

I'm about to keep asking a follow-up when all of a sudden, my phone vibrates against my leg. I take a look and see that it's Chris, my work partner, and vice-team leader. 'I've got to take this,' I say to Autumn, pointing to my phone. Then I quickly walk to the toilets, where it's a bit quieter. 'Chris,' I say after I pick up, 'why are you calling me? I've got the evening off, remember?' 'Rowan,' he says, sounding relieved, 'thank God you're picking up. Listen, I know it's your day off, but I need you to come to the station right now. There's been a murder.'

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‘What?!’ I say, shocked. ‘A murder? In Chestnut Village? There hasn’t been a murder in over 20 years!’ ‘I know,’ Chris says. ‘By the way, I said you had to come to the station, but actually, now that I think of it, it’s better if you come to Chestnut High School. That’s where the victim was found. We know it’s a teacher, but apart from that, we have nothing.’ ‘Alright,’ I say. ‘I’m on my way.’ But Chris already hung up.

When I walk out of the toilets, I look for Autumn and Jess to tell them I have to leave, but I don’t see them anywhere. I decide to just leave, and while I walk out, I send them a text: ‘Emergency at work, had to go, you got to find someone else to drive you home. See u later.’ I get in my car and drive away as fast as I can, definitely breaking the speed limit. It’s an emergency though, so for me it’s legal, my car is an unmarked police car after all.

About 10 minutes later, I arrive at Chestnut High School, the only high school in the area and also the school where Autumn works. I get out of my car and see Chris standing at the school’s entrance. ‘Hi Chris,’ I say after I walk towards him. ‘It’s been ages since I’ve last been here. I’ve never been interested in coming back to take a look. Let’s just say high school wasn’t exactly the peak of my life. I think I wouldn’t have made it through without

Jess.' 'You know I really like your stories,' Chris says, 'but right now we have a murder to solve, so let's keep them for another time.' I agree, and together we go inside. While going upstairs to what I suppose is the crime scene, I look around and see not much has changed. The artworks on the walls are new, and they have finally painted that one wall. On the 2nd floor, Chris takes me to a little office next to some classrooms. I remember the school's counselor being here.

Inside the small room, I see forensic people all over the place. 'Can we come in?' I ask one of them. 'Sure,' he says. 'Just put on gloves, cover your hair and shoes, and try not to touch anything. We haven't found anything so far and we don't want the police's DNA to confuse us.' I nod. Chris and I put on the necessary protection, and we go inside. The first thing we see is the body of a tall, bald man lying in a pool of blood. When I look a bit better, I see a slit through his T-shirt, right about where his heart should be. At the police academy, I saw lots of pictures of dead bodies, and also saw a few in real life, but this is different. The ones at school all looked so peaceful, but this man looks like dying was the scariest moment of his life. It makes my stomach turn a bit, but I take a deep breath and pull myself together. 'A few questions,' I say to the forensic officer. 'One: Do we know the murder weapon, and if yes, where was it? Two: When did this happen? Three: Who is this guy?' 'Well,' the forensic officer says, 'we don't know a lot yet, but I will try to answer your questions as well as I can. This is Jack Barlow, P.E. teacher at this school. He was likely stabbed with a big knife, but we're not sure, since we didn't find a murder weapon. Time of death is most likely between 2 p.m.