

The Simple Truth

By

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INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

JANE BARNES enters the Police Station and sees SGT. NORMAN talking with three other police officers. Jane walks towards Sgt. Norman and interrupts his conversation.

JANE
(confidently)
I know who it is.

SGT. NORMAN
You know who what is?

JANE
I have your killer.

Sgt. Norman takes a deep breath and excuses the officers he was conversing with.

SGT. NORMAN
Excuse us, gentlemen...

The three officers walk away. Sgt. Norman turns towards Jane.

SGT. NORMAN
(continuing)
Who is it?

JANE
The mother of the child, Emma.

SGT. Norman walks towards his office and Jane follows. Upon entering, he sits behind his desk and Jane sits across from him.

SGT. NORMAN
Why do you think a young mother
would kill her child?

JANE
Think about it. Her community would
shun her and her parents could
disown her. Not to mention, she hid
the pregnancy. When I have spoke to
her, she was vague and
unresponsive.

SGT. NORMAN
Do you have evidence?

JANE
Not exactly....

SGT. NORMAN
(interrupting)
...Jane, we have been through this
before. You need hard evidence.

JANE
She is coming to the station for
questioning. Will a confession be
hard enough evidence for you?

SGT. NORMAN
Don't disappoint me, but go easy on
her. You have to remember she is a
young mother who just lost her
child. I don't need a lawsuit on
top of this case.

JANE
Don't worry, I've got this.

Jane stands up and exits Sgt. Norman's office. She goes to
her desk to read over lab results and facts from the case.

INT. POLICE STATION LOBBY - DAY

EMMA MILLER and her mother, SARAH MILLER, enter the police
station. DAVID MILLER stands stoically outside of the
station. Sarah is in hysterics while Emma seems annoyed by
the situation. Jane enters the lobby to greet the Miller
family. Sarah runs to Jane.

SARAH
(crying)
This is all a misunderstanding!
Please don't do this to our family!

JANE
Ma'am, nothing has been done to
your family. No charges have been
pressed. I only need to ask Emma a
few questions.

SARAH
She didn't do it. We are good
people. She didn't do it.

JANE
I am here to find out who did. Mrs.
Miller, I will need you to wait
here. Emma, will you please follow
me?

Jane turns around and leads Emma to a small room for questioning. Sarah runs outside to her husband, crying.

INT. POLICE STATION QUESTIONING ROOM - DAY

Emma sits at a table with her arms crossed, silently. Jane stands across from her as she reads over her file. Jane places a recorder on the table.

JANE

I know this is hard for you right now, Emma, but I need to you to be open and honest with me. If you give me clouded answers it will only make you look more guilty.

EMMA

(angrily)

But I am not guilty. Stop wasting your time.

JANE

Talking to the mother of a murdered child is not a waste of time. Please tell me what happened earlier this morning.

Emma rolls her eyes and sits silently refusing to look at Jane. Jane closes her file and takes a seat across from Emma.

JANE

Emma, I know how you feel. I have lost a child too...

For the first time, Emma looks up and makes eye contact with Jane.

JANE

(continuing)

Her name was supposed to be Katharine. I thought I was going into labor, but the baby did not survive the birth.

Jane begins to cry and takes a moment to herself. For a brief moment, Emma reaches her hand out to comfort Jane, but pulls back. Jane composes herself and wipes away her tears.

JANE

The loss of that child turned my life upside-down. I can no longer have children and my husband and I

JANE
divorced. Emma, I want to help you
and your family. Please tell me
what happened.

Jane walks around the table and kneels next to Emma. Emma glances down at Jane, then continues to stare at the wall straight ahead. Silence fills the room.

JANE
Emma, please.

EMMA
What do you want me to say? I did
not kill my child. I would never do
that.

JANE
Then what happened this morning?

EMMA
I don't know.

JANE
You have to talk or at the very
least, you will be guilty of
withholding evidence.

EMMA
(yelling)
I don't know okay! I went down to
the barn because I knew the baby
was coming. It hurt like hell and I
passed out. I didn't even get to
hear my baby cry!

JANE
I know what that's like. I never
heard my baby cry either.

EMMA
No! God took your baby, someone
else took mine!

Jane stands up, stunned, with her mouth agape. Emma rises and storms out of the questioning room. The door slams shut. Jane sits in the chair, reeling. Sgt. Norman opens the door and enters.

SGT. NORMAN
I just saw your suspect in tears
running down the hallway. I told
her to go home.

JANE

Good.

SGT. NORMAN

What the hell happened?

JANE

I tried to empathize with her and obviously, it didn't go over well.

Sgt. Norman takes a seat in the chair across from Jane.

JANE

She didn't do it.

SGT. NORMAN

You have no evidence to prove that. A few hours ago you were convinced she was guilty.

JANE

I can tell. Call it a woman's intuition or whatever, but she didn't do it. She loved that child. She would not have hurt it.

SGT. NORMAN

Have you gotten any other information from the family?

JANE

No. The mother is constantly in hysterics and the father refuses to speak.

Annoyed, Sgt. Norman stands up to leave the room. He walks to the door.

SGT. NORMAN

I am depending on you, Jane. You need to either start looking at other suspects or find more evidence.

JANE

Yes, sir. I am going to start talking to the people of the community and see what they have to say about the Miller family.

SGT. NORMAN

Why don't you try the church? That is basically the heart of the community right there.

JANE

That's a good idea, sir. I will look there next.

SGT. NORMAN

Okay. I am trusting you with this, Jane. I don't want what happened before to happen again. Are you sure you can handle it?

JANE

Yes. I am sure. I've got this.

Sgt. Norman shakes his head. He leaves the room and closes the door. Jane stands up and kicks the chair.

JANE

Dammit!

Jane leaves the questioning room and walks briskly to her desk to grab her keys.

EXT. CHURCH - DAY

Jane, driving her car, arrives at the church and parks out front. The church is medium-sized and white, exactly what one would picture an Amish church to look like. She steps outside of her car, takes a deep breath, and stares at the church, emotionally conflicted. After a moment, she walks up to and enters the church. Inside the church, Jane's jaw drops. The church is beautiful and simplistic, with natural light pouring in from several windows. Jane, in awe, walks up to the front of church as she looks around. Jane enters the first row of pews, kneels, and prays. She quietly cries as she prays.

JANE

Hi God. I know it's been awhile, but I could really use your strength right now. This baby has been killed and it's reminding me of Katharine. This one is personal. I don't know how to do this....

A door opens and Jane looks up, startled. JACOB KING, the Miller's farmhand, enters holding a basket of church supplies. Both gasp in shock.

JANE

I'm so sorry! I didn't mean to intrude.

Jane begins to stand up and gather herself. Jacob, anxiously, walks towards her.

JACOB

No. I am sorry I startled you. I was just gathering some things before the service tonight.

JANE

There is a service tonight?

JACOB

Yes ma'am. For the situation with the Miller family.

JANE

You work for them, correct?

Now at Jane's pew, Jacob sets his basket down next to the row. Jane sits down and Jacob joins her. He fidgets, nervously.

JACOB

Yes ma'am. I have for three years now.

JANE

Would you say you know the family pretty well?

JACOB

Oh, yes. They are practically my own family.

JANE

What do you make of their...situation?

JACOB

It's terrible. I have prayed about it a lot.

Jane takes out her cell phone to record the conversation. Jacob stares down at it, horrified.

JANE

Don't worry. I have to record this for evidence later. We are simply having a conversation.

Jacob pauses briefly.

JACOB

Umm...okay.

JANE

Tell me what you know.

JACOB

About the Miller family?

JANE

Yes and about what happened this morning.

JACOB

The Millers are good people. While faith is important to everyone in our community, it is especially important to them. They gave me a job when my father died and my family needed money. And Emma...

JANE

Yes, tell me what you know about Emma.

Jacob relaxes and sits back in the pew. He smiles.

JACOB

She is good and kind. She made a mistake getting pregnant, but she would have never hurt that child.

JANE

Were you there at the farm this morning?

Jacob looks down at his hands. He is startled by the question.

JACOB

(quietly)

I arrived to start my work in the fields around 6 am.

JANE

Did you see anything?

JACOB

No. I went straight to the fields when I got there.

JANE

When did you leave the fields?
Where was Emma during this time?

Jacob rises, distressed, and steps out of the pew. He leans down and grabs his basket. Jane, taken aback, watches him.

JACOB

She didn't do it. Stop blaming this on Emma. She wouldn't have done this.

JANE

Jacob, please. Any help you can give me would be great.

Jacob begins to walk away. Jane looks to the front of the church, disappointed. Jacob pauses. He looks back at Jane.

JACOB

Have you talked to Paul? What does he have to say about all of this?

Jane look back at Jacob, intrigued.

JANE

No! Who is Paul?

JACOB

(resolutely)

The boy Emma is in a courtship with. They have been together for about a year.

JANE

She never mentioned him!

JACOB

I am not surprised. She probably wants to protect him.

JANE

Protect him? From what?

JACOB

Well...

Jacob fidgets nervously. He looks up at Jane, but then down to the ground. Jane rises out of the pew.

JANE

Jacob, did you see Paul at the farm morning?

JACOB

(apprehensively)

Yes.

JANE

Jacob, what did you see?

JACOB

When I was walking back towards the fields, I saw him walking away from the woodshed. He was carrying bloody rags.

JANE

Did you speak to him?

JACOB

No. I saw him from a distance. He looked exhausted and distraught.

JANE

Did you see anything else?

JACOB

No ma'am. He walked back to the barn and I went to the toolshed to get some of my tools. About an hour later is when Mr. Miller found the baby.

JANE

Were you there when the baby was found?

JACOB

Yes. I was still in the fields. Listen ma'am, I hope I have helped you with your investigation, but I have to get back to the Miller's farm. I told them I would only be gone for an hour or so.

Jane stops the recording on her phone. She walks over to Jacob. Jacob becomes still as Jane reaches out and gently touches his arm.

JANE

Thank you so much Jacob. You have no idea what a great help you have been. The Millers are lucky to have you.

JACOB

You're welcome. And please, go easy on Emma and her family. They are kind people. She didn't kill that baby.

JANE

I will do the best I can.

Jane exits the church, leaving Jacob, wide-eyed, inside. She walks to her car, starts it, and drives away.

EXT. MILLER'S HOME - DUSK

Jane parks her car in the driveway of the Miller's home. She steps outside and locks the car. Jane walks past the house and towards the backyard, where the woodshed is. Upon entering the woodshed, Jane searches it thoroughly for other evidence. She tears apart the shed in a determined manner.

JANE

(to herself)

C'mon. I know there is something missing.

About to give up, Jane looks down and beneath the table where the baby was found, she sees a glimmer of light. Jane bends down to reach the crack in the floor where she finds a pocketknife with the initials "PRT". Jane smiles.

JANE

(to herself)

Aha! This has to be Paul's.

Jane clutches the pocket knife and runs out of the woodshed. In a hurry, she walks to the front door of the Miller's home and knocks. Sarah answers and opens the door.

SARAH

Jane? How can we help you?

JANE

I need to speak to Emma.

SARAH

She is upstairs in her room. Given what happened earlier, I don't know if you speaking to her again is a good idea. Can I give her a message?

JANE

No. I have to talk to her. New evidence has been found and this is critical to the case.

Sarah sighs and further opens the door, letting Jane inside. Jane enters the house.

SARAH

Her room is upstairs and on the right. Please try to not upset her anymore. This whole family has been through enough.

JANE

I will do my best.

Jane walks upstairs.

INT. OUTSIDE EMMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Jane knocks on Emma's door.

EMMA

Come in!

Jane enters Emma's room. Emma gasps, surprised to see Jane.

EMMA

What are you doing here? Don't you ever sleep?

Jane walks towards Emma, who is sitting on her bed.

JANE

I would sleep better if I knew who was responsible for the death of your child.

EMMA

What else do you want?

JANE

(angrily)

I want you to tell me about your relationship with Paul and why I just found his pocketknife in the woodshed.

Jane pulls out the pocketknife and throws it on the bed. Emma stares at it, stunned.

EMMA

I don't know. Where are you going with this?

JANE

No. You know exactly where I am going with this. Is Paul the father?

EMMA
(quietly)
I don't know.

JANE
(yelling)
Emma, tell me!

EMMA
Yes! Okay? He is the father. I love him! But he had nothing to do with this. He didn't kill our child!

JANE
How do you know that?

EMMA
He wouldn't do that.

JANE
Then why did I find his pocketknife in the woodshed?

EMMA
He takes that knife everywhere.

JANE
Was he there during and after the birth?

EMMA
He was there with me during labor, to help me. Everything is such a blur after that.

JANE
Do you remember him leaving at any point? Do you remember when the baby was taken from the barn? Was he in the barn with you the whole time?

EMMA
I'm sorry! I don't know! If I knew, I would tell you. I passed out, okay? One moment, I am delivering my child and the next, I wake up in my bed and my child is dead. Do you have any idea what that feels like?

Jane, taken aback, sits down on the bed next to Emma. Emma begins to cry.

JANE

Emma, I am so sorry, but you need to tell me where Paul was this morning. He is now a suspect in this case.

EMMA

(sobbing)

Please don't investigate him. It would destroy him. If you need to blame someone, blame me.

JANE

Emma, did you kill your child?

EMMA

No. I know I don't remember anything, but I also know that I would never hurt that child. I loved him.

JANE

Then I am going to have to investigate Paul.

EMMA

You can't. His father is the head of the church and would excommunicate him, if he were to find out.

JANE

Doesn't he know you two are courting?

EMMA

No. We have kept it a secret from him. Only my parents know. If his father were to find out about me, or worse the pregnancy, Paul would be gone.

JANE

Emma, this is my job.

EMMA

I know.

JANE

Be honest with me, is there any chance that Paul could have killed your baby?

EMMA

I don't know.

Jane, frustrated with the lack of cooperation, grabs the pocketknife and stands up. She walks towards the door to exit, but pauses to look back to Emma.

JANE

Paul is now a suspect in this case.
I'm sorry.

EMMA

No!

Emma begins to scream and cry into her bed. Jane exits her room, walks downstairs, and leaves the house without saying goodbye. Outside, she takes a breath. Her cell phone rings and she answers.

JANE

Hello?

SGT. NORMAN

Jane. The DNA evidence is in. We
have cause of death.

Jane talks on the phone as she walks to her car.

JANE

What is it?

SGT. NORMAN

The baby had been smothered with a
rag.

Jane stops walking and is wide-eyed, stunned.

JANE

(solemnly)

They smothered it?

SGT. NORMAN

Yes. However, we have no human DNA
evidence to figure out who killed
the child.

JANE

Shit.

SGT. NORMAN

I know this isn't what you
necessarily wanted to hear, but we
have what we have.

JANE

I am going to find who did this,
Sir.

SGT. NORMAN

Good. That is what I want. Just
remember to keep yourself in check.
I already see the effect this case
is having on you.

JANE

I am fine.

SGT. NORMAN

I'm sure you are. But I need you
sharp these next couple days. Get
some rest.

JANE

Thank you. I will be sure to do
that.

Jane hangs up the phone and opens her car door. She starts
the car and drives away from the Miller's home.

EXT. PAUL'S HOME - MORNING

Jane drives up to the front of PAUL's home. She parks her
car, exits, and walks up to his front porch. She knocks on
the door. Paul answers.

PAUL

Can I help you?

JANE

Are you Paul Thomas?

PAUL

Yes. Are you Jane?

JANE

I am.

PAUL

I was expecting you. Would you like
to come inside?

Jane nods her head and enters Paul's home. He leads her to
living room where they sit down on the couch. Jane takes out
her phone to record the conversation.

JANE
Is your father here?

PAUL
No. He is at the church.

JANE
Good. Paul, I need you to be honest with me. Why didn't you come to me sooner? You know this makes you look bad.

PAUL
I know. I was scared. I haven't known what to do since this all happened. I haven't known what to do since Emma got pregnant.

JANE
How long have you and Emma been courting?

PAUL
A little over a year.

JANE
And are you the father of her child?

PAUL
Yes.

JANE
Tell me about the morning when Emma gave birth to your child.

PAUL
I came late that night because Emma had been experiencing some pains earlier in the day. When we figured out she was in labor, we went down to the barn and set up an area for the birth with some cloths and blankets.

JANE
What about when the child was born?

PAUL
He was beautiful. Emma had lost a lot of blood and was in and out of consciousness. I didn't want her father to wake up and find her gone

PAUL
and I knew I needed to get her upstairs to her bed. I left the baby, sleeping, in the barn and when I returned he was still there. I fell asleep holding my son and when I woke up, he was gone.

JANE
Why didn't you go looking for him?

PAUL
I was scared. I didn't want Emma's father finding me in the barn. I figured Emma had come down and taken the child back to bed with her.

JANE
Then what?

PAUL
I returned home. I found out that my son had been murdered hours later.

Jane shuts off the recorder on her phone. Paul watches her intently, scared.

JANE
Paul, is there anything else you want to tell me off the record?

PAUL
I didn't hurt my child. I loved him, even if I only knew him for an hour.

JANE
Does your father know about any of this.

PAUL
No. He can't.

Jane nods her head. She pauses briefly and looks around the room. She returns her attention to Paul.

JANE
Is it alright if I search your house?

PAUL

No. I would rather you not.

JANE

Then I am going to have to get a warrant and your father would find out about all of this.

Paul, at a loss, shakes his head.

PAUL

Search away. I have nothing to hide.

Jane stands up.

JANE

Where is your room?

PAUL

Follow me.

Jane follows Paul up the staircase. He leads her to his room. Paul opens the door and gestures for Jane to enter. Jane turns on the light and begins to look around. Jane searches around the room for a few minutes. Unsuccessful, she opens the closet doors and begins to look through his clothes. Under a pile of dirty clothes, she spots a cloth. She notices blood on a pair of pants and finds bloody rags in the pockets. She looks back at Paul and sighs.

PAUL

(from outside the room)
Did you find anything?

JANE

One minute!

Jane puts the rags and bloody pants into an evidence bag. She searches the closet for any remaining evidence and doesn't find anything. She takes what she does have and walks out of the room to confront Paul. Paul sees the evidence bags and panics.

PAUL

I can explain that!

JANE

I am listening.

PAUL

The blood is from the birth, I swear. I used the cloths to swaddle the baby and clean up.

JANE

Clean up the birth or the murder of
your child?

PAUL

The birth. Oh god, please no.

JANE

I am taking this to the station.
Paul Thomas, you are officially a
suspect in the murder of your
child.

Jane turns away from Paul and walks down the stairs. Paul stands stunned outside of his room as he watches her walk away. Jane takes the evidence to her car and puts it in the backseat. She starts her car and drives away towards the station.

JANE

(to herself)

I've got him.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAY

Jane storms into the police station and heads straight for Sgt. Norman's office. He is sitting at his desk on the computer. Jane rips open his office door, determined. He looks up as Jane enters. She throws the evidence bags on his desk.

SGT. NORMAN

What the hell?

JANE

I've got him

SGT. NORMAN

Who?

JANE

The killer. Paul Thomas. Emma's
boyfriend and the father of the
child. He did it.

SGT. NORMAN

Slow down. Tell me what you know.

JANE

I have him on tape admitting to be
at the scene of the crime hours
before it happened. He claims he
fell asleep with the child, but he
has no alibi to prove it.

SGT. NORMAN
Okay. What the hell did you just
throw on my desk?

JANE
He gave me permission to search his
house. I found bloody pants with
rags in the pocket. These are the
rags that were used to smother the
child. They have to be! No rags
were found in the woodshed!

Sgt. Norman examines at the evidence. He looks up at Jane,
who is out of breath.

SGT. NORMAN
I'm not going to lie, this is good.
Now, are you one hundred percent
positive it's him? I don't want to
fuck this up.

JANE
Yes sir. I am sure.

Sgt. Norman nods his head in agreement and stands up from
his desk. He grabs the evidence, walks towards his office
door, opens it, and shouts out to the rest of the station.

SGT. NORMAN
(shouting)
Watson, take these bags of evidence
and send it to the lab. Jones, I
need an arrest warrant for Paul
Thomas. Now!

Jane stands behind Sgt. Norman and smiles to herself.