



True Crime audiobook scripts

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The Receipt in the Glove Box

Cold case · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

For twenty-six years, the only thing anyone knew about Daniel Raske's last afternoon was that he bought gas.

The receipt was in the glove box. Pump four, eleven dollars, 2:14 p.m. Detectives in Varden County read it a hundred times and learned nothing.

Then, in 2019, a records clerk named Paula Stent turned it over. On the back, in pencil, someone had written a phone number.

It was not Daniel's handwriting.

Eleven Signatures

Financial fraud · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 30 seconds

The loan file had eleven signatures on it. Nine of them belonged to people who had never heard of the loan.

That was the detail that stopped the auditor, a quiet man named Gerrit Lowe, on an ordinary Thursday at Kessick Farmers Bank. Not the amount. Not the missing collateral. The handwriting.

"Everybody signed their name the same way," he told me. "Same loop on the letter L. People are not that consistent. One person is."

What the Mail Carrier Noticed

Missing person · Mature (55+) · Midwestern US · 30 seconds

Nobody reported Harold Vance missing. His mailbox did.

Lorna Peet had carried the route through Dunnock Mills for nineteen years, and she knew Harold collected his mail by ten every morning. On the fourth day it was still there, she knocked. On the fifth, she called the sheriff's office.

"People think I deliver envelopes," she said. "I notice things. That is most of the job."

The Frame Was Never Empty

Heist, art theft · Adult (30–45) · Neutral British · 30 seconds

The most successful art theft in the history of Tessaly went unnoticed for six years, because the thief was polite enough to leave something behind.

A copy. A good one. It hung in the east gallery of the Halloran Museum, admired by schoolchildren and insured for two million pounds, while the real painting sat in a storage unit forty miles away.

No alarm rang. Nothing was broken. Somebody simply had a key.

Forty Dollars at a Time

Financial fraud, small town · Adult (40–55) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

Nobody steals three hundred thousand dollars from a volunteer fire department all at once. In Carrowby, it left forty dollars at a time.

A tank of gas. A box of printer paper. A reimbursement for a training course that was never held. Each one too small to question, each one signed by the same treasurer the town had trusted for sixteen years.

"She brought a casserole when my wife was sick," the fire chief, Dale Imhoff, told me. He stopped for a while before he went on. "I keep coming back to that. I think the casserole was real. I think both things were real."

The Man Who Sold the Marina

Con artist · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

In the summer of 2011, a man calling himself Peter Ansley sold the Port Lissel marina to four different buyers. He did not own it. He had never owned so much as a rowboat.

What he had was a blazer, a folder of very convincing paperwork, and a habit of buying lunch. He walked each buyer down the same dock, shook hands with the same harbormaster, and waved at boat owners he had met the week before.

"He knew my dog's name," one buyer recalled. "I checked his references. I never checked whether the references were his."

By September, Peter Ansley was gone. So was one point four million dollars.

Day Nine, Courtroom Four

Courtroom · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

On the ninth day of the trial, the prosecution called a witness nobody in the gallery had heard of: a retired typewriter repairman from Brannock Falls.

His name was Walter Osei, and he spent forty minutes explaining how a worn letter E can identify a single machine. The jury leaned in. The defendant, for the first time in two weeks, stopped taking notes.

Then the prosecutor placed two documents side by side. One was the will. The other was a grocery list, typed in the defendant's own kitchen.

"Mr. Osei," she asked, "were these typed on the same machine?"

He took off his glasses. "Yes, ma'am. I would know that E anywhere."

The Voicemail Nobody Deleted

Missing person · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

Marguerite Ensor's sister has kept the same phone for eleven years. She will not upgrade it. She is afraid of losing a voicemail that is nineteen seconds long.

It was left at 6:52 on the evening of March 3rd, 2014, from somewhere along the coast road north of Tamsin Lake. Marguerite sounds cheerful. She says she is running late, that the light on the water is ridiculous, that she will call back.

She did not call back. Her car was found two days later, locked, with a full tank.

"I do not listen to it for clues anymore," her sister told me. "I listen to it because it is her."

A Password Called Autumn

Cybercrime · Adult (25-40) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

The breach at Sable Crossing Credit Union did not begin with a hacker in a dark room. It began with a birthday card.

An employee in the loans department received an email on her birthday, with a link to a greeting from a colleague. She clicked it. Anyone would have. Within ninety seconds, someone four time zones away had her login. Her password was the name of her dog, Autumn, and the year she brought him home.

"We spent a fortune on firewalls," the security director admitted later. "The attack cost them one friendly email."

Over the next eleven days, two hundred and six accounts were quietly opened and emptied.

The Wrong Blue Coat

Wrongful conviction · Adult (40-55) · Southern US · 45 seconds

Three witnesses told police the man who robbed the Quillon Creek pharmacy wore a blue coat. Terrence Mabry owned a blue coat. In 1998, that was most of the case against him.

He served fourteen years. The coat sat in an evidence box the entire time, and nobody looked at the label until a law student did, on a slow afternoon in 2012.

The coat in the security footage had a hood. Terrence's did not. It never had.

"I told them that at the station," he said. "I said, look at it. Just look at it. It took fourteen years for somebody to look."

The Bookkeeper of Brindle Ford

Financial fraud, small town · Adult (40-55) · Midwestern US · 1 minute

Everyone in Brindle Ford agreed that Joyce Tannehill was the most careful person they had ever met. That, it turned out, was the problem.

For twenty-two years she kept the books at Aldous Grain and Feed. She balanced every account to the penny. She never took a sick day, and she never took a vacation, which her employers considered loyalty.

An auditor would have called it a warning sign. A bookkeeper who never leaves is a bookkeeper who cannot afford to let anyone else open the ledger.

"We gave her a plaque," the owner's son, Curtis Aldous, told me. He laughed, but not much. "Employee of the Decade. It hung right over the filing cabinet where she kept the second set of books."

When Joyce finally did take a day off, for a dental appointment, a temp opened the wrong drawer. By the time Joyce was out of the chair, the sheriff was in the parking lot.

Box Fourteen

Cold case · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 1 minute

The evidence room in the basement of the Orrin County courthouse floods about once every ten years. In 2009, it flooded on a Friday.

By Monday, deputies were carrying wet cardboard up the stairs and laying it out on the lawn to dry. Most of it was routine. Stolen radios. Old traffic files. And then Box Fourteen, which had no case number on it at all.

Inside was a woman's wristwatch, a bus ticket to a town called Hask Hollow, and a photograph of a man standing beside a green pickup truck.

"I had worked in that building for thirty years," said Sergeant Ines Calloway. "I had never seen that box. Somebody had put it on the top shelf, at the back, behind the Christmas decorations."

She turned the photograph over. On the back was a date, and four words in blue ink: He said he would.

It would take her six years to learn who wrote them.

A Very Good Listener

Con artist · Adult (40-55) · Neutral British · 1 minute

The woman who called herself Dr. Helena Marsh never asked anyone for money. That was her gift. People offered.

She arrived in the village of Wexmoor in 2015, rented a cottage near the church, and joined everything. The choir. The garden society. The committee to repair the hall roof. She was, by every account, a very good listener.

She listened to widowers talk about their savings. She listened to retired teachers worry about their pensions. And every so often, she would mention a small investment of her own that had done rather well.

"I pressed the cheque into her hand," said Arthur Pym, who is eighty-one. "She told me to go home and think it over. I thought that was the most honest thing I had ever heard."

There was no investment. There was no doctorate. There was not, as far as police can establish, a Helena Marsh. She left on a Sunday, during the service, while the choir was singing.

The Map Came Back by Mail

Heist, rare documents · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

In the spring of 2003, someone walked out of the Pell Harbor Public Library with a two-hundred-year-old survey map folded inside a newspaper. Twelve years later, it came back in the mail.

No return address. A postmark from a city three states away. Inside the tube, wrapped in a clean bath towel, was the map, undamaged, and a single typed line: I am sorry. It was never worth it.

Head librarian Nadine Abara opened the package at the front desk, in front of a line of people waiting to renew their books.

"I sat down on the floor," she said. "I am not a person who sits on floors."

Detectives tested the tube, the towel and the paper. They found nothing useful. The case is technically still open, and the question that keeps it open is not who took the map. It is what happened, in year twelve, to change their mind.

Seven Minutes on the Tape

Forensics · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

The security camera at the Kessick Road storage yard recorded the entire theft. For two years, that recording was considered useless.

It was dark. The lens was dirty. The figure loading forty thousand dollars of copper wire into a van was a gray smudge with legs.

Then the file landed on the desk of Dr. Priya Nambiar, a forensic video analyst who does not look at faces first. She looks at how people walk.

"Everyone wants the license plate," she explained. "The plate was mud. But this person favored the left knee, every step, for seven minutes. You cannot hide a limp for seven minutes while carrying wire."

She measured the stride. She measured the height against the fence posts. Then she asked the detectives one question: had any employee of the yard filed an injury claim in the past five years?

One had. He still worked the night shift. He had been the one to report the theft.

The Clockmaker's Apprentice

Forgery · Mature (55+) · Scottish · 1 minute

For eleven years, collectors paid a fortune for the clocks of Ewan Strachan, a master craftsman who died in 1840. The trouble was that Ewan Strachan kept producing new ones.

They came out of a workshop in the harbour town of Dunmere, where a restorer named Callum Reid repaired antique timepieces for museums. He was good at it. He was, the experts agree, slightly too good.

"A forger usually gets caught on a shortcut," said Fiona Baird, the curator who finally raised the alarm. "Modern glue. A machine-cut screw. Callum made his own screws. By hand. He aged the brass in a bucket behind the shed."

What gave him away was not a flaw. It was pride. Inside the case of the fourteenth clock, where no buyer would ever look, he had scratched two small initials. Not E.S.

C.R.

"He wanted somebody to know," Baird said. "Eventually. I think he wanted it very badly."

Twenty-Two Years of Tuesdays

Wrongful conviction · Mature (55+) · Southern US · 1 minute

Every Tuesday for twenty-two years, Odessa Whitlow drove four hours each way to visit a son the state had declared guilty. She never missed one.

She kept the gas receipts. All of them, in shoeboxes, in a closet in Calder Ridge. When I asked her why, she looked at me as if the answer were obvious.

"Because somebody was going to ask me someday how I knew," she said. "And I wanted to say, I did not just believe it. I showed up for it."

Her son, Raymond, was convicted of a warehouse burglary in 1996 on the word of a single informant. That informant took it back in 2004, in writing. It took another fourteen years for a court to read what he wrote.

Raymond walked out on a Thursday. His mother was annoyed about that.

"I told him, you could not have waited till Tuesday?" She laughed, and then she did not. "I had my whole routine."

The Trailhead Register

Missing person · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

Every hiker who enters the Marrow Ridge backcountry is asked to sign a paper register at the trailhead. Name, date, destination, expected return. On the morning of October 9th, 2016, Tobias Lund filled in three of the four.

He left the last line blank.

Search coordinator Gwen Ashby has thought about that blank line for years. Two hundred volunteers walked the ridge that month. Dogs. A helicopter, for six days, until the weather closed in.

"People ask me if I think he meant to come back," she said. "I tell them what I know. I know he packed a lunch. I know he fed his cat and left the radio on for her. Those are not the actions of a man who is not coming home."

The register is kept in a county archive now, in a plastic sleeve. Ashby visits it once a year. She says she is not looking for anything. She is keeping an appointment.

Follow the Rounding

Forensics, forensic accounting · Adult (40–55) · Neutral American · 1 minute

I have been a forensic accountant for nineteen years, and I can tell you that nobody has ever been caught by a big number. Big numbers get checked. It is the small, tidy ones that give people away.

Real expenses are messy. Forty-three dollars and seventeen cents. Two hundred and six dollars and ninety-one. When I opened the travel claims for the Ellmont Housing Trust, I found four years of invoices that ended in zero. Five hundred even. Twelve hundred even.

Human beings invent round numbers. The world does not produce them.

So I stopped reading the amounts and started reading the dates. Every one of those invoices was approved on a Friday afternoon, after four o'clock, when the second signer had already gone home.

I remember sitting back in my chair. It is a strange feeling, the moment a spreadsheet turns into a person. You are no longer looking at numbers. You are looking at somebody's Friday.

The Juror in Seat Six

Courtroom · Adult (40–55) · Neutral American · 1 minute

The fraud trial of Leland Moss lasted five weeks, and for most of it the jury looked bored. All except the woman in seat six.

Her name was Bernadette Kowal. She was a retired school secretary, and she took notes in shorthand, which nobody under sixty in that courtroom could read.

The defense had built its case on confusion. Shell companies. Wire transfers. Charts with so many arrows that the judge once asked for a recess to study one.

"They wanted us to give up," Kowal told me after the verdict. "I ran a school office for thirty-one years. I have been lied to by experts. Eight-year-olds."

In the jury room, she tore four pages from her notebook and laid them on the table. She had followed one single payment, start to finish, through every company on the chart.

It began in a pension fund. It ended at a boat dealership.

The jury was back in under three hours.

The Invoice from Nowhere

Cybercrime · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

At 4:51 on a Friday afternoon, the accounts clerk at Dunnock Mills School District received an email from the district's roofing contractor. New bank details. Please update before the next payment.

It looked right. The logo was right. The signature was the name of a man she had spoken to a dozen times.

She updated the details. On Monday, the district paid an invoice for three hundred and eighty thousand dollars to an account that had existed for nine days.

"The email address was off by one letter," said investigator Tomas Reyes. "One. An R and an N pushed together to look like an M. On a small screen, at five to five on a Friday, you would not see it. I did not see it, and I was looking for it."

The money moved four times before breakfast. What interested Reyes was not where it went. It was the timing. Somebody had known exactly when the roof was finished.

The Quietest Robbery in Orrin County

Heist, bank · Mature (55+) · Neutral American · 1 minute

Nobody knows what day the Hask Hollow Savings Bank was robbed. That is how well it was done.

There was no mask, no note, no car idling at the curb. The vault was never forced. Sometime between 2008 and 2013, the contents of thirty-one safe deposit boxes simply stopped being there.

It came to light when a farmer named Elias Brandt came in to collect his late mother's wedding ring and found an empty tin drawer.

"He did not shout," the branch manager remembered. "He held the box upside down and looked at me. I would have preferred shouting."

Safe deposit boxes are private by design. The bank keeps no list of what is inside them. So when investigators asked the obvious question, what exactly is missing, nobody could answer except the owners. And some of the owners had been dead for years.

To rob that vault, you needed only two things. A key. And patience.

The Reporter Who Stayed

Investigative journalism · Adult (25-40) · Irish · 1 minute

When the national papers lost interest in the Ballycorran credit union, one reporter stayed. She was twenty-four, she worked for a weekly with a staff of three, and she had nowhere else to be.

Aoife Tierney covered cattle marts and parish notes. She had never investigated anything bigger than a disputed raffle. But she had noticed something the visiting journalists missed.

"They all interviewed the manager," she said. "Nobody interviewed the cleaner. The cleaner had been emptying those bins for twenty years. She knew who stayed late. She knew who shredded."

Tierney spent eleven months on the story. She was threatened with a solicitor's letter twice and offered a cup of tea by nearly everyone.

"That is the thing about a small town," she said. "Nobody will tell you anything, and then everyone tells you everything, usually at a funeral."

Her report ran on a Thursday. By Friday the board had resigned.

The Charity That Never Met

Financial fraud, charity · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

After the Tamsin River flooded in the spring of 2019, donations poured in from all over the state. Within a week, the Tamsin Valley Relief Fund had collected over six hundred thousand dollars.

It had a website. It had a logo, a blue wave over a pair of hands. It had a board of five directors with reassuring titles.

What it did not have was a single meeting. Not one. Three of the five directors did not know they were directors.

"I found out from my neighbor," said Ruth Okonkwo, a retired nurse whose name appeared on the letterhead. "She thanked me for my service. I said, what service?"

The fund's founder would later insist that every dollar was accounted for. In a sense that was true. Investigators accounted for all of it: a lease on a truck, a kitchen renovation, and eleven thousand dollars in sandbags that were delivered, in August, to a town that was already dry.

Detective Okafor's Notebook

Cold case, detective interview · Mature (55+) · Neutral American · 1 minute

Detective Samuel Okafor retired in 2011 with a pension, a bad shoulder and one case he could not put down. He keeps it in a spiral notebook in his kitchen drawer, next to the takeout menus.

The case is the disappearance of a night watchman named Gene Hollis from the Varden County rail yard in 1989. No witnesses. No note. A thermos of coffee still warm on the desk.

I asked Okafor what he wrote in the notebook.

"Questions," he said. "Not answers. Young detectives write down what they know. That fills up about a page. What you do not know, that is the whole book."

He opened it. The first line, in faded pencil, read: Why was the gate locked from the inside?

"Thirty-some years," he said. "I have maybe forty theories about that gate. I only need the one."

He closed the notebook and put it back in the drawer. He did not close the drawer.

The Landlord with Nine Names

Con artist, rental scam · Adult (25-40) · Australian · 1 minute

Between 2014 and 2018, at least sixty people in Corrimba Bay paid a deposit on a rental house to a landlord they never met. The landlord had nine names. The houses were real. None of them were his.

The method was almost lazy. He copied genuine listings, lowered the rent by a third, and explained that he was working overseas. Send the bond, and the keys will be in the post.

"You feel stupid," said Kirra Doyle, who lost two thousand dollars and a week of her life. "But I was a nurse on night shift with a toddler. I did not have time to be suspicious. He was counting on that."

Detective Alan Pike traced all nine names to one laptop in one caravan park.

"People picture a mastermind," Pike said. "He had a camp chair and a prepaid phone. The clever part was not the technology. The clever part was knowing who is too tired to check."

The Lake House Keys

Missing person · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 90 seconds

When Rosalind Achterberg left her house on the morning of June 14th, 2007, she took three things: her car keys, a library book, and the keys to a lake house her family had sold four years earlier.

Nobody can explain the lake house keys.

She was fifty-three. She taught piano to half the children in Ellmont. She had a lesson booked at four that afternoon. Her car was found the next day in a gravel turnout on Route 9, eleven miles from the lake, with the library book on the passenger seat. It was open, face down, the way you leave a book when you mean to come right back.

Her younger sister, Colette, met me at the turnout. She comes every June.

"For years I was angry about the keys," she said. "I thought, if I could just understand the keys, I would understand everything. Why take them? The locks had been changed. She knew that."

She was quiet for a moment. A truck went by.

"Then one day I found my own set. In my coat. I had been carrying them around for four years without knowing it. So maybe there is no mystery there. Maybe she just never cleaned out her purse."

Colette does not expect an answer anymore. What she wants, she says, is smaller than that.

"I would like to return the library book," she said. "It is very overdue. Rosalind would be mortified."

The Water District

Financial fraud, small town · Adult (40-55) · Southern US · 90 seconds

The Calder Ridge Water District serves nine hundred homes, employs four people, and has always been the least interesting institution in the county. Then, in the fall of 2018, the pumps stopped.

Not because of a storm. Because the electric bill had not been paid in seven months.

Customers had paid. Rates had gone up twice. The district's clerk, a soft-spoken man named Wendell Pruitt, had presented a balanced budget every year for eleven years, and the board had approved it every year in under ten minutes.

"We met at the diner," board member Lucille Hargis told me. "Wendell would hand out the pages, somebody would say looks fine, and we would order pie. I am not proud of that. I am telling you how it was."

What the pages did not show was a second account. Over eleven years, a little under four hundred thousand dollars had moved through it. Investigators expected a boat. A beach house.

They found none of that. Wendell Pruitt drove a fourteen-year-old sedan. The money had gone to keeping his brother's failing hardware store open. Payroll for six employees. A new roof.

"That is what I cannot get past," Hargis said. "He robbed nine hundred families to save six jobs. And if he had asked us, honestly, I think half this town would have chipped in."

She shook her head.

"He never asked. That is the whole crime, right there. He never asked."

The Silver in the Attic

Cold case, detective interview · Mature (55+) · Neutral British · 90 seconds

In January of 1987, someone broke a vestry window at St. Oswin's church in the village of Cawdrey Fen and took everything that shone. Two candlesticks. A chalice. A silver plate given to the parish in 1702.

Detective Inspector Marian Slade was a constable then, six weeks into the job. It was the first crime scene she ever attended. She remembers the cold, and the vicar offering her a biscuit.

"We had nothing," she said. "A boot print in a flower bed. I made a plaster cast of it, very proudly. It sat in a cupboard for twenty-eight years."

The case was never closed. It was simply forgotten, the way small cases are.

Then, in 2015, a woman rang the station and asked for whoever handled old burglaries. Her father had died that spring. She had been clearing his attic. There was a suitcase.

"She was crying before she finished the sentence," Slade recalled. "She said, I think my dad did something. And I knew. I actually said it out loud: is there a plate?"

There was a plate. There was all of it, wrapped in pillowcases, never sold, never even polished.

Slade drove the silver back to St. Oswin's herself.

"People ask why I bothered, for candlesticks," she said. "But that woman could have put the suitcase in a skip. She picked up the phone. Somebody had to make that worth doing."

Sentencing Day

Courtroom · Adult (40–55) · Neutral American · 90 seconds

On the morning Graham Tolliver was sentenced, the courthouse in Brannock Falls ran out of chairs.

He had taken money from two hundred and fourteen people over nine years. Retirement savings, mostly. A college fund. The proceeds from the sale of a family farm. Thirty-one of those people had asked to speak, and the judge had said she would hear every one of them.

It took all day.

A retired machinist named Stan Wyrick walked to the podium, looked at the defendant for a long moment, and said only, "You came to my daughter's wedding." Then he sat down.

But the statement people still talk about came near the end, from a woman named Doris Kemp. She was seventy-nine, and she did not raise her voice once.

"I am not here to tell you what you took," she said. "You know what you took. You kept very good records. I am here to tell you what you did not take. I still have my garden. I still have my Thursday card game. I still trust my neighbors, and I worked hard to keep that, because you made it difficult."

She folded her paper.

"I wanted you to know that you were not as thorough as you thought."

The judge gave him eighteen years. In the hallway afterward, somebody asked Doris

Kemp whether that was enough.

"I did not come for the number," she said.

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