

THE EDITOR - Book 4

The Missing Shot

A Daphne Taylor Mystery

Plot Summary - Chapter by Chapter Breakdown

Notes: We have left several details of this story vague, so you can give them a personal touch. You can tailor this outline in several of the following ways to make it unique, without changing the main plot. 1) Daphne Taylor could be much younger and a magazine editor instead of a literary editor. 2) The story may be set in any town, village or community of your choice. 3) Yvonne Langford may be introduced in the story much earlier. 4) Adrian Hansel, the publisher, might have known that his lawyer or the lawyer's daughter was involved in a case of murder. 5) Perhaps change the ending, whereby Langford Jr. pulls the trigger and wounds Daphne.

Part One - Rising Tension

Chapter One

CH 1/ Scene 1 – Daphne Taylor lives a quiet life. She is retired but still working. Perhaps it was an odd concept some years ago, but for Daphne it had been her plan all along. She bowed to the exigencies of her bosses for too many years. Now, however, she is free to work at her own pace, doing what she loves best: editing and writing books. Until recently she lived in Vancouver, Canada, but when her publisher told her that she would do well to move to the States, she didn't hesitate. She always loved Oregon. It is her favorite State in the US.

CH 1/ Scene 2 – In her search for a new place; she found Bridgeton, Oregon, to be the best suited to her taste. Located in North Portland on the Columbia River, Bridgeton is bordered by Hayden Island and the Jantzen Beach. The little houses perched on the river banks, the marina, the floating house boats, townhouses and bungalows provided the surroundings and backdrop Daphne was looking for. *This move is going to be perfect*, Daphne tells herself. But she is already missing her friend, D.I. Michael Stanton. They had been working on a few investigations together; however now, Daphne has to open the doors to a life devoid of criminal elements – except those in her books.

CH 1/ Scene 3 – Now that she is living in a townhouse rather than an apartment, Daphne is conscious of the safety and security issues that she may have to face. Yet, those outweigh her love for the place. The large living room, the gleaming hardwood floors, the state-of-the-art kitchen, the bay windows in her bedroom and living room were all so attractive, that security came second in her considerations when deciding where to put down her suitcases. Her publisher, a man in his fifties, with outlandish visions when it comes to the future of publishing, welcomes Daphne the week after her arrival in Portland with a party. There she meets many of the authors she worked with in the past and some new ones who are curious to know what she will do with their manuscripts.

CH 1/ Scene 4 – The party over, Daphne returns home to find her front window wide open. She remembers closing the darn thing before leaving for the party. Upon inspection of the window latch, she has to conclude that since the window has not been forced, she must have left it open after all. However, the sense of her privacy being invaded does not leave her. She does not sleep well that night and as soon as the morning comes, Daphne decides to go for a long walk along the marina and nearby beach. She is just reaching the beachfront when she notices an open sun-umbrella rolling across the sand and toward the water. She runs to catch it. When she does, she closes it and brings it back to where she first noticed it.

CH 1/ Scene 5 – There's no one in sight. Daphne plants the closed umbrella into the sand and walks away. She returns to the sidewalk bordering the beach and resumes her walk. She soon hears someone behind her trying to attract her attention. She stops and turns around. The young fellow is out of breath. He asks her how come she ran after his umbrella and then closed it. "Why did you do that, lady?" he demands. Daphne is out of answers except for one: she tells him that she was trying to help him. She

tells him that she thought his umbrella was going to get damaged. "Next time, mind your own business, lady," the young man says as he turns on his heels and jogs back to the beach.

Chapter Two

CH 2/ Scene 1 – That night, before checking her emails, Daphne notices the "breaking news" on her browser's home page. The young man with the umbrella has been killed; apparently his heart has been pierced with the tip of his beach umbrella. Daphne stares at the news report. She cannot believe what she is reading. The pictures released by the media do not show anything of the crime scene, but Daphne believes the umbrella used as the weapon is most likely the one she found rolling into the waves and the same one which she folded and planted in the sand. She has to find out why this umbrella was so important to the victim.

CH 2/ Scene 2 – Daphne makes her way back to the beach and stops to have another look at the scene. The crime scene perimeter is still cordoned off and now a white tent stands where she planted the umbrella into the sand. At the time, she is sure there was nothing on the beach but a towel stretched on the dry sand. The incoming tide would not have washed it away. It was way above the tidal encroachment. As Daphne is about to return home, she sees a couple of people walk toward her. Since it's getting late, and there's no one around, Daphne is a little afraid of what these two may want with her.

CH 2/ Scene 3 – She does not move and waits for the couple to get past her. But they don't. They stop and ask her what she is doing here. Daphne hesitates but then asks who they are. They show their badges and repeat their question. Daphne knows she has no choice but to tell these two detectives what happened that morning. In answer to her little spiel, the female detective introduces herself as Lillian Keaston and her partner, Bill Adams, and says that Daphne better come with them to the station. They need her fingerprints to compare them to the ones they found on the umbrella handle.

CH 2/ Scene 4 – Daphne feels trapped. If there are no other prints than hers on the darn umbrella, then what? It would be logical if these detectives were to say that she jumped to the top of the list of suspects. As for motive, who knows? They might think she is an old bitty, with a bee in her bonnet, who had to kill the guy. A plea of momentary insanity might be the only thing that sees her out of this situation. While she waits in the interview room, she takes her phone out of her bag and phones Adrian Hansel, her publisher.

CH 2/ Scene 5 – At first, Adrian cannot bring himself to believe that Daphne is once again embroiled into a homicide investigation so soon after her arrival in Portland. Although it's now nearly ten at night, Adrian decides to get Daphne out of trouble – if trouble there is. When he arrives at the station, he is told that Ms. Daphne Taylor may be detained overnight for questioning. Adrian has no choice: he phones his lawyer. He tells him to come to the station as soon as he can.

Chapter Three

CH 3/ Scene 1 – Meanwhile, Daphne finds out that only her fingerprints have been found on the umbrella. She is told that she can have a lawyer during questioning. As she was about to tell Detective Keaston that she does not know any lawyer, the door opens and Mr. Langford Jr. walks in. He tells the detectives to step out. He wants a word with his client. He sits across from Daphne and introduces himself as Mr. Hansel's legal advisor. Depending on what she will tell him, he is likely to recommend that she engages the services of a criminal attorney.

CH 3/ Scene 2 – This is really going too fast for Daphne. A couple of hours ago, she was standing by the crime scene recalling what she had seen and done that morning to help the victim, and now, here she is, being questioned for the young man's murder. Mr. Langford Jr. listens to Daphne's account of the event and why her prints have been found on the umbrella. She then tells the lawyer that Joshua Dario, the victim, was very unhappy about her messing with his umbrella. She has no idea why he was so mad at her.

CH 3/Scene 3 – Upon leaving the interview room to return to the waiting room to find Adrian Hansel, Langford is stopped by Detective Adams who apprehended Daphne that evening. He tells him that by his way of thinking Daphne could not have killed Joshua Dario. Now that he's received the preliminary

autopsy report back from the Coroner, he's got to conclude that Daphne wouldn't have had the strength to pierce the guy's sternum with the tip of the umbrella. Joshua was an athletic guy. He jogged regularly. Glad to hear it, Langford asks if he still intends to keep his client overnight. "No", is the answer. But Detective Adams wants Daphne to stay in town for a while. They'll want to interview her again.

CH 3/ Scene 4 – When Daphne returns home in company of Hansel and Langford, she is far from happy. This has not been easy for her. She does not mind being questioned during an investigation, but she does mind being accused of a crime she couldn't possibly have committed and being dragged to a police station just because she was in the wrong place at the wrong time. Before the two men leave, Daphne tells them about the window incident. She is sure someone has been through her place. But she couldn't prove it if asked to do so.

Part Two - Main Action

Chapter Four

CH 4/ Scene 1 – After another difficult night, the next morning Daphne decides to get some shopping done. The shopping center is just around the corner. It would take her mind off from what happened the previous day. When she is about to enter the grocery store from its mall entrance she stops dead in her tracks. Right there in the electronics' shop window there's a photograph of Joshua Dario. She reads the caption below the picture. Joshua was apparently a photographer of some note. He was due to display some of his work at the neighborhood gallery.

CH 4/ Scene 2 – Daphne returns home, unloads her groceries from her car and is about to open her back door, when a woman comes to meet her. She offers to help Daphne carry the groceries inside and then says that she wants to know if she found Joshua's camera on the beach when she 'played' with his umbrella. Daphne demands to know who the woman is. The latter says that she's Yvonne, Joshua's girlfriend. She wants the SIM card back. She says that Joshua had taken some compromising pictures of the two of them and she wants to delete them before anyone sees them.

CH 4/ Scene 3 – After convincing Yvonne that she only met Joshua by accident, Daphne explains that she had no idea who he was; that she did not know he was a photographer until she saw his picture in the electronic shop's window and that she has absolutely no idea where his camera could be. Yvonne leaves Daphne to go on with her day but asks that the two of them keep in touch. Daphne agrees, although she does not know what else she could add to her story.

CH 4/ Scene 4 – That evening, after long hours spent working on a new author's manuscript, Daphne is ready to call it a day. She is about to turn the oven on to cook her pizza when her doorbell interrupts her. She wishes people would keep business hours. When she opens the door, she is surprised to see the two detectives standing on the front steps. She lets them in. She offers them a drink – a juice or a coffee – which they both refuse. As soon as they're sitting down they ask if she knew that Joshua was a photographer. Daphne says that she had no idea until she saw his picture in the shop that morning. They then ask if she would mind if they looked around her place.

CH 4/ Scene 5 – By this time Daphne has had enough of their intrusion on her life. She could not have killed Joshua – they know that – so why the hassle? They tell her that they need to find the camera or the SIM card. The photographs on that card would give them some of the answers they're looking for. Daphne nods and then asks them if they have interviewed Joshua's girlfriend, Yvonne. The two detectives look at each other – puzzled obviously. Daphne then explains what happened that morning and also tells Detective Keaston and Adams that she would be glad to have someone search her place – with a warrant in hand – because she knows that someone has come through her home, on a couple of occasions, while she was out.

Chapter 5

CH 5/ Scene 1 – It doesn't take long for the two detectives to come back the next day with a warrant to search Daphne's place. Langford is standing by. He does not want the detectives to assume anything if and when they find the camera or SIM card. Daphne is sitting in the living room while she waits for the

police officers to finish searching her bedroom and den. She passes her hand between the armrest and cushion of her chair. It comes in contact with what feels very much like a SIM card. Daphne knows better than to say anything. She closes her hand around the item and pulls it out. She gets up, goes to the bathroom where she knows the female officer has no reason to follow her, and quickly places the card in her bra. She goes back to the living room and regains her seat.

CH 5/ Scene 2 – Once the officers have completed their search – and have not found the SIM card or camera – they leave Daphne's place. But before leaving, one of the detectives tells Daphne that the forensic team might be back to examine the window if it becomes necessary. Daphne doesn't say much and closes the door on them. She talks to Langford briefly and soon sends him on his way. Since the police have not requisitioned her computer, tablet or cell phone yet, she finally can take a look at the SIM card's content. As expected, they're quite a few sexual pictures of Yvonne and Joshua, but they're natural, loving poses in black & white. Nothing that could truly be considered as porn. Then the next set of photos is likely what would interest the police. They're all snap shots of the umbrella rolling down the beach and of Daphne grabbing it at the last moment before the wind gust would have lifted it and carried it out to sea.

CH 5/ Scene 3 – Now Daphne understands why Joshua was mad about her interfering with the umbrella's "roll" and "take off" pattern. He may have wanted to take one of these shots and display it later at the gallery. Following the set with the umbrella, there were several shots of the sky, then of the sand, of a leg and then nothing.... *That was the killer*, Daphne concludes. Noting that there's nothing else on the card, she takes it out of the viewer and sits back in her chair. Who could have dropped the SIM card in her living room? Moreover, Daphne cannot understand who could have such an easy access to her home. Obviously someone has "easy" access since she found the SIM card in her living room.

CH 5/ Scene 4 – In a sense, Daphne would have liked the detectives to find the card for it clearly shows that she did not attack Joshua and what she did with the umbrella. But now, how can she get the card to the police? She presses Langford's number on her cell phone and then cuts the connection. She takes a flash drive, downloads Yvonne's pictures onto it and deletes them from Joshua's SIM card. She then calls Langford. She tells him what she found *after* the officers had left. Langford tells her that he'll come and get the SIM card from her. Daphne does not like that idea. She tells him that she'll get it to the police herself. She only wanted him to know what she will be doing with it. Since it's nearly lunch time and Daphne has not eaten this morning yet, she decides to have a quick sandwich.

CH 5/ Scene 5 – By the time Daphne is about to pull out of her driveway, a car pulls up behind her. Langford jumps out and brandishes a gun in front of him. He yells for Daphne to get out of the car. She hates this sort of grandstanding action. It always ends badly. Although she is scared stiff, Daphne knows that if she gets out, Langford will not hesitate to grab her purse to take the SIM card out of it. As he steps closer to her car, he repeats his demand for Daphne to get out of her car. She bends forward slowly and puts the SIM card in her bra again. She stays down until she feels he is inches from her open car window.

CH 5/ Scene 6 – As Langford is pointing the gun through the open window, Daphne swings up and sprays his face with mace. Langford staggers back and shoots in the air. When Daphne hears the police sirens, she exhales a sigh of relief. Langford, slumped on her front lawn, is whining and crying his eyes out. Detective Keaston comes out of her car pointing her gun in front of her. Daphne raises her hands and places them behind her head. She then tells the woman that what she wants is in her bra. Detective Keaston smiles and tells Daphne to lower her arms.

Part Three - Resolution

Chapter Six

CH 6/ Scene 1 – An hour later, Daphne finds herself at the police station again. This time Adrian Hansel is with her. They're sitting across from the captain's desk. Captain Assor wants Daphne to repeat what she told Detective Keaston and Adams during her latest interview.

CH 6/ Scene 2 – Daphne obliges. Joshua Dario was quite famous for his photographic work. However, he was often very interested in the opposite sex's curves. He displayed several photographs of nude ladies at the gallery from time to time. These photographs sold very well, so well in fact, that the gallery owner encouraged him to shoot some more sexual poses. All was well until one day Joshua fell in love – “it does happen to the best of us” – and the object of his desires was none other than Yvonne Langford, daughter of a highly respected lawyer in Portland.

CH 6/ Scene 3 – As soon as Langford learned of the affair between Joshua and his daughter, he saw red. He wanted Yvonne to stop seeing the man. She would not listen to her old man and went on with the relationship. “But Langford is a stubborn man. He did not give up. And when Joshua saw me at the beach, he must have thought I was there to sabotage his work on Langford's behalf.”

CH 6/ Scene 4 – Daphne then asks the captain why would the killer leave the SIM card in her living room, why not destroy it. The captain tells her that Langford has not admitted to leaving the card in her living room but that the lawyer knew Daphne had it when she got up to go to the bathroom during the search. Captain Assor believes the killer wanted to incriminate Daphne. Daphne does not quite agree with that surmise. She now believes the killer left the SIM card as some sort of cry for help. However, Daphne is no psychologist and does not share her thoughts with the captain.

CH 6/ Scene 5 – Daphne then asks the captain who does he believe killed Joshua? She has her suspicion but she would rather hear it from him. She does not believe Mr. Langford did it. The captain then tells Adrian and Daphne that he will reserve his answer until it is official. But he believes Daphne will concur with his findings.

CH 6/ Scene 6 – The next day, Daphne reads it on the front page of the paper: YVONNE LANGFORD IS ARRESTED FOR THE MURDER OF JOSHUA DARIO. Apparently when the young lady learned of Joshua's intention to sell the compromising photographs, she rushed to the beach, grabbed the umbrella and planted it in Joshua's chest, and then wiped her prints off its handle. While Daphne was out buying groceries, Yvonne climbed through the editor's window and planted the SIM card in the living room chair. She thought the police would find it and Daphne would be accused of the crime.

CH 6/ Scene 7 – The only remaining question for which Daphne wants answers is “who has easy access to my place?” Captain Assor informs her that Langford had a duplicate key made when he signed the lease for Daphne before she finally moved down from Canada. While Daphne was at the party, Langford came in to go through her stuff. Later, during the trial, it was revealed that Mr. Langford Jr. was some sort of porn-king in his spare time and that was one of the twisted reasons he wanted to get his paws on the SIM card.

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