

CHAPTER SAMPLER

The truth
can't stay
buried forever.

DO NOT GO OUT AT NIGHT

FRANÇOIS & MARTINE
GRAVEL LATULIPPE

TRANSLATED BY DAVID WARRINER



Do Not Go Out At Night

By François Gravel
and Martine Latulippe

Translated from the French by David Warriner



ORCA BOOK PUBLISHERS

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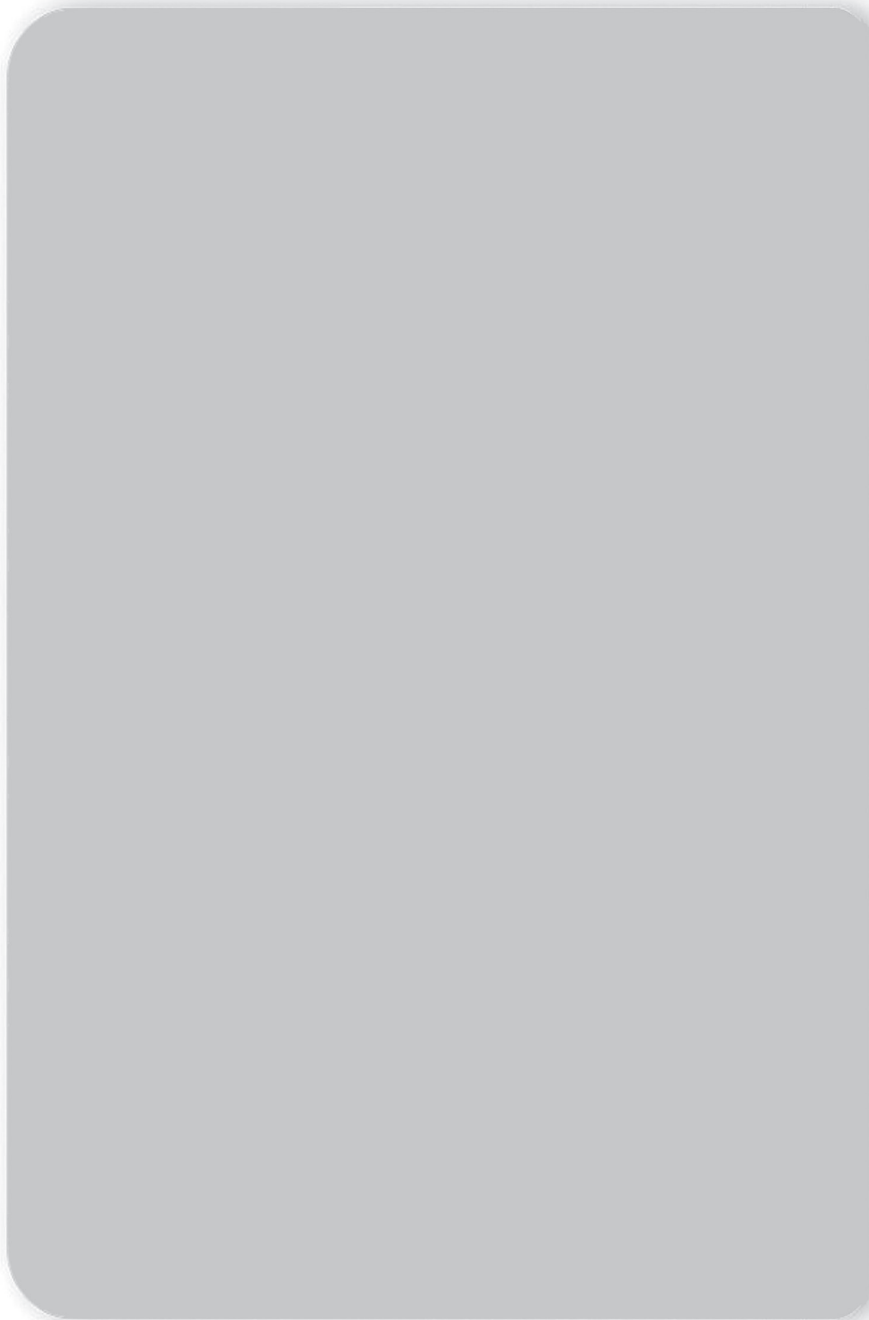
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IRIS DALTON CASE FILE

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SERVICE ★ INTEGRITY ★ JUSTICE

INVESTIGATION REPORT

CASE No.

456-2734905-998

Lead Investigator:

Detective Inspector Kevin Malone

Riverside Police Department

Transcript of witness statement

Oliver Kelly

Monday, June 25

My name is Oliver Kelly. I'm fourteen years old. I'm giving this statement to the police voluntarily to explain what happened to me in the past few days. My parents are here with me. They're the ones who encouraged me to tell you what my friend Maddy and I discovered recently.

Maddy's coming in to the police to give her statement this afternoon, I believe.

The first thing I want to say is that I don't know why I was at the construction site that night. My parents have asked me, the police officers have asked me—and I've asked myself that question time and time again. The truth is, I had a feeling I had to go there. It really felt like there was a hand on my back, pushing me. Sorry, I can't explain it any other way.

All right, I'll start at the beginning. It happened on Friday. Yes, June 22. I was walking over to my friend Tate's house for a party to celebrate the end of the school year.

Tate Shepherd. He lives two blocks away from me, on Larch Street. I don't know what the house number is. But you can't miss the place. It's the only house on the street with a basketball hoop over the garage door.

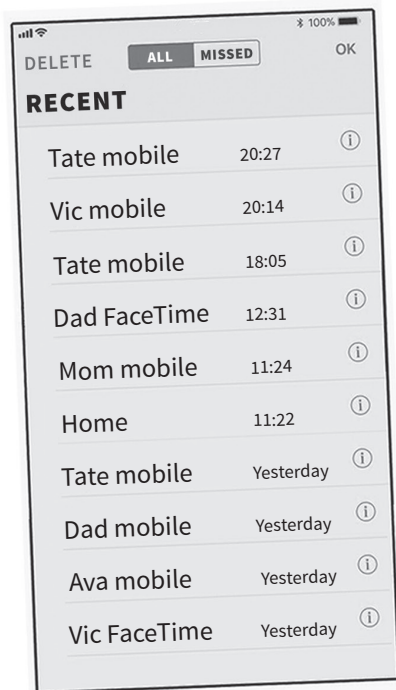


It was nearly nine o'clock—yes, nine o'clock in the evening—when I got there. I know that because I checked my phone quickly. Tate had invited us all over for eight thirty, so I wasn't early, but I wasn't really late either. It was the perfect time to get there, you know. While I had the phone out, I figured I'd check if I had any messages. I didn't have any.

No texts, no emails, no voice messages. You can check.

I put my phone back in my pocket, and that was when it happened. Instead of knocking on the door at Tate's house, like I should have done, I kept walking. To the end of the street. It was like something was drawing me there.

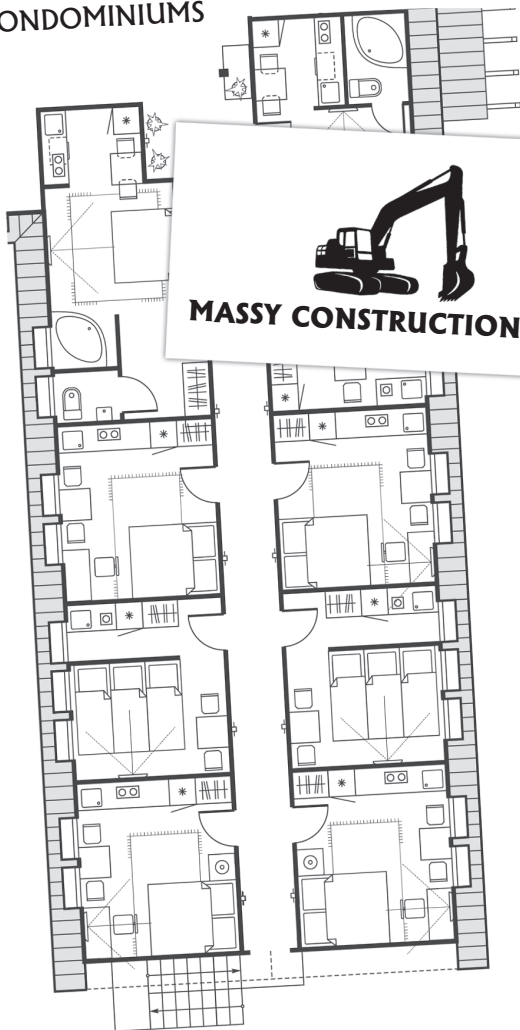
I didn't hear anyone calling my name, no. Like I said, I don't know why I decided to keep walking. Ask me a hundred times if you like. I still won't know the answer.



There's a construction site down the street. Right now it's just a big hole in the ground. But we know it's going to be a condo building because there's a big sign that says *Royal Condominiums—Coming Soon*. There's a chain-link fence around the construction site, but someone had cut a hole in it. It wasn't hard to get in.



ROYAL CONDOMINIUMS



MASSY CONSTRUCTION INC.

I knew I had no business being there. I did think about turning around and going back to Tate's, but then I saw Maddy on the other side of the fence.

I've known Maddy forever. We were in the same classroom in kindergarten. We used to be in the same Scout group, and now we're both doing the same sports program at school. The soccer program.

No, she didn't ask me to meet her there. I was really surprised to see her there, on the other side of the fence.

She beckoned for me to come join her. She didn't say anything, she just motioned with her hand.

I hesitated for a second. The place was giving me the creeps, kind of like a graveyard. But she motioned to me again to come join her—so I did.



DIARY OF
Maddy Mercer

Friday, June 22

I don't know why I said yes when he invited me. It's not like Tate and I are friends. But we're not NOT friends, either. It was the first time he'd invited me over, though. To be fair, he did invite everyone in our year. Well, everyone in our soccer program, anyway. And there really are a lot of us. So I'm not surprised he invited me too.

I wasn't planning on going. But then...I was all by myself earlier. No one else was home. Dad is out of town at a conference. Mom is working the evening shift this week, and my best friend, Laura, went out for dinner with her mom and dad. School just finished, and there I was at home, on my own, with nothing to do. Pretty sad, right? So I figured I might as well go over to Tate's.

Tate lives on Larch Street. It isn't far, only a few blocks. On the way there's a construction site. There's been a lot of fuss in the neighborhood about that place. The developer bought two houses and another old ramshackle building and knocked them down. For a while the site was a mess, and it was really busy. There were lots of trucks coming and going. Now it's a lot quieter. They've demolished the old houses, and they're getting ready to put in the foundation for a condo building. It's basically a patch of wasteland with a hole in the ground and a few mounds of dirt.

So anyway, it was Friday night, it was nearly nine o'clock, and the sun was about to go down. I was walking past the construction

site when something caught my eye. A hole in the fence. It looked like someone had cut through the metal to get in there.

But why would they want to do that? There's nothing in there to steal. The place was deserted. I kept on walking, but ten steps later, I turned around. Curiosity got the better of me. I went back to the hole in the fence and sneaked through it, making sure not to tear my clothes.

I wandered around the site for a while. There wasn't much to see. Rocks, dirt and nothing else. I took a look around me and shook my head. What exactly did you think you'd find in here, Maddy? I said to myself. A thief? Someone who wants to steal a bunch of rocks?

I had no business being there. I don't know what I was thinking, going in through that gap in the fence. That's it, I decided, I've had enough—I'm going to Tate's now. Just as I was about to walk back to the fence, a flash of color caught my eye. There was something there, beside an excavator in a hole in the ground. Something yellow. Once it had caught my eye, I was curious to see what it was.

I couldn't resist taking a look. I crouched by the side of the hole and leaned over the edge. It wasn't very deep. I reached for the yellow object, whatever it was. When I swept away the

sand covering the top of the object, I saw that it was a yellow backpack. It looked old and dirty, and most of it was still buried in the ground. It took me a little time to dig it out with my hands. Obviously it hadn't just been tossed into this hole. It looked like it had been there a long time.

I pulled the bag free and took a closer look at it. What was it doing there? Did some kid lose it? I wondered if I should open it. Maybe the owner wrote their name inside. I unzipped the bag nervously. I was scared it might be crawling with bugs. But I didn't see any creepy-crawlies. I did see a T-shirt, a recorder (the kind you play in music class) and a decaying leather case containing what I thought at first was an old pocket watch but turned out to be a compass. No name. No ID.

Suddenly I got the feeling I was being watched. I knew I hadn't done anything wrong, not really. But I'd been wandering around somewhere I shouldn't be, and I'd snooped inside a backpack that didn't belong to me. I looked over my shoulder quickly, feeling uneasy. And I saw a silhouette standing over by the fence. My heart was racing.

Still holding the bag, I sprang to my feet and turned around. And I immediately breathed a sigh of relief when I realized who the person watching me was. It was Oliver, a friendly kid I recognized from class. For some reason, I beckoned him over to show him

what I'd found. I figured he must be on his way to Tate's too. I know I should probably have just waved at him, put the bag back where I found it, forgotten all about it and gone to Tate's with Oliver to celebrate the end of the school year. But the urge was too strong. I had to tell him what I'd found.

Oliver seemed hesitant. Again I beckoned for him to come over. And, just like I did, he sneaked through the gap in the fence to join me.

The sun had gone down already. The construction site slowly sank into darkness.