

English Through Stories

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Missing Person - Episode #1

Episode 1: The Man in the Mask

I didn't kill him.

I didn't even plan to kill him. I had a gun, but I just wanted to hurt him and stop him from attacking me. I had no idea why this stranger was hitting me, and it was ticking me off.

This morning Anne Prado, one of my students at the University of Southwestern California, came to my office. She said she had a problem and she needed my help. Her sister, Sarah, was missing. We were on our way to Sarah's apartment to find her, when halfway up the front steps of the building, a man ran toward me and started punching me.

I hit the man in the ear. He screamed with pain. He was small, but a tough son-of-a-gun. I stepped back, and hit him hard in the stomach.

"Oh my God!" he moaned. I think I hurt him that time.

I knew he was in pain. I pushed him down to the ground. He fell onto the grass in

front of the steps to the apartment building. Now it was my turn to take control.

I stood over him and asked, “Who are you? What do you want?” He didn’t answer. He had a ski hat on, so I couldn’t see his face.

“Just get the hell away from this apartment building! You’re not welcome here!” he said.

I grabbed him by the shirt, pushed his face into the ground, and put his arm behind his back. He yelled even louder now. I think he was finally ready to stop fighting.

“Now, who are you? Why can’t I go inside the apartment?” I was getting angry and wanted some answers. I saw a few people come out of the apartment building to see what was happening.

But the man still didn’t say a word. He lifted himself up suddenly, and pushed me away. He looked at me coldly for a second, then ran into the street.

I turned to find Anne to make sure she was okay. “Do you know who he was? Have you seen him before?” I asked.

“No, Dr. Reeves. I don’t come to my sister’s apartment very often. I don’t know who he is.”

Let me back up a minute: This morning in my office Anne had explained that two days ago, she was supposed to have lunch with her sister, Sarah Salas. When her sister didn’t come to the restaurant, Anne called Sarah’s apartment. There was no answer.

Anne went to her sister’s apartment right away and knocked on the door, but there was no one home. She called Sarah’s work. Her boss told Anne that Sarah had been missing for two days. So Anne decided to ask me to help find her sister and her sister’s husband, Bill, who was also missing.

Missing Person - Episode #2

Beer and Cigarettes

Some of my students know I'm an amateur detective. Before I became a university professor five years ago, I had a real job. I worked for a security agency that protected private homes, and also important people like famous actors and politicians. I learned a lot about criminals. I had also learned a lot about police work from my father, who was a cop for 34 years.

I had wanted to become a police officer, too. But that was impossible. I got into some trouble when I was a kid. It was a stupid high school trick, but because I was 18-years-old, I was treated like an adult. I was arrested by the police, convicted, and now I have a police record. With a criminal record, I can never be a cop.

I worked for awhile as a bodyguard. One of my cases was protecting a famous history professor. He and I became friends, he helped me go to college and now I, too, am a professor.

As I said, when Anne came to see me this morning, I told her I would be happy to help. We came over to the apartment building where Sarah and Bill live, and that's when this mysterious man tried to stop us from going in.

"Let's see if we can get into their apartment and take a look around," I suggested.

We walked into the large, white building, and up to the third floor. Anne got an extra key from the apartment manager so we could go in.

"Apartment number 306, Anne?" I asked her.

"Yes. Here's the key," she answered.

"Let me open the door." I took the key from her. I opened the door very slowly.

One thing I learned from my work as a bodyguard: Be careful when opening a stranger's door. You never know what's behind it.

I opened the door slowly. I went in first, making sure everything was okay before Anne followed. The living room was large and full of expensive things: a big-screen television, a fancy stereo, a CD player, two big, brown leather chairs, and a comfortable-looking sofa. The living room alone was bigger than my entire apartment.

"My God, it smells like beer and cigarettes in here! Bill and Sarah don't even smoke," Anne said.

I walked to the back of the apartment, and saw myself in the mirror. I am always surprised at how I look: I'm 42 years old, five feet eleven inches tall, blond hair, average weight. But when I see myself in the mirror, I look 3 inches shorter and 5 years older.

I checked the windows and the closets on each side of the apartment, and went into the bathroom. Then I saw something move.

I quickly turned to Anne and put my hand up in the air, meaning: "Don't move." I put my finger to my lips, telling her to be quiet.

Someone was in the bathroom.

Missing Person - Episode #3

A Woman in Pain

I put my hand on my gun, and slowly opened the door wider. I saw nothing. I carefully picked up a towel from the floor. Nothing. "There must be someone in the bathtub," I thought.

In one fell swoop, I kicked the shower curtain back. "Don't move!" I shouted.

Suddenly a little white cat jumped out of the bathtub and scurried between my legs. A cat. I should have known.

"Oh, Jasmine! I forgot about you!" Anne said. The cat looked happy to see her. She took her into the kitchen. I poked around the rest of the bedroom, and then followed Anne into the kitchen.

"Does the cat have any food left in her dish?" I asked.

"It's almost gone. Poor Jasmine! You must be hungry."

"Well, Bill and Sarah haven't been gone long, we know that." I walked over to the telephone answering machine and checked their messages. No one had called.

We continued looking through the three-bedroom apartment. There was no sign of any violence, no burglary, no break-in. I checked in the master bedroom, and I saw nothing unusual: a beer bottle, photos of Bill and Sarah's wedding, some dirty clothes, an old Time magazine.

Next to the bed on the night table there was a bottle of pills. "Anne, what are these pills for, do you know?"

"I think they're for Bill's leg. He messed up his leg playing football in college at USC," Anne replied.

I put the bottle back on the table and sat down on the bed to think. I had no idea what happened to Anne's sister and her brother-in-law. They seem to have just disappeared into thin air. They didn't call anyone. There was no sign of any crime in their apartment. No one at their jobs had seen them for two days. Where could they be?

"Well, Anne, I don't see anything here to help us. I think we should talk to the police again."

"But I tried talking to the police, Dr. Reeves! They told me to fill out some forms and wait. They won't do anything. That's why I went to you for help!" She began to cry a little.

I stopped and looked at her for a second: God, I thought, this poor kid. Twenty-two, and in such pain.

"Okay, well, we won't find anything else here. Let's go," I said to her.

Just then I heard a telephone ringing. I turned to the phone on the table, but there was no sound. Then I saw Anne reach inside her purse: it was her cellular phone!

"That's my cell phone, Dr. Reeves." Anne said. "Hello?"

I watched Anne's face as she answered the phone. First it was happy, then worried, then very sad.

"Right...10 minutes...yes...see you there...bye!" Anne hung up and looked at me in fear.

"That was Bill. Something terrible has happened!"

Missing Person - Episode #4

Meeting at the Cafe

“We have to go, Dr. Reeves!” Anne said excitedly. “That was Bill on the phone. He is at a restaurant called Cafe Pico. Sarah’s been kidnapped!”

“Kidnapped? Are you sure?” I asked, somewhat incredulously.

“I’m sure. Someone has taken Sarah,” Anne replied. “Bill said that a man is holding her, and he will kill her if we don’t give him the ransom he’s demanding.” Anne was pulling me to the door of the apartment. “Come on! Bill said he will explain at the restaurant.”

I closed the door to the apartment and followed Anne down the stairs and into my car. The weather was typical for Los Angeles: sunny, 75 degrees, with brown smog covering the city. L.A. is a city of dreams. But for some people, it’s a city of nightmares.

Anne and I drove down Robertson Avenue in my old red Mustang, going around cars as fast as we could without causing a pile-up.

“Where is this cafe again?” I asked her.

“On Robertson and Pico, next to a bookstore,” Anne answered. She was justifiably nervous. You could tell it in her eyes.

Arriving a few minutes later, we found a place to park in front of the bookstore, and walked into the Cafe. Bill was there waiting for us.

“Bill! Oh my God, Bill, what happened?” Anne hugged Bill, who looked tired and worried.

“Oh, this is a friend, Dr. Darron Reeves.” Anne said. “Dr. Reeves, this is Bill. Dr. Reeves is my professor at USC. But he is also a very good detective. When I found out that you and Sarah were missing, I went to him for help.”

“It’s good to meet you, Bill,” I said.

“Um, yeah, I’m glad to meet you, too,” Bill said.

Bill, Anne, and I sat down at a table in front of the cafe. The waitress came to take our order. I asked for a glass of iced tea. I’m a bit of a caffeine addict, truth be told.

“Bill, tell us what happened to Sarah. Is she okay?” Anne asked impatiently.

“Sarah is fine for now,” Bill said. “But for awhile, I thought both of us would be killed. Two days ago, a strange man knocked on our door at the apartment. I opened the door, and before I knew what was happening, he had a gun in my face and was shouting obscenities at me.”

“What did he look like?” I asked.

“He was tall and muscular,” said Bill, “but he wore a ski hat, so I couldn’t see his face very well. He had a mustache, I think. It all happened so fast.”

“That’s okay. Go on,” I said.

“Well, the man took Sarah and me and put us in a car. He put a small towel around our eyes, tied our legs and hands together, and then drove us to another place. We were forced out of the car and into a small, dingy room.

“We were given food twice a day. I’m not sure how many kidnappers there were holding us there. I heard several voices outside the door, maybe three or four, I’m not sure. Finally this morning, about an hour ago, I was let go, and given a message: If I wanted Sarah to be set free, I had to pay a ransom of \$500,000.”

Missing Person - Episode #5

No Police!

“When does he want the money?” I asked.

“Tomorrow. He said he would call me this afternoon and tell me where to make the drop,” Bill said. “He also made it crystal clear that we were not to call the police. If I don’t hand over the money by the deadline, he said he’s going to kill Sarah!” Bill put his face in his hands. He turned to Anne, “Geez, Anne, I don’t know what to do!”

“We’ll get the money, Bill, don’t worry!” Anne said. “You know that my parents left Sarah and me a lot of money when they died.” Anne put her hand on Bill shoulders.

Anne and Sarah’s parents owned a very large computer company in Los Angeles, Pardo Computers, Inc. When they died a few years ago, Mr. and Mrs. Pardo left their two daughters a very large pile of cash. That’s how Anne got the money to go to USC, and could afford her cell phone, her Mercedes, and her apartment on the beach.

While Anne and Bill comforted each other, I called the young waitress over and asked for another iced tea. She wasn’t very friendly, but then again most waitresses in L.A. aren’t. They all really want to be actresses.

Drinking my tea and thinking about the case, the thought occurred to me that the kidnapper must know Anne and Sarah or at least know that they had a lot of money, and could get it quickly.

“I know this is a difficult time, Bill,” I interrupted, “but I need to ask you and

Anne a few questions. Does your family have any enemies? Anyone who might want to hurt you?" Anne looked at Bill, and they both began to think.

The two of them spent the next 20 minutes coming up with a list of people who might want to harm them. They got the list down to two prime suspects, both of whom used to work for the Pardo computer business before they were fired. They gave me the names of the two ex-employees.

"This will be a good place for me to start," I told them. "Now, you two need to get some rest. I'll drive you both back to Bill's apartment."

"No, Dr. Reeves, I want to go with you!" Anne insisted. I found it very hard to say "no," but I had to. I needed time to be alone, and to get some advice from an old friend.

"I'm really sorry, Anne," I apologized, "but you need to rest and I need time to look into these names you gave me."

"No police!" Bill quickly added.

"Don't worry, Bill," I told him, "there'll be no police involved. Not yet, anyway"

The three of us got up and started walking toward my car. I had a funny feeling that there was more to this mystery than any of us thought.

Missing Person - Episode #6

Episode 6: Kathy (Again)

I drove Bill and Anne back to Sarah and Bill's apartment building to drop them both off there. Anne had left her car there, so she could drive herself home. I told them to call me if anything new came up.

"Thanks for your help today, Dr. Reeves." Anne said. "I know you'll help us find my sister." She gave me a big, long hug.

I didn't linger there with Anne, as much as I wanted to reassure her that things would work out. I needed to talk to an old friend, Kathy Chang, about what happened today. We were supposed to have dinner at 5:30 p.m. at her apartment, and it was already 5:20. Kathy hates it when I'm late.

I drove to Kathy's apartment and I snagged a parking spot in front of her building. It was 5:45 p.m. and I was late. I knocked on the door, and Kathy let me in.

"You're late, Darren--as usual," Kathy said.

I knew I was late, but Kathy and I have known each other for many years. I didn't want to hear about all of the other times I was late, so I changed the subject. "I'm glad to see you, too, Kathy. What are we having for dinner?"

"Dinner? You come late and now you want dinner?" she replied. "How much are you willing to pay me?" She had one of her inviting smiles on her face.

"All I have is yours," I said jokingly. I think I broke the ice with that one.

Kathy and I stopped dating over a year ago, but she still likes to pretend that we're going out. I meet her every week for dinner, and I play along with the joke. Deep down, though, I think she's still in love with me. I admit I have feelings for her as well. But life keeps interfering...

"Okay, time for dinner. Let's dig in." Kathy quickly brushed her long hair back from her face, got up, and went into the kitchen.

Kathy was a reporter for Los Angeles' biggest television station. She was both very smart and very beautiful. I first met her at a conference in Hawaii about six years ago. She was now my best friend in Los Angeles. One more thing about Kathy: she is a great cook.

"Let's eat, big guy," she said. And so we did.

Missing Person - Episode #7

An Accident?

Kathy came back in the room with tonight's dinner, Italian pasta with chicken. As we ate, I told Kathy about Anne and her missing sister.

"A strange man came to Sarah and Bill Salas's apartment building two days ago, forced them both into a car, and took them away," I explained. "Today, the man let Bill go and told him to get a half a million dollars, or he would kill Sarah."

"And how did you get mixed up in all this?" Kathy asked.

"Sarah's sister Anne is my student at USC. She asked me to lend her a hand, and I said 'yes'."

"So who do you think the kidnappers could be?" she asked.

"Well, Bill and Anne gave me the names of two ex-employees of Pardo Computers. I am going to see one of them tonight."

"Where does this person work?" Kathy asked.

"He now works at a strip club near the airport."

"He's not the person who took Sarah," Kathy said confidently.

"Why do you say that? I haven't even talked to him yet," I said, surprised.

“Trust me. The man you want is smart, very smart. Smart men don’t work at strip clubs.”

Kathy was probably right. I thanked her for the wonderful dinner, and told her I would call her tomorrow if I found out anything. Even though I trust Kathy’s judgment, I decided to go visit this former employee anyway, just to be sure he wasn’t the one who took Sarah.

I drove my car down La Brea. Suddenly I heard an emergency announcement on the police scanner in my car. The radio picks up all of the police communication in the city. I had it put into my car so I could hear any important police action related to my cases. I immediately pulled over and cranked up the volume.

There was an accident on the freeway involving a black Mercedes. The woman in the car was hurt. I listened closely to the name as the radio operator gave the details: young Latina female, age 22, name--Anne Pardo.

Missing Person - Episode #8

Episode 8: Tracing the Plates

“Be careful! She may have broken bones,” the ambulance driver yelled.

I arrived at the accident scene just a few minutes after the police. Anne was already in the ambulance and ready to go to the hospital.

“Wait just one second,” I said to the police officer closing the back door of the ambulance. “I’m a friend of the victim. Can I talk to her?”

“Okay, go ahead,” she said, “but hurry up.”

“Thanks.” I turned and looked at Anne. She had hurt her arm and leg, but she was awake and able to speak. “Anne,” I said softly. “Anne, it’s me, Dr. Reeves.”

Anne opened her eyes slowly. “Dr. Reeves, wha--what are you doing here?”

“I heard about the accident on my police scanner. Anne, what happened?”

“A...a car...red car...going very fast...hit me. Hit me from behind...tried to kill me...” It was difficult for her to talk.

“A red car, Anne?” I asked, hoping to get more information. “Did you see the driver?”

“No...didn’t see...but...I got the license plate...3XZW...4...5..1” she said, running

out of breath.

“Anne, that’s wonderful! Good work!”

“Thanks, Dr. Reeves.” She smiled a little and touched my hand softly.

“Okay, buddy, you’ll have to go now,” the policewoman yelled. “She needs to get to the hospital.”

I jumped out of the ambulance and it drove away. I got back in my car and drove to the nearest pay phone. I had to find out who owned that car.

“Hello, police department?...yes, get me Officer Cho.” Cho was an old friend of mine. When I needed a favor, he was always willing to help.

“Cho? This is Darron Reeves. Yeah, look, I need some information on a car registration. License number 3XZW451...right, I’ll call you back in an hour. Thanks, Cho. You’re the best.”

It was now 7:45 p.m. and I still needed to talk to one of the ex-employees of Pardo Computers who worked at a club near the airport. I drove down the freeway and arrived about 20 minutes later.

When I got to the club, I walked inside. The bar smelled of old beer, old cigarettes, and old men. I sat down at the bar and ordered a drink. I was here to speak to Lenny MacKay, an ex-employee of Pardo Computers.

“Excuse me, bartender,” I said to the man serving the drinks, “I’m looking for Lenny, Lenny MacKay.”

“I never heard of Lenny MacKay,” he answered very quickly. “You got the wrong place. There ain’t no Lenny MacKay working here.”

I looked into his eyes, and I knew he was lying.

I got up from the bar and walked to the back of the place. There was a door to the left. The door had a sign on it that said, “DO NOT ENTER.” I entered.

“Hey!” A man yelled at me as I went into the back room. “Who are you?”

“I’m looking for Lenny MacKay. Are you Lenny?”

“Yeah, I’m Lenny. Now who are you?” he replied.

“My name’s Reeves. Look, I’m not here to waste your time. I just want to ask you a few questions. Now, where were you two days ago, at about 8:30 in the morning?”

“I was in Las Vegas with my girlfriend. Ask her. She’ll tell you that I was with her.”

I believed Lenny when he told me that he was in Vegas, but I needed to be sure. “Who’s your girlfriend? What’s her name?” I asked.

“Her name is Tanya. She’s working here tonight. You can ask her!”

I walked over to the table and found a girl sitting by herself, drinking a beer. “Are you Tanya?” I asked.

“Yeah, I’m Tanya. What do you want, bud?”

“I just have a quick question for you: Where were you two days ago?”

“Who wants to know?”

“I’m investigating a girl who’s gone missing, and I just want to clear someone of suspicion, that’s all.”

“I was in Las Vegas with my boyfriend, Lenny, Lenny MacKay.”

“That’s all I needed to know. Thanks.” I walked out of the bar and got back into my car. As usual, Kathy was right: Lenny wasn’t involved in the kidnapping.

I got back on the freeway and drove to my apartment. It was now 10:30 p.m. and I was tired. I needed to sleep before I could continue my investigation. As soon as I got into my apartment, I checked my voice mail for messages. There was only

one. It was from a man with a very deep voice.

The message was short but very clear: “Darron Reeves, stop trying to find Sarah Salas! If you don’t stop looking for her now, you will die!”

Missing Person - Episode #9

Episode 9: At the Beach

So now someone wanted to kill me. But how did anyone know I was working on this case? Was Lenny part of this kidnapping in some way? I still had more questions than I had answers about this case.

I called my friend Officer Cho back at the police station. He had the car registration information I requested earlier. The mysterious red car that hit Anne last night on the freeway belonged to John Costello, age 37, living in Santa Monica. Tomorrow I would visit Costello. Tonight, I just needed to get some sleep.

The next morning I got up early and went to visit Anne in the hospital. Luckily, she was doing just fine. I told her I would pick her up later in the afternoon and give her a ride home.

First, I went to visit June Brown, the other ex-employee of Pardo Computers that Anne and Bill thought might be involved in the kidnapping. She now worked at a clothing store on the beach, Stern’s Fashions. I love going to the beach in L.A. The sun is always shining, the surfers are riding the waves, and the people all look so beautiful, just like movie stars.

I walked into the clothing store and looked around. The customers were mostly college students. “Excuse me, miss?” I said to the young sales clerk. “I’m looking for one of the employees here, a June Brown?”

“Who’s looking for her?” she asked, a little suspicious.

“My name is Darron Reeves. I just want to ask her a few questions.”

“What kind of questions do you want to ask her?” she replied.

“Just some questions. Look, is June Brown here today or not?” I was getting impatient with this girl.

“I’m June Brown, and I don’t know if I want to answer your questions, mister.” She crossed her arms and looked at me with a very unfriendly face. “Who do you work for? The police?”

“No, I don’t work for the police. I’m a, eh...private detective,” I answered. “I just want to know where you were three days ago, in the morning. Can you just tell me that?”

“I don’t remember. I think I was with my boyfriend,” she said with a smile. “Yeah, that’s right, I was with my boyfriend.”

“Can I talk to your boyfriend?”

“No, you can’t,” she said, suddenly getting very angry.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Because he doesn’t want to talk to you!” June said. “Look, buddy, I don’t have to answer your questions. Now why don’t you just get out of my store?” She turned around and walked away.

I couldn’t force her to talk to me, so I didn’t try. I left the store and got back in my car. Maybe this girl was involved in the kidnapping, Maybe she and her boyfriend were trying to get even with Pardo Computers. Maybe, maybe, maybe.

Missing Person - Episode #10

Episode 10: The Bartender Shows Up

Episode 10: The Bartender Shows Up

It was time to try a different approach. I decided to find John Costello first and talk to him. I wanted to find out why his car hit Anne's and almost killed her. I knew Costello lived in Santa Monica, so I drove up the freeway and got off near Main Street. I went to the address Officer Cho gave me and knocked on the door. No one answered. I knocked on the apartment manager's door. An old woman answered. "Excuse me, I'm trying to find John Costello. He lives in number 503."

"Mr. Costello lived--past tense--in 503. He moved out two months ago," she said.

"Do you know where he lives now or where he works," I asked.

"I don't know where he moved to, but I think he still works at the bar on 4th Street."

"Thanks for your help." I got back in my car and drove down to the bar. It was only 10:00 a.m., and already there were cars parked outside the place. Some people like to start drinking really early.

As I walked down the street toward the bar, I heard two gun shots. I immediately reached for my gun, which I keep on my belt. The gun is registered, of course, but I only carry it with me when I think there might be trouble. I ran toward the bar,

and I heard another sound, like the wheels of a car turning very fast. I slowly opened the front door of the bar and looked around. There was a man standing over a dead body. The floor was covered with blood.

“Don’t shoot!” the man yelled at me.

“It’s okay, I’m a private detective. What happened here?” I asked.

“Someone just ran in here and shot John! I think he’s dead,” the man answered.

“John? The dead man’s name is John?” I asked.

“Yeah, he is--was--the bartender. His name’s John Costello.”

“Someone call the police,” I said. “Did anyone recognize the man who shot Costello? Did anyone see what he looked like?” There were four men in the bar. Each man looked at the other. Everyone just shook their head.

“Uh, I didn’t really see him very well,” said one man.

“Yeah, it’s dark in here. I didn’t see his face,” said another.

I decided not to stay at the bar. I didn’t want the police to find out about Sarah’s kidnapping, and how Costello may have been connected. I drove back toward downtown. I stopped to have lunch at my favorite sushi bar and thought about the case. I was now more confused than before. This morning I guessed that John Costello might be the kidnapper. Now Costello was dead. The girl at the beach store might be involved, but I had no evidence of that. I was stuck. At around 2:00 p.m. I went to the hospital and picked up Anne. She was feeling much better, and was happy to see me.

“Have you heard anything from Bill about giving the money to the kidnappers?” I asked her.

“No, Bill hasn’t called.”

“Well, let’s go over there and see what happened.” We drove over to Bill and Sarah’s apartment, and we were surprised to see two police cars outside the

building. Bill was sitting on the steps of the building crying.

“What happened?!” Anne said to me as we parked the car. “Why are the police here?”

“I don’t know, Anne,” I said. “Let’s just try to stay calm and find out what is going on.” As we walked toward the apartment building, I had a feeling in my stomach that something was wrong--very wrong.

“Oh, Anne, she’s dead! She’s dead!” Bill cried. He jumped up to hug Anne. “Sarah’s dead!”

“Bill, what happened?” I asked. “Did the kidnappers call?” I saw that Anne was in shock. She couldn’t believe what Bill was telling her.

“No, I made a terrible mistake,” Bill said. “I got scared, so I called the police this morning. I told them everything. I told them that Sarah had been kidnapped. Then two hours later...she was dead! I found Sarah’s body in the street in front of the apartment building!”

Bill began to cry again, and Anne looked like she was going to fall down. I grabbed her arm and helped her sit down on the steps. I turned to the police officer standing next to us. “Where was the body found?” I asked.

“In the street, like Mr. Salas said,” he answered. “We got here about 30 minutes ago. She was already dead. She had been cut in the throat by some type of knife or piece of glass.”

It was over. I had tried my best, but Sarah was now dead. I thought about all the things that had happened. I even blamed myself. Maybe I should have...? But you can’t blame yourself. Sometimes, you just have bad luck. There was nothing more I could do. I shook hands with Bill and gave Anne one last hug. I decided I would call my friend Officer Cho and tell him what I knew. Maybe they could find the person who killed Sarah. As I was about to leave, I noticed a list of names on the mailboxes of Bill and Sarah’s apartment building. I don’t know why I decided to look at the list. Sometimes you just do the right thing at the right time and get lucky. This was one of those times. I recognized one of the names on the list. I couldn’t believe my eyes, so I looked more closely a second time. Yes, I was right.

The name on the list read “Costello, John--Apt. 1A.” John Costello lived in the same building as Bill and Sarah Salas.

Missing Person - Episode #11

Episode 11: Right on Schedule

Things were starting to make more sense to me now. I was beginning to see what had really happened to Sarah Salas, and why she was killed. But I had no proof to show that I was right. I needed to get some real evidence. I went home and rang up Kathy Chang. I asked her to do me a big favor that night. Fortunately, she said “yes.” Now I was ready. I turned on the television and watched the baseball game. I had some time to kill until it was dark outside. When it was nighttime, I got in my car and started driving.

When I got near Bill and Sarah’s apartment building, I turned off the lights of my car and parked about a block away. I didn’t want anyone to know I was here. It was now 7:30 p.m. I was right on schedule.

Very quietly I walked up the sidewalk in front of the apartment building. I needed to break into Costello’s apartment, which was on the first floor. I looked into the apartment through the window. There was a light on. I took out my gun and made sure I had bullets in it. I slowly began to open the front window, which was already cracked open. After about a minute, I got the window open and stepped inside the living room of the apartment.

I saw a light on in the kitchen. There was someone in there, and this time it was no cat. I walked to the kitchen door. I needed to surprise the person if I were going to catch him. As I opened the door, I yelled as loud as I could, “Don’t move!” The man turned around suddenly. I had guessed right: it was Bill.

“What?! What are you...” Before he finished his sentence, Bill took the frying pan he was holding and hurled it toward my face. I ducked down and the pan flew over my head. Bill came at me. He pushed me to the ground, and hit me in the stomach.

I hit him back in the face. We hit each other several times, until I noticed that my gun was now on the floor next to us. I stopped hitting Bill and reached for the gun. But Bill saw what I was doing, and jumped up. He grabbed the gun before I could get it in my hands, and pointed it at me.

“Don’t move, Reeves.” Bill had a big smile on his face. I was not smiling.

“So you figured out the truth, eh?” Bill said. “You think you are so smart, don’t you, Reeves? Well, you were right. I did kill Sarah, and now I will get all of her money. But you will just get a bullet in your head. That’s your reward for being so smart.”

Bill looked at me with real hatred. I have seen men kill before. I know the look in their eyes before they kill. I knew that I didn’t have much time to think of something.

Bill stood in front of me with the gun pointed at my face. Suddenly I remembered the pills I found in Bill and Sarah’s bedroom for Bill’s bad leg.

Now I knew what to do.

Missing Person - Episode #12

Episode 12: Kathy to the Rescue

Without thinking another second, I kicked Bill in his right knee. He screamed in pain and fell backwards on his back. The gun fell to the ground. I picked it up and pointed it at Bill.

“The game is over, Bill.” I said, moving the gun closer to his face. “ I know that you killed John Costello, too. Was he your partner in kidnapping Sarah?”

“Costello was an idiot. He was supposed to kill Anne and then keep quiet. But he told me he wanted more money or he would tell the police everything he knew. So I had to kill him so he wouldn’t blab to the cops.”

“And you came to Costello’s apartment tonight to get rid of any evidence that connected you to him?” I asked.

“Costello had my name written down on a sheet of paper I gave him. I had to find the paper and get rid of it.” Just then I heard a knock on the door, and someone came in. It was Kathy Chang.

“Kathy! Right on time!” I said. “Did you call the police?”

“Yes, they are on their way here right now. I have a camera person from the television station outside. We’re ready to report the story.”

The police arrived a few minutes later, and arrested Bill Salas for the murder of his wife and John Costello. Anne would be devastated, of course, but at least now she would know the truth.

Now it was really over, and the murderer had been found. A week later, I met Kathy at her apartment for our usual dinner. Of course she wanted to know all about the case of Sarah Salas' kidnapping. We talked over a wonderful meal of baked chicken.

"I understand that Bill killed his wife, Sarah, for her money," Kathy said, "but how much money was he going to get?"

"Bill had a two-million-dollar life insurance policy on Sarah," I responded. "Bill would get two million plus half of the money from Pardo Computers."

"And how was John Costello involved in this whole thing?"

"John Costello lived in the same apartment building as Bill and Sarah," I said. "He moved-in a few months ago, and became friends with Bill. But John liked to go to Las Vegas and gamble. He also liked to smoke and drink. So he needed money--lots of money."

"And Bill gave him a chance to make a lot of money by helping him kidnap Sarah," Kathy said.

"Exactly. Bill told John he would give him \$500,000 if he helped him kidnap Sarah."

"But how did they take Sarah? Where did they keep her?"

"Bill had planned everything out very carefully," I explained. "He told John Costello to call Sarah on the phone to ask her for some help with his computer. When she got there, John tied her up and kept her in his room. Bill left Los Angeles for two days in a rented car, so people would think both he and Sarah had disappeared. And it worked: Anne called the police, because she thought that both Bill and Sarah were in trouble. That's when Anne asked me for help."

“What went wrong with Bill’s perfect plan, then?”

“The problem was that John Costello wasn’t a very good helper,” I said. “He was supposed to kill Anne on the freeway, but he didn’t. Then he told Bill that if Bill didn’t give him more money, he would tell the police about the kidnapping.”

“That’s when Bill decided to kill Costello, to make sure Costello didn’t tell the police?”

“Exactly. He went to the bar where Costello worked and killed him,” I said. “Then he went back to Costello’s apartment to kill his wife. He cut her throat and put her body in the street. But when I discovered that John Costello lived in the same apartment building, I knew it was no coincidence, and that’s how I figured it out.”

I took a drink of the wine and looked at Kathy. She really was a very beautiful woman.

“Well, let’s not think about Anne or Bill or John Costello,” Kathy said. She smiled and raised her glass of wine. Perhaps I’ve been working too hard on this case. I’ve forgotten the simple pleasures of life. It was time to spend some more time on the good things in life, like a good glass of wine, a good meal, and Kathy’s wonderful smile.