

*M*  
*S*

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It was a crisp autumn afternoon when my parents left. You could almost see the storm clouds rolling in, but they left anyway. The police man said “your parents were halfway around the block when your parents were shot and killed.” Jack, my older brother, and I were both deeply devastated at first. Then Jack moved on and I couldn’t; to me it just seemed like there were too many mysteries floating about my parents’ death. He said Andie “Come on buck up, it’s not the end of the world.” I thought “How could he say that, they are our own flesh and blood. They were our parents, of course I was going to make a big deal out of it.”

After my parents died I had to go live with my older brother, Jack Bule. When I was growing up, he was never there and by the time I was ten, he was in college. Moving in with him, as you can imagine, was very uncomfortable. He was kind of my last connection to my family though. Both sets of grandparents lived in different states and so did all of my other relatives, except for Jack. It seemed the only way I could stay in this town was if I went to live with Jack. He had a job at the local bank and is doing pretty good on his own.

Day after day passed, week after week, month after month until a year with still no answers to whom or what killed my parents. Living with my brother for a year seemed like pure wretchedness, but turned out okay if you call non-stop chores, driving tests and errands “okay”. After the year anniversary the police gave up on trying to figure out who killed them. Then I realized it wasn’t up to the police to figure out who killed my parents, it was up to me, Andie Bule. I thought since living with my brother

was a nightmare, this would help me get away from all the chores and stuff. Being only sixteen and just being able to drive and still in high school, I knew trying piece things was going to be hard, but since it was summer vacation I had more time on my hands.

I figured I would start by checking out the crime scene. The crime scene wasn't much a crime scene anymore. It was then a patch of red tinted grass and concrete. It was peculiar to see where my parents' mangled bodies dropped stone cold dead. Seeing this spot was very emotional, I couldn't look at it for long before tearing up. I started thinking of my parents and their voices, their smells. Then I remembered one of the things my parents used to say. They said snooping is one of my strengths, so snooping around what used to be the crime scene was effortless.

I searched and found what looked to be a slip of paper torn in half. On it was written 7:15:45, 205, 10-18, next to the numbers was the letter M and underneath that was the letter S. I was so happy to have found that piece of information. Suddenly it started to rain, so I ran up the nearest driveway. I was so overwhelmed by finding the clue I didn't realize whose driveway I ran up.

It just happened to be the driveway of Mr. Alfonzo McSlellan. I decided since I was there I would put my skill to good use. He never seemed to like my parents, so I knew if he was acting strange something would be wrong. I went up to the door ready to ask questions. I reached up to the Tulip doorbell, which was very abnormal. Mr. McSlellan himself was very abnormal; he has thick brown hair and is very big. He always wears this hideous flannel, patterned shirt. He even wears it to work, ugh. Every year, when I was in Girl Scouts, I would sell cookies at his house. It always seemed to smell like cigarette smoke and flowers. I always hated that smell; it made me dislike him even more.

He cracked the door to see who was there. When he saw me, he opened the door completely. There he was, in the same dreadful flannel with the same peculiar stench. The strangest thing was though when I asked him simple questions all I could get out of him was a yes, no, or I don't know. When I am saying easy questions I mean really easy for example, "Do you like the weather at the moment?" Then when I got into the actual questions, he gave even less. The conversation seemed to go like this. "So, how have you been," I asked, "Ok I guess," was his reply while scratching his head. "Is your street quieter with the police gone now," I asked. "I . . . guess" he said then he shrugged his shoulders. "Do you ... um ... know anyone who disliked my parents or wanted them dead?" I asked. "No! Now can we please-um get off that awful subject?" He waved his hands rapidly. Then I asked, "Did you see anything suspicious before the day my parents were murdered?" "No! Now just drop it Andie," was his reply. He seemed real uneasy and restless to end the conversation. I said goodbye after five minutes of nothing and went across the street.

Across the street were Mr. and Mrs. McSegor. They live in the biggest, oldest, creepiest house on the block. They aren't nice at all and have hated my family since we moved here ten years ago. Just as I was about to walk up the steps I heard a door close, I practically jumped out of my skin. I turned around and there was Mr. McSlellan coming out of his door. I ran as fast as I could, my heart was beating just as fast, to the nearest bush to hide. Mr. McSlellan, not being very bright and sightless, just strolled right passed past me, looked at a post-it note on the front of the door and walked in. I held my breath and made sure not to make any movement or sound. It was one of the scariest moments ever. Not being able to contain myself, I jumped up as he walked in the open door. The post-it on the door said *Maple Street Association Meeting from 3:30*

to 6:00. It was almost four, so I thought I would have time to go check out their house and do some more snooping.

Inside the house was as mysterious and creepy as the outside. Except the inside was worse because everywhere you looked there were ceramic animals. Cats, dogs, ducks, cows, everything you can imagine. As I walked in, I saw Mr. McSlellan turn the corner and then go down a corridor. I went after him, not knowing where I was going, or if it would even be important, but it was like something inside of me telling me to keep after him and keep going. He went down some stairs so I went down some stairs. He ended in a library. Apparently, the McSegor's had a secret room. To get there, one had to pull the bookcase off the wall. He grabbed on and just pulled. He had to reach behind the books for a knob of some sort. It didn't look difficult considering fat, old Mr. McSlellan could open it.

Man was I wrong. I tugged and pulled that thing to the point I thought my arms would fall off. Suddenly, I found what seemed to be a lock behind one of the books. I just had to figure out the combination. So with every little last piece of energy I had left, I searched around that room. I started looking in the books. I looked top to bottom, side to side, but I didn't find anything, until I realized a book dropped off the shelf while I was looking. Could this be the book that has the digits to the code I need to get into the room. Then possibly find a clue to solve who or what killed my parents. I thought about people coming back out of the bookcase but I was too anxious to try out the combination.

I picked it up and looked at it; there was nothing on it or in it. My spirits sank utterly low. That was until I found that on the very last page, there were five numbers written on it. I was just about to get a good look at it when "wham" the bookshelf flew open and knocked me unconscious.

I was out cold for about two hours, then I woke up and found myself on a stage somewhere with an audience of about ten watching me carefully. At first, I couldn't see very well, but it got better. Finally, I could see some faces. I wasn't too shocked to see Mr. McSlellan and Mr. McSegor, both of their faces weren't pleasing. One of them called to the other "She's awake, she's awake!" Then slowly I could see Mr. McSegor get up and slither up to the stage. I started freaking out; I couldn't imagine all the bad things they might have done to me.

He asked "Do you know where you are?" "No," I shyly replied, and then he said "Andie you are in the exact same secret room you were trying to break into, you conniving little girl!" He said "This room belongs to the Maple Street Association," he stopped to mumble to himself, "It is a secret society of criminals that live on Maple Street that hate your parents and other good doers." Then he told me they were the ones involved in the murder of my parents. I stopped and think to myself "How could this happen? Why would these people hate my parents?" Each and everyone there was one of my neighbors. Then I turned to my right and there, to my utter disbelief, was someone who I never suspected, but it was my own brother Jack! I started to cry when I saw my brother. I figured at least he would try to save me.

Mrs. McSegor came up next to her husband and said in her old, squeaky voice "This whole room will be filled with poisonous gas in the next five minutes and the only way to get out is if you figured out the combination to the locks on your body." Then she said in her high snooty voice "The combination was the exact time your parents were killed Andie." "How heartless are you!" I screamed. "Shut up you annoying little girl!" she yelled back. I didn't let on but I knew right then the combination to the locks. I waited for everyone to get out of the room. Then instantly I put in the combination: 7-15-

45. Thankfully, that piece of paper wasn't only a clue, but it was also a life line. After realizing that if the time on there is when my parents died then the address must have been the house they were killed out of. Also the date on there was the date they were killed and M.S. must have stood for Maple Street. All this time I couldn't believe my neighbors, and my brother, were going around behind my back! I was just flabbergasted, I just couldn't take it in, I really didn't want it to be true.

I was rushing, trying to get out when I didn't even know how I got in. I heard everyone behind the bookcase. There weren't any doors or windows that I could see. I knew if I followed the way everyone else left, they would surely catch me from behind the bookcase. Thankfully, there was an air vent near the ceiling that if I could squeeze in, I might have a chance of getting out. It was really close and I could barely breathe, but to me it didn't matter as long as I got out. The air vent lead me, like a dog leads a blind person, to a bathroom that had a window and a door. Going down the air vent breathing harder and harder ever minute more I was in there. I didn't want to take any chances with the opening the door, but I could open the window. I was so happy to get out. Even if I did land in a thorn bush, I was happy to get out.

I ran as fast as I could to the police station in the pouring rain. The rain beat on my face and made it sting, but I kept running. When I got there, I ran in through the old oak door, and told the old southern accented deputy everything that had happened with the Maple Street Association. I even told him about the secret room and getting knocked out. Then deputy said, with a smirk on his face "I always thought there was somethin' fishy 'bout the people who lived on that street," He let me ride in the car with him to tell him more of the details. When we got there, about twenty minutes had passed and the whole house smelled odder then normal.

Suddenly the deputy drove right past it and went to the neighbor's house. He said that the smell was so strong and automatically knew, without even cracking a window, that the smell was a poisonous gas. He also said that the house would explode any- BOOM! The house burst into flames that seemed to swallow the house. Then deputy said in his thick country accent "Darlin' no one could have survived that explosion, so don't you go worrin' 'bout somethin' that ain't there' anymore."

We went back to the station and after the fire was put out the firemen said that everyone was definitely killed. I was glad that everyone was dead, but now I realized I would have to leave the town soon because my only living relative in this town was now dead. My grandparents got wind of that and moved straight to town so I could finish high school here. It was much better than living with Jack. Now I am doing an internship with the police and detectives. Everything has settled down from the explosion everything was getting better, slower, but better. School has been going well with all my friends and my grades are good. My friends are all really supportive with all the events from my past. So whenever I am feeling down they are always there to comfort me. The police internship is going good sometimes really good and fun mysteries come into my life. The police usually give me easier cases then most of the other detectives. One day though I will get a big case to work on.