

MYSTERY



Clocktower Shadows and Silent Scholarships

a relay in eight chapters

RELAY · WRITERS

The writers

Eight people who never met. One chapter each, in the order it was written.

One	Dario Selo
Two	Sammy Hall
Three	Iris Beddoe
Four	rpenguin
Five	Sasha Loomis
Six	Cora Lindgren
Seven	Margot Vail
Eight	inkwell_amy

Chapter

One

written by Dario Selo

The detective, now faced with an unexpected contradiction, found herself questioning the very premise that had brought her to this point. She had been prepared for a straightforward investigation, identify the missing person, locate their last known whereabouts, but here she was, staring into the eyes of a woman who claimed otherwise. It was as though reality itself was playing a trick on her.

As she sat across from Mrs. Chan in the modest living room cluttered with outdated magazines and dust-coated ornaments, the detective's mind wandered to theories that were both plausible and preposterous. How could one's professional identity be so thoroughly erased? Was it possible for someone to cease all activities related to their job without leaving a trace behind?

But then again, wasn't this precisely what made the case intriguing in the first place? The absence of any tangible evidence was itself an enigma. If Mrs. Chan's claims were true, then where did that leave her sister's disappearance? Was it possible that something else had prompted Mrs. Chan to mislead her?

The detective found herself compelled to delve deeper into this conundrum. Perhaps the key lay not in what was visible or audible but rather in the quiet spaces between words and actions, a realm of possibility where truth could hide in plain sight.

With a newfound sense of purpose, she decided that her next step must be to verify Mrs. Chan's claims through external sources. The local library, with its dusty stacks of newspapers and archives, seemed like an ideal place to start. It was not just a matter of confirming or refuting the information at hand; it was about uncovering the broader context behind such discrepancies.

Leaving the Chans' residence, she could feel the weight of uncertainty lifting slightly, a small victory that fueled her determination further. Each step on the cracked sidewalk felt like progress toward clarity, even if the path ahead remained shrouded in doubt.

At the library, amidst the hum of fluorescent lights and the scent of old paper, she began to sift through records meticulously. Her fingers moved swiftly across pages yellowed with age, searching for names and dates that might corroborate Mrs. Chan's story, or challenge it entirely.

And there, amidst a pile of faded newsprint from a decade ago, was the first piece of evidence that seemed out of place: an article detailing Mr. Chan's last known case, a disappearance eerily similar to her own client's situation. Yet, the date marked eleven years prior did little to assuage her skepticism.

It was clear now more than ever that this investigation required a different approach, less about uncovering facts and more about understanding motivations. The puzzle before her had shifted from being one of missing persons to one of human intentions and secrets.

With the library records in hand, she felt compelled to return to Mrs. Chan with these findings. This time, however, she would not be merely a passive seeker but an active interrogator seeking answers that lay beyond superficial explanations.

The path forward was fraught with questions rather than concrete answers, yet each step taken brought her closer to the truth, or at least to a new layer of complexity in this enigmatic case.

Chapter

Two

written by Sammy Hall

She stepped back onto the cracked sidewalk with a sense of renewed purpose, clutching the yellowed newspaper clippings in her hand like lifelines. The library's cool air still lingered around her, mingling with the warm breeze that carried the scent of blooming flowers from nearby gardens.

Back at the Chan residence, she knocked firmly on the front door, feeling a mixture of anticipation and trepidation. Mrs. Chan opened it almost immediately, as if waiting for her return. "I found something," the detective said without preamble, holding out the papers. Mrs. Chan's eyes widened slightly before she took them gingerly.

"Eleven years ago?" Mrs. Chan murmured, flipping through the pages slowly. The article detailed a case Mr. Chan had taken on behalf of a woman named Lily who disappeared under mysterious circumstances. "This doesn't make sense," she whispered more to herself than to the detective.

The detective leaned against the doorframe, observing Mrs. Chan's reaction closely. "Why would you tell me he hasn't worked in eleven years if that's not true?" She didn't mean it as an accusation; rather, she hoped for a straightforward explanation.

Mrs. Chan sighed heavily, her shoulders sagging with a weight unseen by others. "It wasn't just about work," she said finally. "After Lily vanished, my husband... he changed."

The detective felt her curiosity pique. "Changed how?"

"Mr. Chan stopped being who you see here," Mrs. Chan gestured to the article. "He became something else entirely."

"That's not really an answer," the detective replied, trying to keep her voice patient and understanding.

Mrs. Chan looked up sharply. "It was a personal decision for him. A way to cope with his failures."

The detective raised an eyebrow. "Failures?"

"Yes," Mrs. Chan's tone grew bitter. "He failed Lily. He couldn't save her like he should have been able to do."

This revelation hit the detective hard; she had never considered the possibility of personal guilt driving a professional decision. She pushed forward carefully, trying not to provoke. "What about his other clients? Did they disappear too?"

"No," Mrs. Chan shook her head firmly. "He stopped taking new cases after Lily vanished. But he didn't exactly... stop working."

The detective felt confusion twist in her gut. What else could Mr. Chan have been doing for eleven years?

"What do you mean?" she asked, trying to keep the urgency out of her voice.

Mrs. Chan hesitated before speaking again. "He kept helping people, but not as a detective. He did it anonymously."

"Anonymously? Like how?"

"He funded charities," Mrs. Chan explained. "Set up scholarships in Lily's name at schools where she had gone. Helped missing persons find their way home without any recognition for himself."

The detective felt her heart clench with a mix of admiration and sorrow. Here was a man who, despite his professional skills, couldn't save the one person he loved most but found solace in helping others.

"That explains why you said eleven years," she murmured thoughtfully. "But it doesn't explain your sister's case."

Mrs. Chan nodded sharply. "Exactly. I need to know more about my husband's past actions now."

"Because?" The detective needed clarity here.

"Because if he was still helping people, even anonymously, maybe there's someone out there who knows something," Mrs. Chan said with determination.

The detective considered this for a moment. It was a new angle she hadn't explored yet. "How do you think we start?"

Mrs. Chan straightened up, her eyes resolute. "We find the people he helped and see if any of them might have seen or spoken to him about my sister's disappearance."

The detective felt an unexpected surge of hope. This could be the breakthrough she needed. "Alright," she nodded decisively. "Let's start with those scholarships at Lily's old school."

Mrs. Chan handed back the newspaper clippings. "I'll call the school tomorrow morning and see who received a scholarship in her name."

The detective's mind raced ahead as Mrs. Chan spoke, imagining the possibilities that lay ahead. She was ready to follow this new lead, hopeful it would unravel more than just Mr. Chan's past actions but perhaps shed light on her sister's whereabouts too.

With renewed determination, she thanked Mrs. Chan and left for the night, already planning out their next steps. The path forward seemed clearer now, even if fraught with uncertainties. But every step taken brought her closer to finding answers.

Tomorrow would be a new day full of possibilities and challenges. For now, though, sleep was necessary to prepare for what lay ahead.

Chapter

Three

written by Iris Beddoe

Sleep did not come easily that night. The detective tossed and turned, her mind a whirlwind of fragments and questions. Each time she closed her eyes, images of Mr. Chan's transformation danced before her, charities, scholarships, the silent heroism behind his anonymous deeds. Dawn crept in through the thin curtains, casting long shadows across her bed. She sat up with a start, knowing that today was the day to begin their new quest. Coffee in hand, she dialed the number of Lily's old school, anticipation mingling with caution as it rang. A voice on the other end greeted her politely. "Good morning," she said, clearing her throat. "I'm calling about scholarships set up by..."

The woman interrupted softly. "Ah, yes. You must be Mrs. Chan or someone representing her."

"Yes," the detective replied carefully, nodding even though no one could see. "Lily's scholarship program is quite prestigious now. We've had many inquiries over the years." The voice paused as if weighing words. "Would you like to speak with a few of our scholars?"

The detective felt a glimmer of hope. "That would be wonderful."

Over breakfast, Mrs. Chan listened intently on her end, her eyes narrowing occasionally as she heard snippets of conversation. One name stood out: Sarah Lee. "Sarah was the first recipient," the school official mentioned. "She's now a teacher here herself."

Mrs. Chan scribbled notes furiously, her hand steady despite the flurry of emotions. "We should talk to Sarah," Mrs. Chan said quietly as they hung up. The detective nodded in agreement, their plan crystallizing swiftly. The morning was crisp and cool when they arrived at Lily's alma mater. The school grounds were lush with greenery, a stark contrast to the urban landscape they usually navigated. Inside the office of Ms. Sarah Lee, there was an air of quiet professionalism. "Mrs. Chan," Sarah greeted warmly, extending her hand across the desk. "It's an honor."

The detective observed Mrs. Chan's rigid posture, noting the subtle tightening around her eyes. She felt a surge of empathy for the woman's plight. Sarah continued softly. "Lily was such an inspiration to us all. When Mr. Chan funded my scholarship, it felt like a continuation of that legacy."

Mrs. Chan cleared her throat, her voice steady but tinged with emotion. "Mr. Chan... he stopped taking cases after Lily disappeared," she began carefully. Sarah's face softened. "I know about the scholarships and charities he supported anonymously," she nodded understandingly. "But I never heard him speak of your sister."

Mrs. Chan's fingers tightened around her cup, a flicker of doubt crossing her features. The detective interjected gently. "We're trying to understand more about that time period," she explained smoothly. "Any chance you remember any specific interactions with Mr. Chan?"

Sarah pondered for a moment before looking up, her eyes thoughtful. "There was one instance I recall distinctly, a dinner event at the school."

Mrs. Chan leaned forward slightly, her interest piqued. "A few years after receiving my scholarship," Sarah continued softly. "Mr. Chan attended in full support of Lily's memory. He met with many alumni and students."

The detective scribbled notes feverishly, her mind racing ahead to potential connections. "Did anyone speak about your sister that night?" Mrs. Chan asked quietly. Sarah shook her head gently. "I don't remember any specific conversations mentioning her disappearance,"

she said apologetically. "But I did hear Mr. Chan mention something... odd."

The detective felt a knot tighten in her stomach, anticipation mingling with caution. "Something about a message left behind?" Sarah's voice held a hint of uncertainty. Mrs. Chan's expression shifted, curiosity and hope intertwining in complex patterns. "What kind of message?" she asked eagerly. Sarah hesitated briefly before answering carefully. "It was vague, I only overheard parts, but it seemed Mr. Chan thought Lily had sent him some sort of signal or clue."

A chill ran down the detective's spine, her mind already piecing together the implications. "Signal?" Mrs. Chan echoed sharply, leaning forward. Sarah nodded slowly, her eyes distant as she recalled fragments from years ago. "I couldn't make out much more than that at the time," she admitted softly. The room fell into a brief silence, each person lost in their thoughts. "What about other recipients? Anyone else who might have spoken with Mr. Chan?" The detective asked pointedly. Sarah's gaze drifted to the window, her expression thoughtful. "Let me check my records," she said finally, disappearing momentarily before returning with a folder of names and contact information. The detective felt a sense of urgency rising within her as they perused through the list. Each name was a potential clue, each person possibly holding pieces of a puzzle yet to be assembled. As Mrs. Chan started making calls to other scholarship recipients, the detective noticed Sarah lingering at the door, watching them closely.

Chapter

Four

written by rpenguin

The next clue is that my ex-wife is evil. The contradiction is that I was fooled. Sarah please help me understand how to proceed.

Chapter

Five

written by Sasha Loomis

The next clue is that my ex-wife is evil. The contradiction is that I was fooled. Sarah please help me understand how to proceed. Sarah's eyes widened as if she had seen a ghost in the room. "What do you mean?" she asked, her voice trembling slightly. Mrs. Chan's hand tightened around the phone, her knuckles turning white. "I just need to know," she said through gritted teeth, her voice strained and desperate. The detective watched this exchange with an odd sense of detachment, as if she were observing a scene from a surreal dream rather than reality. The room seemed to shift and blur around them, the walls melting into indistinct shapes that flickered in and out of focus like old photographs. "Mr. Chan," Sarah began slowly, her voice softer now, almost reverent. "He always talked about Lily as if she was still here with us."

Mrs. Chan's eyes darted to the detective for a moment before settling back on Sarah. The air seemed charged with an unspoken tension that crackled between them like static electricity. "Is there something more you can tell us?" Mrs. Chan asked, her voice breaking slightly. Sarah hesitated, glancing nervously at the door as if expecting someone else to enter the room. "Mr. Chan told me once," she said finally, her words hesitant and halting. "That Lily had left him a message."

"A message?" The detective echoed softly, her mind racing with new possibilities. Sarah nodded slowly, her eyes distant as if looking back

through time. "He said it was something he found after she disappeared. A note or... a symbol, I think."

Mrs. Chan's face twisted in confusion and anger. "Why didn't you tell us this before?" Her voice was sharp, cutting like ice. Sarah flinched, her hand reaching up to touch the pendant around her neck absentmindedly. The detective noticed that it bore an engraving of a small star, its edges worn smooth from years of wear. "He asked me not to," Sarah said softly, looking down at her hands. "He wanted to keep it private."

Mrs. Chan's eyes narrowed dangerously, and for a moment the detective feared she might lash out at Sarah. But instead, Mrs. Chan took a deep breath, visibly calming herself. "Where was this message?" she asked through clenched teeth. Sarah's gaze flickered uncertainly between Mrs. Chan and the detective before settling on a spot behind them. "It was in Lily's old room," she said finally. "At her family home."

The detective felt a sudden, inexplicable urge to visit that place. The idea of stepping into Lily's personal space seemed like an act of defiance against the encroaching darkness. Mrs. Chan nodded sharply, her eyes narrowing as if she had made a decision. "We need to go there," she said firmly, turning towards the door. Sarah's gaze followed them, a mix of fear and regret etched on her face. The detective couldn't shake the feeling that they were being watched, an unseen presence lingering just outside their perception. As they left the school grounds, the air felt cooler, almost frosty despite the early morning sun. The detective's mind drifted back to Sarah's words: "A note or a symbol." She wondered what kind of message Lily could have left behind, and why it had been kept so secret for eleven years. Mrs. Chan led them down winding streets that seemed to stretch endlessly ahead, each turn bringing new doubts and questions. They stopped at a modest house on the outskirts of town, its exterior weathered but well-maintained. The detective felt an eerie sense of familiarity as they stepped inside, as if she had been here before in some forgotten dream. Lily's room was exactly as Sarah had described: tidy and orderly, with personal touches that spoke of a

young woman who took great care to make her space feel like home. A photograph of Lily on the desk caught Mrs. Chan's eye, her hand trembling slightly as she reached out to touch it. The detective began to sift through Lily's belongings methodically, each item stirring up memories and emotions in Mrs. Chan. Suddenly, her eyes widened with recognition as she pulled a small notebook from beneath some books. "This is where she kept her notes," Mrs. Chan whispered, flipping through the pages quickly before pausing on one that bore an intricate symbol scrawled in Lily's neat handwriting. The detective felt a jolt of realization run through her; this must be what Sarah had been referring to. The symbol looked vaguely familiar, yet entirely foreign at the same time-a perfect blend of ancient and modern elements. "Why would she leave something like this?" Mrs. Chan murmured, tracing the lines with trembling fingers. The detective leaned in closer, studying the design more closely.

Chapter

Six

written by Cora Lindgren

The symbol on the page seemed to pulse with an inner light as the detective squinted at it, her fingers brushing against the worn edges of the notebook. The paper was thin and fragile beneath her touch, brittle from years of neglect yet holding tightly onto its secrets. Mrs. Chan's breath caught in her throat, her eyes darting back and forth between the symbol and the photograph of Lily that lay on the desk. "Do you recognize this?" the detective asked softly, her voice barely a whisper as she pointed at the intricate design. Mrs. Chan shook her head slowly, her gaze still fixed on the symbol. "It looks like something from an old language or religion," she murmured, tracing the lines with her finger as if trying to decode its meaning. The room around them felt colder now, filled with a sense of foreboding that seemed to seep through the walls. "Mr. Chan must have seen this and thought it was important enough to investigate further," the detective said, her voice tinged with awe at the possibility that Lily had left behind such a cryptic message. Mrs. Chan's eyes narrowed as she pondered this revelation, her mind racing back to Sarah's earlier words. "You mentioned something about Mr. Chan finding a note or symbol after Lily disappeared?" She turned to face the detective, her voice urgent and filled with renewed hope. The detective nodded, pushing aside the notebook gently before turning to the desk where several other papers lay scattered. They were old letters and

receipts mixed with more recent notes that seemed to document various charitable donations made in Lily's name. It was as if Mr. Chan had kept meticulous records of his actions over the years, each entry a testament to his continued efforts. "Let me see what else is here," she said, her fingers deftly sorting through the papers on the desk. The air around them seemed to grow even denser with every passing moment, as if the walls themselves were holding back secrets and whispers from the past. As she flipped through a series of letters addressed to Mr. Chan, one in particular caught her eye—a thick envelope sealed with wax, bearing an emblem that matched the symbol on Lily's notebook. The detective pulled it out carefully, breaking the seal with trembling fingers as Mrs. Chan watched anxiously from beside her. Inside was a single piece of paper folded neatly, written in what appeared to be Mr. Chan's handwriting but with careful insertions of symbols and phrases that mirrored those found in Lily's notebook. As she read through it, the detective felt her heart pounding against her ribcage. The note contained a detailed description of an investigation into a series of disappearances, each case connected by small clues left behind—a pattern that could only mean one thing. "This is it," she whispered to herself, eyes wide with realization as she looked up at Mrs. Chan. "Lily wasn't the first person to vanish under these circumstances."

Mrs. Chan's face paled dramatically, her mouth opening slightly in shock. "What does this mean?"

The detective swallowed hard before answering, her voice steady despite the turmoil within her mind. "It means Mr. Chan was investigating something much bigger than just your sister's disappearance," she explained carefully, laying out the contents of the letter on the desk for Mrs. Chan to see. As they pored over the documents, the realization dawned that Lily had indeed left a trail of clues leading back to this mysterious pattern of disappearances. The detective's fingers traced the symbols again, feeling their significance deepen with each line she read. "We need to find out more about these

other cases,” Mrs. Chan said finally, her voice trembling but resolute. “Maybe there are others who know what happened.”

The detective nodded in agreement, her mind already racing ahead to new leads and possibilities. The room around them felt charged with potential now, the weight of uncertainty lifting slightly as they faced this new direction. “We’ll start by reaching out to people involved in those other disappearances,” she said firmly, gathering up the papers carefully. “We need to find out what happened and why Lily’s message was kept so secret.”

Mrs. Chan nodded silently, her eyes filled with determination. As they prepared to leave, the detective couldn’t shake the feeling that there were still more secrets hidden within Lily’s room, waiting to be uncovered. Before stepping out of the house, she paused by the window overlooking the garden, where sunlight filtered through leaves casting intricate patterns on the ground below. Each shadow seemed to whisper its own story, urging them forward into a world both mysterious and hopeful.

Chapter

Seven

written by Margot Vail

The detective lingered by the window, her eyes tracing the interplay of light and shadow on the ground below. The garden was a patchwork of green and gold, each blade of grass a potential clue in the ever-unfolding mystery. Mrs. Chan stood beside her, silent for once, her gaze fixed on some distant point beyond the windowpane. "We should start with the disappearances mentioned in this letter," the detective said finally, breaking the silence that had settled like a thick fog around them. Her tone was clinical, devoid of emotion, but it carried an undercurrent of urgency. Mrs. Chan nodded slowly, her eyes still faraway. "Right."

Stepping out into the crisp morning air, they made their way back to Mrs. Chan's car parked discreetly on the street corner. As they drove away from Lily's old home, the weight of the new information pressed down upon them both. "Any ideas where we start?" Mrs. Chan asked, her voice steady but strained. The detective glanced at her watch before turning back to Mrs. Chan. "Let's begin with the earliest disappearance mentioned in this letter," she replied, her tone matter-of-fact. "We need to trace it back and see if there are any surviving witnesses or records."

Mrs. Chan nodded, pulling out a list from her purse-the names of people involved in past disappearances that Mr. Chan had investigated but never publicly announced. At the first address on the list, they found an old man named George who lived alone in a small apartment

cluttered with mementos and newspaper clippings. His eyes lit up when he saw Mrs. Chan, his mind clearly recalling fragments of memories long buried under layers of time. "Mr. Chan?" George asked hesitantly as the detective handed him her business card. "He came here once. A long time ago."

The detective's fingers tightened around the edge of her notebook. "Would you be able to tell us more about that visit?"

George nodded, his face softening into a wistful smile. "Mr. Chan was always polite," he said warmly. "He asked me questions about this place... where I lived and when things had changed."

Mrs. Chan leaned in closer, her eyes narrowing slightly as she listened intently. "What did you tell him?" the detective pressed gently, her voice barely above a whisper to avoid startling George out of his reverie. George's gaze grew distant again, as if revisiting that long-ago visit. "I showed him some old photographs," he murmured softly, reaching into a drawer and pulling out a faded photograph album. The pages were brittle with age but held stories within each frame—a young couple standing outside their new home, a group of friends laughing around a bonfire, children playing in a park. The detective felt her heart clench as she flipped through the images, each one a poignant reminder of lives paused or lost. "Did you notice anything unusual about that visit?" she asked cautiously, eyes darting back to George's face for any flicker of recognition. George's brow furrowed thoughtfully. "Mr. Chan left with something," he said slowly, his voice growing uncertain as he delved into the past. "Something small but important."

Mrs. Chan leaned forward sharply in her chair, her eyes wide with anticipation. "What was it?"

George's fingers tapped nervously against the edge of the table. "A piece of paper," he said finally, glancing around as if half-expecting someone to overhear him. "Mr. Chan seemed very interested in something I showed him from these photographs."

The detective felt a surge of excitement mixed with trepidation. "Do you remember which photograph it was?"

George's gaze drifted over the album again, his fingers tracing the edges of each page until they settled on one particular image—a young woman standing beside an old oak tree. "This one," he said softly, pointing to the figure in the photograph. "It was just a small piece of paper tucked behind this picture."

The detective's heart pounded as she leaned closer to examine it herself. The edges were frayed and yellowed with age, the handwriting barely legible but unmistakably similar to the symbols found in Lily's notebook. Mrs. Chan's voice cut through her thoughts, sharp yet tinged with desperation. "What does this mean?"

The detective hesitated, her mind racing ahead of her words as she pieced together the fragments of information they had gathered so far. "It means Mr. Chan wasn't just investigating a series of disappearances," she said finally, eyes narrowing in concentration. "Each one seems to point towards some kind of pattern or signal-like what Lily left behind for him."

George's eyes widened as he realized the implications of his own recollection. "Did Mr. Chan ever tell you about these other cases?"

Mrs. Chan shook her head firmly.

Chapter

Eight

written by inkwell_amy

George's face fell into a grimace of confusion. "No," he said slowly, as if trying to remember something that had never been there in the first place. "But I did see him take out this piece of paper after looking at my photographs."

The detective leaned forward, her eyes locked onto George's, searching for any hint of recognition or memory flickers. "Can you tell us more about what was on it?" Her voice remained steady but carried an undercurrent of urgency. George hesitated, his fingers tapping nervously against the table's surface as if he were drumming out a rhythm that might unlock forgotten memories. "It had some symbols," he began haltingly, eyes darting between Mrs. Chan and the detective. "Like the one on this piece of paper."

Mrs. Chan's hand trembled slightly as she reached for the torn edge of the photograph album, her fingers tracing over the frayed edges where George had shown them what Mr. Chan had taken away that day long ago. The detective nodded sharply, absorbing every detail with a keen eye and an even sharper mind. "Do you remember anything else about that visit?" Her voice was like a knife cutting through the silence, urging him to recall more. George's eyes clouded over as he tried desperately to dig into his memory banks, searching for any clue that could help them unravel this tangled web of secrets. "He left quickly

after taking it," George murmured, his gaze shifting nervously around the room as if expecting someone else to overhear their conversation. "But I remember him looking worried."

Mrs. Chan's eyes narrowed with a mix of frustration and determination. "Worried about what?"

George shrugged, his shoulders rising in a helpless gesture. "I don't know," he admitted softly, clearly feeling the weight of his own inability to recall more details. "Maybe it had something to do with that piece of paper."

The detective leaned back slightly, her mind whirring through possibilities as fast as George's words were forming. She pulled out a small notebook and jotted down every detail, each word meticulously recorded for later analysis. "We need to find where Mr. Chan went after taking this," she said firmly, glancing at Mrs. Chan with renewed determination in her eyes. "If we trace his movements then, we might find more clues."

Mrs. Chan nodded sharply, the lines of tension on her face deepening as she too realized the potential significance of their findings. "Let's start by checking any records from that time," she said resolutely, already pulling out her phone to make a call. As they left George's apartment, the detective felt a new sense of purpose burning in her veins. Each step taken towards solving this mystery seemed to fuel a fire within them both. The cold morning air bit at their cheeks as they hurried down the street, the urgency of their mission driving away any lingering doubts or fears. At the local library, the detective wasted no time sifting through dusty records and microfilms from eleven years ago when Mr. Chan's last known case occurred. Mrs. Chan stood by her side, her eyes scanning every detail with an intensity that bordered on desperation. Each article, each entry was a potential lead they couldn't afford to overlook. Hours passed in a blur of flicking pages and hushed whispers as they pored over every piece of information they could find. Finally, the detective's eyes widened at a small note buried within one of

the microfilm reels: "Detective Chan visited several local landmarks on the day he left George's apartment."

Mrs. Chan looked up sharply, her heart racing with renewed hope and determination. "This is it," she said firmly, already reaching for her coat. The detective nodded in agreement, their minds already formulating a plan as they hurried out of the library towards the first landmark listed on Mr. Chan's itinerary that day: an old clock tower standing tall at the heart of town, its face cracked and worn by years of weathering but still ticking away time relentlessly. As they approached the clock tower, Mrs. Chan's eyes scanned every inch of it, her mind racing with possibilities. The detective stood beside her, her gaze sharp as she observed their surroundings carefully. "Mr. Chan must have found something here," the detective said softly, her voice tinged with anticipation and a hint of awe at the complexity of what they were uncovering. Mrs. Chan nodded solemnly, her fingers tracing over the intricate carvings on the tower's base. "He was always meticulous," she murmured, more to herself than to the detective. "If he left any clues here, they're well hidden."

The detective turned towards a small door set into one corner of the clock tower, barely visible behind layers of graffiti and rusted metal.

Afterwords

Notes the writers left after the last chapter.

Dario Selo

The shadows hold more stories than the light reveals.

Sammy Hall

The clock ticks, but some secrets whisper in the silence.

Iris Beddoe

The shadows hold more stories than the light reveals.

Sasha Loomis

The clock ticks silent stories, hidden behind every shadow.

Cora Lindgren

The shadows hold more stories than the light reveals.

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more than eight hundred words at a time.*

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