

"All the News
That Happened Today"

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University Student Murdered

"This will not stand!"

WASHINGTON — The art of making a believable fake newspaper front page has always come down to taking the time to craft the details perfectly. A lot of people think words thrown in a haphazard way will suddenly come together to form a coherent whole.

"This is not the case," claims state champion of fake newspaper writing, Dr. Bartholomew Van Winkleman of Nagshead, North Carolina. He claims the secret to creating the best convincing cover of any publication is first to use a lot of unnecessarily emphatic and ridiculous verbiage. "I don't write this way because newspapers are written this way," said Van Winkleman, "but rather because it takes up more space on the page which is supposed to be filled with nonsense anyway."

Van Winkleman went on to add that in addition to long words, it is also important to include a second version of the fake newspaper front page which leaves out all major headlines, titles, and images. The purpose of doing this is to provide an easy way for graphical designers or compositors to tailor the cover to their own needs.

The rest of this article is not going to be worth reading in the least. It is literally just fluff to fill the rest of the page.

Any reader who has wasted his or her time reading this far may also notice an overabundance of unnecessary new paragraphs.

"It is to claim in the very bottom of the page now," said Van Winkleman, "that I will endeavor to give one final profound sound bite that effectively sums up the art of crafting a beautiful newspaper cover that ain't worth half its weight in news." Van Winkleman concluded, "I hope the detail put in to this single image will help future artists create far greater works of art than I have today."

Byline

A Sohni Silver Mystery

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KIMBERLY
PAULSON

Accused Taken Into Custody

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venal
A CAYELLE IMPRINT

Byline

A Sohmi Silver Mystery

by Kimberly Paulson

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CHAPTER 1

JAKE CLARKE SAT AT A TABLE WITH HIS BACK TO THE CAMERA. To those who didn't know the detective, he seemed intimidating. He stood at least six-foot-three, with a bald-shaved head and deep-toned skin. Though in his forties, he was in excellent shape, with broad shoulders and a narrow waist. His pressed burgundy dress shirt and sharp-creased gray slacks made the gun on his hip seem unnecessary, he could easily use his physical presence to compel accused criminals to cooperate. But he didn't work that way. He was a by-the-book kind of cop. He treated everyone with respect, and the lilt of his lingering Jamaican accent had a soothing quality that put people at ease.

The interview he's conducting now is a perfect example. The other man at the table, and in full view of the camera, was homeless, as evident by his appearance and odor. But Jake treated Henry Martinez with dignity. He'd brought Henry a snack and a drink, and removed his handcuffs for the interview. A small but sturdy-looking Hispanic man in tattered

clothes, with days' worth of stubble, Henry had seemed scared and angry when he arrived. But Jake's personality had put him at ease.

Jake had asked the officers to bring Henry to the station for questioning as a potential witness in the murder of Curt Redmond. Local residents saw him sleeping in the area the night Curt was murdered. But an altercation with the man ensued when they retrieved him from the soup kitchen, and Henry arrived in handcuffs instead, which was not a situation conducive to asking for the man's cooperation. Officer Townsend insisted that Henry had tried to attack him and his partner, but Jake took his explanation with a grain of salt. Townsend was too aggressive for Jake's liking, and had been rougher than necessary with Henry. Regardless, Jake judged that the man with him in the interrogation room posed no apparent threat.

"So, you're probably wondering why you're here, huh?" Jake said.

"Yeah, I sure am." Henry's demeanor, though more relaxed, still showed wariness.

"I asked my colleagues to bring you here so I could talk to you about last Thursday night. I'm sorry about what happened at the soup kitchen. They were just supposed to give you a ride to meet with me. But in retrospect, perhaps dropping two cops on you wasn't the smartest move."

Henry nodded.

"The reason I wanted to speak with you was because I understand that you often sleep at the corner of Hill and

Packard, by the Cottage Inn, and that you were sleeping there on Thursday night, correct?”

Henry thought for a moment. “Yeah, I think I was there Thursday night.”

“Do you recall what time you got there?”

“Probably about nine-thirtyish. But I can’t say for sure. I don’t have a watch or a cell phone, so I don’t always know what time it is.”

“That’s fair. We’ll go with nine-thirtyish. Were you alone when you got there?”

“Yeah.”

“What did you do once you arrived?”

“I’m sure I just settled in and went to sleep. I really just consider it a resting place. There’s no other reason to go there. Well, except that sometimes at the end of the night, the employees give away leftover pizza.”

“Man ... maybe I should start hanging out there.”

“No kidding. That’s some good pizza.”

“Yeah, I love the Cottage Inn.”

“Did they give out pizza Thursday night?”

“You know, I was asleep early that night. So, if they did, I missed it.”

“Too bad. What time do you think you fell asleep?”

“Pretty much as soon as I got there. I worked a day’s labor that morning, and I had an AA meeting that evening, so I was beat by the time nine-thirty rolled around. I’m sure I was out like a light no later than ten.”

“AA meeting, huh? How long have you been sober?”

“Twenty months.”

“Congratulations! Good for you.”

“Thanks.”

“So, you believe you were asleep by ten. Did you wake up at any point during the night?”

“Oh, geez, I don’t remember. It’s not unusual for things to wake me up when I’m sleeping outside. Dogs are the worst. But I can’t remember that night specifically.”

“OK, I have to ask. Dogs?”

Henry chuckled. “Yeah, they have to sniff everything. Ever had a cold, wet nose put on you when you’re sleeping?”

“Actually, I have. My childhood dog, Elmo—named after the saint, not the Muppet—used to do that to me all the time.”

Both men laughed.

“Hey, I’ve got a photo I want you to look at.” Jake slid a recent picture of Curt across the table. “Does he look familiar to you?”

“No. Sorry.”

“Is it possible you saw him that night? Please look closely.

Henry studied the photo. “Not that I remember.”

“Do you remember seeing anyone else in the area?”

“I’m sure there were people around, but I don’t remember anyone in particular.”

“How about anyone who looked out of place or seemed to be loitering, waiting for someone?”

“I wish I could help you, but I really don’t pay attention. As long as I feel I’m safe, I just go to sleep. I find it better not to make eye contact with people.”

“What about other nights you’ve slept in that spot, prior to Thursday? Remember anything or anyone out of place, unusual?”

Henry paused. "Are you gonna tell me why you're asking me these questions?"

"Have you heard about the college student who was murdered? It's been all over the news."

"I think I did hear something about that. But I don't know the details. Is that what this is about?"

Jake nodded.

"Why do you think I have information about it?"

"He was murdered on Hill Street, only about a block away from where you were sleeping that night?"

"Holy shit! I didn't know that."

"He was likely killed between ten thirty and eleven twenty. He probably walked right past you just before it happened."

"Is that the guy in the picture you showed me?"

"It is."

"Damn. He looks like a kid."

"He was only twenty. A junior at U of M."

"Oh, wait a minute," Henry said. "That must have been the night I heard all the emergency vehicles. They woke me up. They were so close and so loud that I actually got up and moved to another street. Even with their sirens off, those trucks made a ton of noise. And there were doors slamming, and people were shouting. There was no way I was gonna go back to sleep there."

"So, you fell asleep before the emergency vehicles arrived, and didn't wake up until they got there?"

"Yep."

"This is important. When you woke up, then got up and left the area, what did you see? Tell me anything and everything."

“I remember seeing one cop car already there. And then another pulled up while I was walking away. There was a fire department rescue truck. A bunch of people in uniforms were starting to gather.”

“What about non-uniformed people? Did you see anyone walking or running away from the scene? Was anyone standing around, observing? Any cars parked nearby?”

“I remember, as I was leaving my sleeping area, I startled a young woman who was carrying a pizza out of Cottage Inn. She got into a car with a guy behind the wheel, and they took off. And I remember a man coming out of the Subway across the street. I remember the woman because I scared her and felt bad about it. The guy I remember, because a sub sounded so good and I was jealous. Other than that, I don’t remember anyone else.”

“Any vehicles?”

“Nothing that stands out. I feel kind of stupid that this all took place right under my nose and I didn’t know anything about it. I wish I could help.”

Henry became panicked. “You’re not thinking I did this, right? That’s not why you brought me here, is it?”

“I’ll be honest with you. We can’t rule out anyone at this time. But to answer your question, that isn’t why I brought you here. I was hoping you might have seen or heard something.”

Henry seemed appeased. “Unfortunately, I didn’t.”

Though the questioning lasted about twenty minutes, Henry was unable to provide any useful information. To some, his story may have sounded hard to believe. But Jake was familiar with the ability of many homeless people, able to sleep in

public places by tuning out everything around them. It seemed credible to him that a man like Henry, who was accustomed to sleeping through the background noises of public areas, could sleep through what was probably a quick and quiet murder, and then only wake at the sound of the emergency crews. Unfortunate, because he was in a perfect position to see the perpetrator, but Jake didn't get the impression he was lying. Henry also had no prior arrests in Michigan, according to the state's database.

Jake was about to let him leave, and had informed Henry that they weren't going to bring charges for the incident at the soup kitchen, when a knock at the door came. Jake stepped into the hall, where Officer Townsend waited to speak with him.

"You're not going to believe this, Jake. We did a custodial search of that dirty old bag of his, and we found something. You need to come see for yourself."

Jake sensed his day was about to become more complicated. The search had probably turned up drugs, stolen credit cards, or something of the sort that would require more time and more paperwork, and ultimately pull him away from his top priority, which was solving Curt Redmond's murder. But what the other cop had for him was nothing so mundane, and frankly, beyond his wildest imagination.

"Check this out!" Townsend pointed to a leather billfold. "This is the victim's wallet. It still has his ID in it." He gestured to what looked like a rolled flannel shirt. "But this is the coup de grace."

Jake leaned closer to the shirt for better examination. Then he noticed the knife, which had been obscured by the shirt.

What it couldn't hide, though, was the blood. Dried blood covered the entire blade and the inside of the shirt.

"You've got to be kidding me!" he said. "To be clear, you found these inside his duffel bag? Just like this?"

"Sure did," Townsend said.

"Make sure you document everything perfectly, by the book. Bag it all and send it to the lab. And don't touch a damn thing."

"I'm on it."

Jake returned to the interrogation room, where Henry was waiting. Only minutes before, he had deemed Henry unthreatening and found him earnest. His ability to read people was usually better. Boy, had he been wrong.

"I'm afraid circumstances have changed, Mr. Martinez. We just found what you left in your bag."

He stared at Henry, but the man's demeanor didn't change. He looked curious.

"At this point, I need to read you your Miranda rights." Jake recited the familiar warning, studying Henry. "Do you understand these rights?"

Henry looked shell-shocked. "Yes."

"OK. Please sign this form to confirm that you were informed of your rights, and that you understand them. Are you able to read and write?"

"Yeah, of course." Henry signed the form and slid it across the table.

"Now we need to get serious. What do you have to say about what was in your bag?"

"I don't know what you're talking about. I have a shirt, a towel, some change, a couple candy bars, and I think some old sunglasses in there. Maybe a couple other things."

“Henry, you can drop the act now. We found Curt Redmond’s wallet in your bag. And the bloody knife. We know you killed him.”

The color drained from Henry’s face. “No, I-I didn’t kill nobody! I don’t have no wallet or knife. What are you trying to do, set me up?”

“Why’d you do it, Henry? Were you drinking? Lost control?”

Jake kept his voice leveled. Henry had started to trust him, so he thought it best to continue with a non-hostile approach.

“No!” Henry shouted, becoming more frantic with each question.

“Did you black out, Henry? You’re not the first alcoholic to fall hard off the wagon.”

“No! I wasn’t drinking.”

“Maybe you honestly don’t remember doing it. Maybe you found the wallet later, and couldn’t remember where it came from. But you knew you did something, didn’t you? Something bad.”

Henry crossed his arms across his chest and said nothing.

“There’s no point denying it, Henry. We have all the proof we need.

“No, dammit! You’re setting me up. I want a lawyer, now.”

Jake maintained his composure, but silently cursed. He did not expect this man to invoke his right to a lawyer. At least, not so quickly. Now all questioning had to end. But at least he could hold him on a charge of resisting and obstructing, based on the incident at the soup kitchen. Henry would likely be unable to make bond, so he would remain in detention while Jake and his colleagues processed the evidence and completed their investigation.

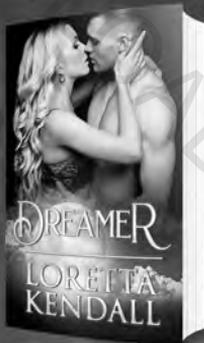
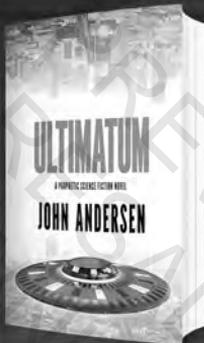
He replaced the handcuffs on Henry's wrists and escorted him out of the room, where officers were waiting to drive him to the jail.

Jake returned to his desk with a smile. He had his guy. The case didn't exactly come together the way he'd expected, but all that mattered was that he got him. The community was safer without Henry Martinez on the street.

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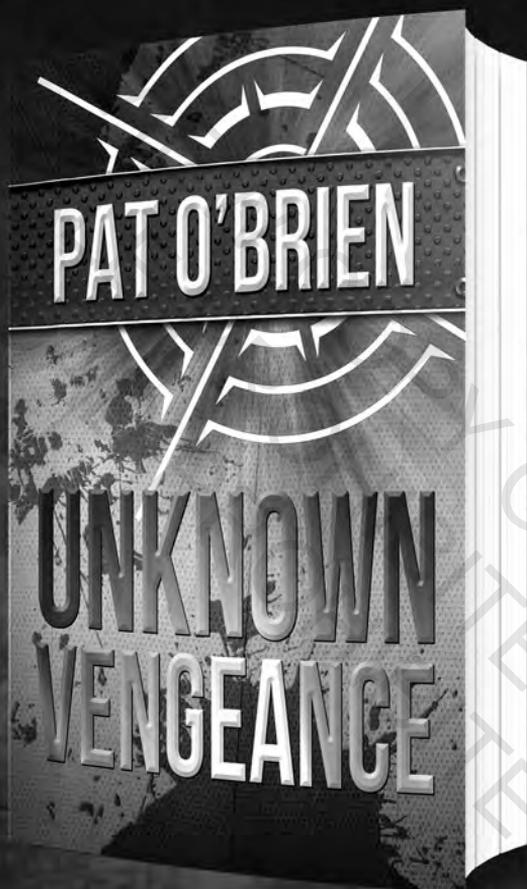
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