studies... he wanted to study and make something of himself. He wanted to get out of that house. Brad knew about the saved up money, and one day while John was at work, Brad went into his savings box, and took all the money. He disappeared for about 3 days, going on a drinking and drug abuse binge. When he returned home, they got into a physical argument. Their argument got so heated, that their father, now a rundown old drunk himself, was forced to phone the police. After the police left with Brad, John never saw him again. And neither did their father.

John had never seen him, or spoken to him again. All he had was some pictures of them as kids, kneeling on the grass together, wearing their spiderman pyjamas. Two little boys so unaware of what hand life would deal them. Although he would never forget how Brad looked, with that terrible scar across his face. He would never forget the day Brad got that scar. He got into a fight at a bar, after flirting with someone's girlfriend, and called John at home, telling him to come and help him. By the time John got there, someone had taken a broken bottle to Brad's face, scarring him for life. He almost died that night..... There was blood everywhere.

John laid there, and a chill went down his spine, as he thought back to events of that night. The scar that Brad got that night, was not the only bad thing that happened. What happened during that fight, was something that John had tried very hard to forget, up until now.

They were always so close as youngsters, especially after their mom left. But Brad got involved in drugs, and gangs, and it went downhill from there. The two brothers did not see eye to eye anymore, as John was determined to be successful and make something of his life, despite what he had been through with his mom and dad. But Brad, on the other hand, was a different story. Always rebelled, always broke the rules, broke the law, but who could blame him.

After what he had been through, it was a miracle that he had not turned out to be some kind of serial killer.

When John left home to go and study further, he did not see his father again, he wasn't even sure if his father was still alive. He had considered many times going back to the house, see if his dad was still alive, maybe even reconcile, but after what his father put them through, he couldn't do it. He had heard at some point that Susan and his dad were still living in that house after all these years, but that his father's health had gone downhill. The alcohol seemed to have started taking its toll. He had made an informed decision to rather stay away, and refrain from getting involved in that again.

There were too many memories there, in that house, in that neighbourhood. John didn't want to face that. That part of his life was behind him.

For Good.

John gazed over at the clock, and jumped up!! It was 11:30!!! He rushed aimlessly around the apartment, and realised suddenly that Sam wasn't home yet... Okay, just be calm. There could be any number of reasons why she isn't home yet. "He tried to keep himself calm; he scrambled around looking for his cell phone. No messages, no calls. Here he was, day dreaming, drifting off to sleep, and Sam wasn't home. He started dialling her number, and listening intently, to his dismay, he got voice mail. Why was her phone off? He called the office, knowing that she had left already, but hoping, somehow that someone would pick up, or she would pick up. Nothing, the phone just rang, and rang, endlessly.

He pulled on his jacket and shoes, and made his way down stairs to his car. The only thing he could think of doing, was driving the route that Sam would drive, and maybe he would find her. Had her car broken down? "I should have sent that damn car in for that service", he thought to himself, thinking of 10 000 reasons why Sam is not home, and why her cell was off. Panic started taking over him and the adrenaline started coursing through his veins. Driving around, he found no sign of Sam, or that God Damn car. He tried again and again to call her on her cell, but all he got was voice mail. He stopped at the Shell garage along the way, asking whether they had not seen her, giving a description of the car, and of her, but to no avail. The cashier confirmed that Sam had not been anywhere near there. He also continued to tell John how slow business was that night.

John started to panic even more. He drove to the office, but all he found was an empty parking lot and a security guard fast asleep. He was at a loss. He drove the route back home, once again. By now he was hoping that maybe Sam had come home already, while he was out looking for her. The route was unfruitful, as there was no sign of Sam, or the car. When he got back to the apartment block, he raced up the stairs, only to come home to an empty, dark apartment once more.

He tried her cell again, - voice mail.

It was now 12:45 am, Sam left the office 2 hours ago, her office being only 8 km away, her cell was off, and there was no sign of her, or the car, on the route that she always drives.

Something was wrong.....

## Chapter Two - Kidnapping

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Slowly, as Sammy started regaining consciousness, she started to panic. She heard the rumbling of the car's engine, and she was in total darkness. She then realised that she was in the boot of her car. Next to her head, was her gym bag, which she should have taken out days ago, but just didn't have the time to. Her wrists were paining terribly, as she tried to loosen the cable ties that were wound so tightly around her wrists that it was cutting off the blood supply. Her feet. Her feet were also tied. What was happening!!!??? The panic started engulfing her, making her nauseous, as she realised that she was in some serious trouble. She started banging and kicking against the roof of the boot, trying to attract attention from someone so that she could be saved. But in the back of her mind she knew that it was useless. Who would be out on the road at this time of night....?

In her mind, she skimmed through all the things that John had always taught her. In emergency situations, there is always a way out, a way to deal with it. But he never prepared her for this. She was too panicked to even think straight, let alone come up with some way to get out of that boot.

Who was driving the car, where were they going, what was going to happen to her.? Her panic suddenly changed into brutal fear for her life. It felt as though she had been in that boot for hours.... who would do this to her.? Suddenly, the car came to an abrupt halt. She heard the car door open, and then slam shut. Then the boot opened. She tried to see who it was, but the shadows hid away the face of her captor. The moonlight only allowing faint lines of his face to be seen. "Get up!" was all he said to her. As she struggled, he put a thick wad of duct tape over her mouth. "If you scream, or make a noise, I will kill you!" And he started to chuckle..... Sammy could hear in his voice that he was serious, and that he would kill her if she did not do what he said. She managed to lift herself up, and he grabbed hold of her, and threw her down to the ground. He closed the boot, and turned to her. She could see his face now. His beard was not shaved; it was about 1 week old, his hair very short and dark. His clothes were a bit ragged, but not like a hobo. He seemed to be well looked after He seemed ferociously tall, but well built and good looking, except for a big scar on his face. He smelt of daisies. Suddenly a second man appeared next to him. She could hear a cars' idling nearby. The second man looked down at her, very well dressed, a suit in fact, and the next thing she knew, he hit her over the head with something. And she lost consciousness.

They then bundled her into their car, and made a few adjustments in her car, before speeding away into the night, like hunters with their prey.

All that they had left behind were her car, and her belongings.

When she woke up again, he was grabbing her by the arm and pulling her up. . he had untied her feet. when she started looking around, she realised that they were on some or other farm or plot... there was a huge white farm house, not very well lit, but well maintained. There were many rows of pine trees around the house, almost hiding it. She did not see any animals, but it was extremely dark. Old, wooden poles made for fences around the farm, she was not sure what it was there for. There was not a sound. She realized that they must be some way out of town, as she did not even hear the sound of a car, a siren, or anything for that matter. She kept wondering where the second man was. He was nowhere to be seen.

They got to the front door, and he pushed her in front of him. Her wrists still bound, she felt helpless. The house was dark, gloomy, and almost mysterious. The furniture was old, and dusty. There were no plants, the dust also an indication of a home that had been neglected over many years. There were no portraits or art hanging on any of the walls that she could see, except for one with two little boys kneeling next to each other on grass.

He looked at her and said "follow me". Still holding her arm, he started walking towards the back of the house; it seemed almost like a maze. As she walked through the house with this stranger, she tried to memorise and take in all that she saw. They came to the foot of stairs, and he motioned for her to walk in front. At the top of the stairs, was a wall, and 3 doors to the left, and two doors to the right. Here, too, the dust lay thick on the furniture and tables. No portraits, or plants. Sammy felt the gloom of this house engulf her. He motioned to her to go to the left, and when they got the middle door, she noticed that it had at least 3 or 4 locks on it. he fumbled around in his pocket, taking out a key. Unlocking the door, he pushed her inside. As soon as she was inside, he slammed the door closed, and locked it.

She listened to his footsteps grow fainter and fainter down the stairs, until she could not hear it anymore at all. She was sitting in the middle of a rundown room. Dark, dusty, there was a strange smell to it. A smell that made her nauseous. Her hands were still bound, and she started scanning the room for something she could use to free herself. She looked slowly around the room. The windows were bolted shut, and there seemed to be some kind of burglar proofing in front of it.

There was no bed, or cupboard, all that there was, was a dirty, smelly mattress, which was very old. Above the mattress were two chains with handcuffs bolted into the wall. There was a women's shoe lying in the one corner of the room. As she took a closer look, she realised that it had a few drops of blood on it.

The paint on the walls was faded, and there were spots that seemed to be peeling off, as if the wrong paint was used. Also next to the mattress was a plate of food that seemed to be untouched. The food was rotting already, there were maggots creeping all over it.

The smell was rancid. There was no pillow, no blanket either... just the mattress, and the shoe. And those chains..... and those maggots.....

There was a thick layer of dust, and many footprints on the wooden floor. What had happened in this room? What were those ghastly chains for? She just sat there. Helpless, not knowing what to do next, or where she was, or what was going to happen to her. She tried to swallow her tears back, but couldn't. The tears rolling down her face, dripping on her bound hands, she broke down, and crawled into a small ball, crying herself to sleep.

"Hi, this is Lieutenant John Gruber, I need your assistance immediately, get me Mason on the line please." John was in a panic. By the time Mason's voice spoke over the phone, John was contemplating firing him, out of sheer frustration. It felt as though it took years for Mason to answer. "Mason, Sam is missing!" "Sir, Missing, how do you know she's missing?" "Don't ask me stupid questions! She's missing, and I need a task force assembled at once to start searching for her. Get Alpha Team together at the station immediately for a debriefing!" John hung up before Mason could question any further, or even give an opinion.

At the station, the Alpha Team as they were known, were the best S.W.A.T team at that time. They had undergone vigorous training exercises, ranging from tactical shooting, to hostage negotiations, to sniper training, and especially catching armed and extremely dangerous criminals. John knew that they were the best team to use in this terrible situation. Throughout the night, every now and then, he would still try Sam's cell, and to his disgust, all he got was voicemail. Later on, the disgust was replaced with sheer remorse, as he kept phoning just to be able to hear her voice, to memorise it.

The team were assembled already when John entered the conference room. Mason was there too. Looking all flustered, and unsure.

John studied Mason for a moment, not quite sure of his strange behaviour, but his attention was quickly diverted to the task at hand. He began by explaining to the team what had happened that night. From the time that he spoke to Sam on the phone, to her sms she sent, and then the fact that nor her, or the car could be seen anywhere, and also that her phone was off. He began mapping out an area for them to start searching. He also tasked mason to try and trace her cell phone, even get cell phone records, and see what the last calls were, and to whom.

John took a quick moment to also brief the team regarding the serial killings that were taking place at that time, and that they needed to consider that she may be a victim of this. His heart started racing as the words slid carefully over his lips "she could very well be our next missing person..."

Mason rushed out of the room, while John continued with his debriefing. He gave them a full description of what Sam was wearing; there was no need to explain what she looked like, as everyone knew her quite well. She had often come to the offices to bring cookies, or muffins, but that was before she started at her new job. Now she barely got enough time to sleep. Everyone in that room knew just how important this job was, and they were all determined to make sure they found her.

As John was talking, he noticed how the faces of these hardened policeman slowly softened. The more he spoke, the more their emotions seemed to surface.

As John ended the briefing, and the men started standing up, a few came to him, and shook his hand, promising to make sure that Sammy was returned safely home.

Their re-assurances did little to comfort John. He knew that they only meant well, but he needed them to be focused, and as determined as he was to find his wife.

As he walked back to his office, his heart was pounding. It would have been easier if he had some kind of evidence to work off. But his wife, the love of his life had disappeared into thin blue air. Without a trace.

Without a stitch of evidence.

He plonked down into his chair, and put his head back. He was starting to get a headache from all the stress of the situation. His mind was running in hundreds of different directions, trying to cipher out a reasonable explanation as to where Sam could be.

His thoughts were interrupted as Mason burst into his office. "Sir, I think I might have found something!! According to the cell phone records, she made a call to you just before 10, sent an sms at about 10:02, and then, at 10:23, there was a call made to a tow truck agency. The call only lasted about 20 or 25 seconds though. That's awfully strange...." "Yes, that is strange, what's the agency's name?" John started to feel a slight bit of relief. Had her car just broken down, and that she had been towed, and was on her way home? Then he realized that it was 06:15 am, and that she was still missing. Why was the call so short? Surely that wasn't enough time to log a call to a tow truck agency? "the agency's name is South Rand Towing Sir,, its located in Germiston." "Right, let's go down there, get the full address, and lets go pay them a visit, maybe they will know something about Sam. The team can start on their search in the meantime."

All the way to the towing company, John was hoping that they would be able to divulge some kind of information, or that one of their drivers had maybe assisted Sam. When they got there, there was an oldish grumpy lady behind the counter. "Yes, what can I do for you?" her welcoming wasn't very welcoming at all. She seemed forlorn, too old to still be working, and not very happy to be where she was. It looked as though she had been doing the same mundane job for the past 25 years. John wasn't very hopeful that she would even be willing to assist them with anything. But he was not going to take no for an answer.

"Madam, I'm Lieutenant John Grober, from the SAPS, I am investigating a missing person. According to her cell phone records, she made a call to your offices last night at about 10:23, and she has not been seen since. the call also only lasted for about 20 seconds. Do you maybe know anything about this, or have paperwork regarding this call?"

She immediately seemed disgruntled. They had intruded on her, and she was in no mood to assist anyone or go the extra mile. " Look, mister, I don't work the night shift. But I do get all the paperwork that the night shift guys do, in the morning, and there was nothing reported at that time. What car was she driving, and in which area was she when she lodged the call?"

By now, she seemed to have realised that she had no other choice other than to help, because John was not going anywhere without information.

" she was driving a blue fiat palio, and was in the boksburg region. are you sure there is no paperwork for her? " " Nope, nothing for a blue fiat palio."

Her arthritic fingers, shuffled the papers, and with her glasses perched on her nose, she skimmed through the paperwork. Shaking her head, she looked up at John, "sorry , you must be mistaken. if someone from our company towed her last night, there would be paperwork, and there isn't."

She saw John's reaction, and seemed to soften a bit. Her attitude now more considerate and helpful. Squinting her eyes she said " Although, I don't know whether this means anything to ya, but we have had these weird phone calls at awkward times in the night. where someone would phone, and pretend to talk to us about his vehicle that is broken down... but the calls only last for a few seconds though... there's been about three of those in the last couple of months. If you want, I can call Brendan in, he's the night shift operator, he's the one that's been answering these call. He might have some information that could help."

She opened a drawer, and ruffled through some papers to locate the phone number. John realised it was a dead end. This kid would'nt be able to tell them anymore than what she just had. Besides, the calls could just be prank calls.

John was at a dead end... what to do next? Mason suggested they go back to the station and make some calls, maybe ask around, if anyone had seen her. but John insisted on regrouping with the team, and help with the search.

Back at the old farm house, Sam was woken by ice cold water gushing down on her, like a waterfall. Startled, when she looked up, she saw him above her, holding a pale of water. This was her wake up call. He looked at her, and bent down, to her height, slowly bringing his hand to her mouth, he grabbed the duct tape off her mouth. as he ripped it off, it burnt her, and felt a lot like when she would go to the spa for her waxing. But she was relieved to be able to breathe properly again. She slowly slid herself back a bit, feeling intimidated by his presence so close to her, but he just knelt there, and stared at her.

For a long while, there was silence, until Sam mustered up the courage to ask " Sir, could you maybe untie my hands, they are terribly sore.... please.." she cowered back, expecting something bad to happen, but she had to ask, she had lost the feeling in her hands already, and she brought her hands forward, so he could see that it had started cutting into her skin.

But instead, the man looked at her, smiled, and said " not to worry, those will be coming off pretty soon.... we are going to get to know each other today, maybe even have some fun.!" and with that, he stood up, and chuckled again, walking away from her towards the door. Before closing it, he turned , went back to her and said " I almost forgot.." out of his pocket, he took out a yellow daisy, and placed it on her lap.

" for my pretty lady"

## Chapter Three - Evidence Found

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It was 1:30pm, John was a wreck. His wife had been missing now for more than 10 hours, Alpha Team were giving no positive feedback, and there were no leads. The towing agency was a flop, there, he was only lead into a dead end. Mason was out of ideas too. He kept the coffee coming, and obeyed Johns every order.

Mason was a strange person. He was one of those people that only seemed normal to those that knew him the best, like family.... To outsiders, he seemed weird, and strange, and mysterious. John had felt that exact way about him when he conducted his interview, but was prepared to give him a chance. Mason had very good records from school, prestigious results from his Degree in Psychology, the Human Anatomy and Criminology. His investigation skills seemed better than the average person. He also had a key eye for detail. And that was what John was looking for. Mason fit the requirements, he did exceptionally well in his Integra Tests, which consisted of Polygraph Tests, Logical and Reasoning, Personality Tests, you name it, he aced it. A good all rounder.

Mason was newly engaged, his fiancé, a manager at a store, they had known each other for about 5 years, and he finally got enough courage to pop the question. He never did speak about his private life though. John had always wondered about that. Mason seemed almost shy to talk about his fiancé. It seemed odd at times, but as John believed, "to each his own" Each person on earth was different.

Mason had no luck with the cell phone records, but was pushing for the trace on Sams' phone. Apparently things looked as though they may take a while. The trace on Sams' phone was all that john was waiting for. To him, it was his last lead, his last hope of maybe finding her, or finding out what happened to her.

At this point, they were where any Investigator dreads to be. A dead end. Lost. Once you reached this point in a case, you literally had to sit back, wait for the killer to make his move, and then hope with all your heart that he would make some kind of a mistake, which would then lead you right to him. But, as they all knew very well, this particular person, knew a little more than the average joe... he was clever, cleaned his tracks, kept everything low key.

"mason, please phone them again, please, God Dammit, how long could it take to get a trace on her damned phone!!" " no problem boss, I'm on it." Mason grabbed the phone, and again, explained how important it was to get the trace as soon as possible.

The lady on the other line was less than sympathetic, and Mason had no other choice but to use his harshest tone to get results. "Look lady, you better get those records to me within the next hour, or there will be hell to pay.! I will go to the media with this. This woman's` life could be in potential danger, and you are telling me to stay calm... an hour !!" " Thanks mason, good for you. didn't know you had a bad side to you. Just remember, focus on the task at hand, and not on the victim. " With that, John turned, and stared out of the window. It overlooked the Market Theatre, the highway, traffic bustling below. Dozens of people walking with shopping bags, stopping to admire and view little stalls displaying jewellery and keepsakes. People totally unaware of what life was really all about. He was trying to put off these thoughts all night. "I have to phone sams' parents.... what do I say to them. I know now for sure that something is wrong. and I can't keep this from them." " just be gentle, when telling them, and tell them that you have every available resource working to get her back safe and sound."

John didn't have the strength to make the call. Except for the fact that he was physically and emotionally drained, he never really got along well with her mom. Her dad was wonderful. They had gone hunting together, fishing ( among their favourite things to do together, ) duck hunting, you name it, even gone to the odd boxing match, and a few pubs. They were like two good friends. Her mom was another story. She was always critizing Sam, always correcting her, Sam was never really good enough for her. On many occasions she had Sam in tears after telling her for the hundredth time that she is her biggest disappointment! She was always finding fault, and if John had to call her now with this, she would probably blame him. He made the decision to make the call. His thoughts then drifted again...Maybe it was his fault. Why did he allow her to work so late? Why did he allow her to drive home alone at that time of night? Was it his fault?

He picked up the receiver, slowly. It was no use trying to use the training they had been given on how to deliver news like this, and he felt awful for having to do this on the phone, but there was no way he could leave the office now. He slowly dialled the number, as if it was the last call he would ever make.

To his relief, Sam's dad picked up. : Botha residence, Gregory speaking.." the old man's voice was strong, as always. "hey, pops, how are you doing>" John decided to take the subtle route, and use the best, least damaging wording he could think of.

"listen, I need to come past the house tonight, there is something we need to discuss urgently. Its important Greg, its about Sam." John could immediately the tone in Gregory's voice chance to a more stern, demanding tone. "son, what up?"

John started to explain that he would have preferred to come and see them personally, but that circumstances did not allow enough time for that. He had to be here, wait for that evidence to show up, and work from there. Gregory seemed to agree, but was still distant, as he tried to fish out the truth from John. "just give it to me straight son... no fooling around... okay.."

"Greg, she's missing. She's been missing since last night at about 10:30, on her way back from work. I was working another crime scene from that serial killer, and the last I heard from her was an sms saying that she was leaving the office. Now, its early day's we are still trying to find leads, and evidence, but I have Alpha Team working on it round the clock, and administrators hacking into cell phone, banking and vehicle tracking to find her. I promise you, I will find her pops.."

#####3

The response on the other end of the line was not totally unexpected. Gregory went quiet for a moment or two, processing the information, and said "son, I know you going to find her. You just leave mom to me... maybe best if I should speak to her about this... Its going to be alright. No one would harm her, shes as sweet as anything.. Who would want to hurt her? Give me your word, that you wont stop until you find her?" He's pleas came from the heart. A father that was on the verge of losing his only daughter. John could understand that this might come as a shock. But knowing his father in law so well, it would take some time for the details and the reality to sink in, nonetheless, he was always positive, and always believed in hope, all the way to the end. On some level, he even made Joh feel a bit at ease , and a bit better about this whole situation.

His emotions seemed to get the better of him, and when mason burst into the office, he had a tear running down his cheek.

he quickly wiped it off before mason could see, and turned to see mason waving a paper in his hand.

"they actually managed to find a trace!!!" "give it here, where,?" as john looked over the paperwork, his blood ran cold.... the trace was found in the mine dumps in springs..... that was where the other 3 murders had taken place. he decided not to dwell on that, and get there as soon as possible. mason and john jumped into the car, and sped off to the location. all the while, both men, thinking the same thing..... those other 3 murders were in that area, at those mine dumps. the serial killer that they assumed was on the prowl, was committing his crimes here, and leaving the bodies

here....

eventually mason spoke. "boss, its the same area." "i know, but lets not dwell on what could be, until we get there and actually see whats going on, okay." mason knew not to say another word. John was breaking down emotionally inside. his insides felt as though someone had taken a vice grip and was holding on as tight as they can, pulling at them. for the first time in his life, he said a prayer. he prayed that when he got there, that he would not find the body of his wife, even though, thats all he wished for, in the last 11 hours.

They sped across the hightway at top speed, mason was calling in for back up in the mean time, while john missioned through traffic. sirens blaring and blue lights flashing, they took the offramp, and made their way to the mine dumps. it seemed like forever, but eventually, they found the sand road, and slowed down. in the distance, john could see a blue vehicle. his heart raced a thousand beats a minute. he picked up speed, untl the blue fiat palio came into clear site.

he stopped the car abruptly and ran to sams' car. all the doors were closed, as well as the windows. he flung the drivers' door open, and immediately fell back. on the seat was a yellow daisy. along with sams' cell phone, and her personal belongings. john felt his blood run cold, his heart felt asif it was going to jump out of his chest. mason ran to him helping him up, and when looking into the car, saw the daisy. he knew immediately what that meant. the serial killer that they had been following and looking for, had johns' wife. they didnt know who he was, they didnt know where to find him. all they knew was that the daisy killer had her.

at the moment, the rest of the vehicles stopped there, with clouds of dust and sand everywhere. john immediately tried to gather himself, and started making some phone calls. he phoned the photographer, and he phoned the fingerprint specialists, so that they could dust the car for prints. perhaps this bastard left some prints somewhere, even a partial would do. he went back to his car to get his surgical gloves, so as not to disturb any prints that might be in the car. slowly, he started processing the car. going through the glove compartment, searching underneath all the seats, hoping to find something other than than damn daisy, that could give them more clues. as he was searching through the car, for any fragment of evidence or a clue, his heart was racing. it felt as

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