



Commented [CH1]: When featuring dates and times, make sure they're serving a clear purpose. Look at ways to build description into the narrative (i.e. an empty street, long shadows, etc.) that establishes elements like time of day while also developing context.

Tuesday 4th July 2017 - 6.05am

Leigh Taylor pulled the car into the space at the curb, automatically switching off the headlights and engine. Superintendent Shaun Sutton's orders ran through her head. *Have nothing to do with Zac Burnett until after the inquiry.* The formal question and answer session was scheduled for Wednesday morning. By Thursday Zac may not have a career and the ban would be irrelevant.

Commented [CH2]: We cover a lot of information here, in just 60 words:

Leigh Taylor
Superintendent Shaun Sutton
Zac Burnett
Q&A on Wednesday
There's a ban

Information covers details, but context provides tension. What's at stake? What's to gain? How high is the risk? What emotional motivations are involved?

Instead of focusing on specifics/details here, we might instead show that Leigh is a cop and by pulling up in front of this house, she risks losing her job. But if she doesn't go through with her plan, she'll never forgive herself. Now, we have a moment that will truly engage a reader.

Commented [CH3]: The transition from romantic tension, to fear, is a touch abrupt here. Look at ways to develop a foreboding tone right from the start of the scene that builds in tension as details are revealed.

There was no reason Sutton needed to find out.

She had to ask the man she loved one question. She had to know. It was as simple and as complicated as that.

Leigh Taylor pushed open the gate and walked along the side path, dodging the puddles.

As was the tradition in her family, front door was for visitors, back door for family.

Cold fingers of fear sent goosebumps over her skin.

Nerves tingled in warning.

The rear door was ajar.

Danger.

She reached under her jacket and withdrew her police issue Glock 22.



Leaning against the wall, she used her left heel to push open the door. Her left hand held the weapon. She waited. No response. No shots. Her leather boots were wet and would squeak on

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the wooden floors. Slipping them off, she walked cautiously into the kitchen. The early morning light was insufficient to see clearly. Her nose twitched as her nostrils filled with the acrid scent of blood.

She removed a small flashlight from her pocket. Its narrow beam showed Zac Burnett, lying on the lino. His face was turned away. The light-coloured jacket soaked in blood, near his outstretched fingers, a gun - a twin to the weapon in her hand.

Dropping to her knees, she checked for a pulse. There was a faint, erratic beat beneath her finger. One brown eye gazed at her. Zac's eyelid closed, and a slight shiver shook his body.

She rang 000 on her mobile, while she stripped a blanket from the bed, laying it over him.

"Police. Code 1, officer down." she said, trying to keep her voice steady. The operator was calm, her questions concise. Leigh answered as clearly as possible. "Response time?" she asked.

"Ten minutes," said the operator, giving some brief instructions.



Call complete, Leigh put the phone in her pocket. Her gut tensed, was that a rattling sound from the living room? A long corridor divided the house in two. With the Glock in her left hand, and the torch in her right, she moved quietly, listening intently for anything out of the ordinary. The bedrooms were to the left, the living spaces to the right. In every room she entered, there were signs of a search. Cupboards and drawers were all open the contents scattered on the floor.

Commented [CH4]: We are in Leigh's point of view, and she's just discovered her lover has been mortally injured. This description is so formal it contradicts their closeness.

Commented [CH5]: This is an example of where you might speak to someone in law enforcement about standard protocol. Would an officer go and get a blanket, or would they check to see where the wound is, to staunch the flow blood and apply emergency care? Perhaps they might leave the injured person and check the rest of the property to make sure they're not about to be ambushed.

Or, you might deliberately show Leigh breaking protocol because she's so upset, she forgets her training. We use that oversight to highlight how much this has rattled her.

Commented [CH6]: The revelation of a sound in the other room gets a bit lost in these paragraphs sentence. The fact a potential killer is still in the house is a big moment. Give it the space and focus it deserves:

Rough example:

Leigh put the phone in her pocket. She was pressing her fingers to Zac's throat when she froze, and awareness prickled through her body. A thud had come from the living room. Or had she imagined it? She held her breath, caught between wanting to help Zac, while fighting the trembling realization that they weren't alone...

Let us stew in her mounting fear and build the tension, before she jumps into action.

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The living room, with its stained-glass French doors that opened out onto the small veranda, was the last room she entered. In the humid air, the stench of blood and excrement hung heavily. She gagged, putting her hand over her mouth until the urge to vomit retreated.

A stranger lay on his back, facing away from the door. His right arm lay awkwardly beneath him, his left outstretched, fingers curled. Drying streaks of red marked the cream painted walls. Blood had flowed over the floorboards filling the spaces in between. He had short grey hair, well-muscled arms and stocky build. His jacket lay open, cut like his neck, from side to side.

Commented [CH7]: We describe a rattle noise above, but here we reveal the man has been dead for some time. So maybe there is a fan switched on, or some other object that explains the noise. Pets can also work well in this instance – i.e. a dog that Zach loved, that helps keep his presence alive throughout the story.

She squatted down and touched the man's hand, holding her breath. His skin was cold, the flesh beneath yielding. She took a quick photo of the room and the body with her phone before returning to the corridor and breathing deeply.



She sat on the floor alongside Zac, “There’s an ambulance on the way. Can you tell me anything...something? Did you see anything...Zac, please...” She had to try.

Silence.

She asked again.

Slowly, one eye opened. His mouth opened, he struggled to speak. She leant over to hear, the words indistinct, a light breath on her cheek. As she watched, his eyes closed.

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Tears ran in long lines down her cheeks, falling from her chin as she stroked his damaged hand, her touch feather light. Zac's ragged nails, the torn fingertips, the dried trail of blood on the floor were testament to his struggle for survival.

"Don't give up," she urged. "Fight, please..." She leant over and kissed him, a tear landing on his forehead. "I love you..." the sound a whisper. A thin film of sweat was cooling his skin, clammy beneath her fingertips.

She leant against the wall, her hand resting on his and speaking to him softly. His eyes remained closed. The weapon lay on her leg, easily reached.

Her nerves were on edge, instantly tuning into a sound from outside. Was it the killer? It wasn't the ambulance, or the local cops, she hadn't heard sirens. Her hand gripped the pistol, finger on the trigger.

Stealthy footsteps; the door opened. She raised the weapon.



Commented [CH8]: High emotion here – which is lovely, but we have limited context. Were they lovers for a day, week, or years? What did Zac mean to her, a casual fling or her hope for the future? Was he a problematic boyfriend, or good for her? It's difficult to cover all of this in an action/death scene, but even a bracelet on her wrist, a photo on the mantle, or even an engagement ring, can speak volumes.

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