



# FOUND MISSING

A True Story of Domestic Violence,  
Murder and Eternity

LINDA SLAVIN

**FOUND MISSING**

*- I just finished your book. It was riveting. You have a truly amazing story and you told it well.*

*- Extremely inspirational. But the way He rescued you...it boggles the mind. No fiction writer could've come up with such a great story!*

*- I have never been abused in any way by any man, I haven't always been very sympathetic to women who stay with an abusive husband. Your book helped me understand your thought processes and how your emotions vacillated and how your whole sense of self-worth was picked apart little by little. I'm sorry for every disparaging word I ever spoke or thought about those women. I am even more impressed with you. Thank you so much for sharing your book with me.*

*-It is time to think about eternity. Life has a short span and this is something that can give you some insight into that.*

FOUND  
MISSING

Linda Slavin

FOUND MISSING  
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To protect the privacy of others, characters have been combined and events have been condensed. These are my recollections; I am the teller of my own story. To protect the privacy of others, some names have been changed and characters intermingled. It is with great respect to each and every character, place and event this story is written. Selected episodes are an inspired recreation.

From a Declaration of Principles jointly Adopted by a Committee of the American Bar Association and a Committee of Publishers and Associations

1. Murder 2. Mystery 3. Suspense 4. Intrigue 5. Christianity 6. Religion 7. Salvation

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Individual lives could reach for greater potential if I chose to look up and lead the way. In his words, I say, "See you at the top!"

- Linda Slavin



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# INTRODUCTION

What happens when the road we've been traveling turns a direction we never anticipated? When darkness surrounds and suddenly thrusts us on to an unknown path?

Trapped like prey in the darkness we struggle towards the light but the harder we try, the darker the night becomes.

Some force, some power greater than ourselves has to present itself, enabling us to overcome the horrific darkness holding us captive. What if, in an attempt to pierce the darkness, we have to give up our wills, and travel a new direction?

Sometimes we have to dig deep into our souls to find truth. It's an experience that overshadows intuition and subconscious thought. It's a new dimension of reality.

But if we were exposed to that kind of divine intervention, would we be aware? And how would we respond?



CHAPTER 1

# VANISHED

Lisa was doing the breakfast dishes Saturday morning when the phone rang. She had just settled her young children in front of the television and was relaxing to the rhythm of the water and the sponge. Vincent's frequent absences had become a familiar – and, to be honest, welcome – feature of her existence since her marriage had soured. But things were different now; Vincent had repented, had begged her forgiveness. Why would he disappear now, just when it seemed like their life together was about to change for the better?

When the phone rang Lisa just stared at it, knowing that she should pick it up, but paralyzed by a nagging dread that some new evidence would reveal that Vincent's remorse was just a passing mood, that her hopes for happiness were just a foolish dream. "Dear God," she prayed, "haven't I been through enough?"

When it rang for the third time, Lisa put down her sponge, wiped her hands on the dish towel and bravely picked up the receiver. There was no point in postponing the inevitable.

"Hello?"

"Lisa?" said a vaguely familiar voice. "Lisa, it's Rob. Vincent's van is on Birch Street. Have you heard from him?"

Rob, she thought. Vincent's friend.

"No," she responded. "I mean, not for a few days." The story of my life, she thought. Last week she wouldn't have cared, would have laughed to think that any of Vincent's friends would call her to find out where he was. But now the fear began

to form in Lisa's mind. Vincent had a lot of friends; if Rob was calling her, it meant that nobody knew where her husband was.

"I think you should check it out," he said grimly, with genuine concern in his voice. "Here are the directions."

Lisa's mind raced as she jotted down his instructions on a scrap piece of paper. Vincent's gone, without the van, and Rob's calling me, she thought, as the sound of the television imposed itself on her thoughts. No time to make any arrangements, I'll have to take the children with me. But what if . . . she couldn't finish the thought. She had lived with the risks since Vincent had graduated from casual drug use to serious drug dealing. She wanted to leave but stayed instead, sure that God's will was to selflessly love and relentlessly pray for Vincent, despite the abuse. Why did this have to happen now, when her obedience had finally paid dividends? Would God be so cruel? No, it was inconceivable. Love never fails.

Time to be strong, Lisa. Resolutely, she gathered her things and walked into the living room, where Vinny and Nicki were playing in front of the television. "Kids," she announced, trying to sound cheerful as she turned off the set, "we're going for a ride. Get in the car."

Playfully, as if they had been waiting for a new distraction, they jumped up and ran outside to the station wagon. Little Vinny was just big enough to climb into his car seat by himself. Lisa buckled him in and then strapped Nicki into the front seat.

Lisa put the car in gear and drove north from Slocum to Kingstown, jumping onto the interstate for a few miles and exiting by the racetrack, a thirty-minute drive. Vincent's van had been on Birch Street, Rob said.

"Where in the world is it?" she fretted, digging Rob's directions out of her purse. She wasn't familiar with the city streets, though she had once lived there, not far from this here.

On Ash Street she recognized the Scoreboard, a local tavern Vincent frequented. Why Rob didn't say it was around the corner from the Scoreboard, she thought irritably. A block later, she turned the corner and saw the van, on which Rob was leaning, parked on the side of the street.

Lisa had only seen Rob a few times. She had first met him a few weeks back when Vincent had picked him up on the way to a Phil Collins concert at the local outdoor arena, and he had been refreshingly fun and engaging. Today, though, he looked dead serious and got straight to the point.

"Vincent's van has been here for a few days," he said, devoid of charm.

Lisa walked around the van, opened the driver's side door and peered in. Nothing, she thought. Just an empty van. She felt a wave of relief wash over her. What had she been expecting?

Still, the windows were down, and the van was parked too far from the curb. That's not right, she thought. The van was new, and Vincent was very protective of it. He would never leave it like this. She imagined a car pulling up as Vincent got out and Mafia-types in dark glasses forcing him into the car and driving off. Get a grip, she thought as she got into the van, though she knew these things actually happened in Vincent's world. Her hands trembled as she started the van and parked it properly.

As she turned off the engine, Rob approached and rested his muscular arms on the open window.

"It's been here for a few days," he said.

"You already said that!" she snapped. Rob understood her despair and lowered his head. More subdued, she asked, "How do you know all this?"

"Rick Duzic told me. I ran into him at the Scoreboard today, I noticed the van on my way in, but Vincent wasn't at the bar and nobody had seen him. That's Rick's house," he added,

pointing with his chin to the house on Lisa's left. It was a blue two-story house with several steps leading up to a covered porch. The door was shut, and it didn't look like anyone was home. "He says he hasn't seen him either."

Lisa stared out at the street as she tried to process this information. Who was Rick? Her thoughts wandered as she noticed a small stand of oak trees at the end of Birch Street, their leaves brilliantly colored in the afternoon light. The lovely autumn foliage seemed to mock her desperate hopes for a new season in her life by heralding the coming cold.

"I think you should go to the police," said Rob, snapping her back to reality. "I mean, what's today, Saturday? The van's been here since Tuesday."

"I don't know, Rob," said Lisa. "Vincent's been gone like this before. It's not unusual for him." But they both knew that something more serious was going on. Vincent was in trouble.

"Lisa, you need to go to the police," Rob repeated emphatically.

Lisa understood from the tone of his voice that Rob knew more than he was telling. She cautiously surveyed his dark Italian face, his thin eyebrows now uncharacteristically furrowed in seriousness.

"What should I say?" she retorted, suddenly furious, unable to decode the clues of her husband's hidden world and decipher the cryptic language of his anonymous friends. "Tell me what's going on!"

Rob sighed, briefly lowering his guard. "I know something happened to him," he admitted uncomfortably. "They had an argument last week, him and Rick." Looking up from the ground, he locked her eyes in a severe gaze. "You need to go to the police," he insisted, and this time the tone in his voice was unmistakable.

Lisa hesitated. Why should she trust this guy she hardly knew? She couldn't even trust her own husband. Still, Lisa's instincts told her to listen to Rob. Whatever his involvement in Vincent's criminality, Rob struck her as a decent person, who could be trusted. "Do you have any better ideas?" she berated herself silently.

Rob stepped back as Lisa exited and locked the van. Lost in thought, she walked past him towards her car, gazing at her sweet children, sitting there so patiently in their car seats.

"Let me know what happens, alright?" said Rob, focusing her attention back to the present.

"We'll be in touch," she muttered.

Rob watched her get into the car, "Hey," he called out, "you know where my apartment is. Feel free to stop by."

Without responding, Lisa started the car and pulled out. "Where are we going, Mommy?" asked Vinny. "Are we going to see daddy?"

I wish I knew, she thought. "We're going to Christie's house for a while," she answered, trying desperately to brighten her voice. She could count on her friend Christie to take care of the children for the night while she visited the police station, only twenty minutes from her house.

An hour later, Lisa sat alone in the car, trying to talk herself out of what she knew came next: exposing her pathetic life to the scrutiny of the police. Rob seemed trustworthy, yes, but then again she thought, as her mind drifted back to the day she first met Rob.

It had been thoughtful of Vincent to invite her out to the Phil Collins concert. It was the kind of gesture he would occasionally make after a particularly harsh spell of abuse. But whatever hopes she harbored that he had changed and would treat her with genuine affection were quickly dashed.



As if to punish her for her presumption, Vincent came home in a foul mood and snarled at her every time she spoke. Thankfully, on the way to the concert they drove in stony silence until Vincent pulled the van up to an ominous looking apartment complex she had never seen and turned to her abruptly.

“Get in the backseat.”

“What?”

“You heard me. Get in the back.”

Confused, Lisa slipped between the front bucket seats into the back of the van. “Hurry up,” Vincent yelled, “I told you to get back there!” He started to shove her, but stopped himself as a man approached the passenger door.

“What’s going on, Vincent?” the man said cheerfully.

“Get in, we need to get a move on.”

Settling into the passenger seat, Rob noticed Lisa in the back. “Who’s that?” he asked.

“That’s Lisa, my wife.”

Rob turned to Lisa. “Good to meet you,” he said. Lisa acknowledged him with a forced smile, scared that Vincent would scowl at her again if she spoke.

Rob’s apartment was north of Kingstown on I-95, still fifteen-minutes from the concert venue.

“You a Collins fan?” Rob asked Lisa. “I never miss a show,” he added with relish.

Lisa shook her head yes, hoping he would talk to Vincent instead.

Rob continued anyway. “I liked Genesis a lot but Collins got too big for them.”

Lisa looked out the window, praying, trying to believe that life would soon change, that God would heal her marriage. But

here she was, in the backseat while a total stranger rode next to her husband. The closer she tried to get to Vincent the more distant he became.

Rob kept up the banter for the rest of the drive to the concert. Vincent drove around the park looking for a parking spot, which he luckily found a couple hundred yards from the entrance to the outdoor amphitheater. Rob got out first and opened Lisa's door for her. She looked up at him.

"Thanks."

"Sure," he said, "anytime," and smiled at her.

The three of them started together towards the amphitheater, but Lisa and Rob ended up trailing Vincent, who was in a rush because they had arrived late.

"I haven't been here in a few months – last time was to see James Taylor – 'Fire and Rain,' you know?"

Lisa didn't know. James Taylor's music wasn't part of her past.

Rob acted like he didn't notice and kept on talking.

"My older brother used to listen to him in Cranston, before he got big. Have you ever had Bakker's steak sandwiches?" he asked.

Rob wouldn't shut up and after enduring Vincent's perpetual cold shoulder, it was unsettling to be the focus of so much of a man's attention. Lisa felt liked and had to admit that she liked it. Lisa was happy the sun had already set so that Rob couldn't focus his eyes on her.

Ahead Vincent waited, motioning them forward. "Let's go, come on," he barked impatiently. As they entered the venue Vincent moaned, "It's already starting. Where in the world can we sit?"

The lawn surrounding the stage was packed with happy Collins fans, talking, laughing, singing, having fun—the scene

was a relief from Vincent's intensity and Lisa didn't want anything to ruin the evening.

"I guess we'll have to sit back here," Vincent said with disgust. "We should have gotten here earlier."

"Man, it's alright," Rob said cheerfully. "We can hear him fine from here."

They sat down on the grass together, Lisa nervous between Vincent and Rob. Rob's arm touched Lisa's arm and she didn't dare move. But as the night progressed she finally relaxed – ignoring the awkward situation - and immersing herself in the splendor of the starry night sky. A warm breeze soothed her body as she inhaled deeply, seizing the moment and acknowledging that this friend of Vincent's had somehow caught her attention.

\*                     \*                     \*                     \*

Vincent ... Rob ... "God, don't give up on me," she prayed in her car on her way to the police station. Her faith gave her a surge of strength. God wouldn't let her down. He had been preparing her for this; she had prayed for Vincent to forsake his lifestyle and make something of their marriage, and God had seemed to answer: Vincent had, indeed, opened his heart to her. I need what you have, he had said. But now she feared that not only her marriage but Vincent's life might be over. *Pray for him now, Lisa, pray that he's safe.* Lord Jesus, she began, but now she had made a wrong turn. There was a gas station ahead and she pulled into it, leaving the prayer unfinished.

At one of the pumps an old man with coveralls and greasy fingers approached the car as she lowered her window.

"Can you tell me where the police station is?"

"Which one?" he answered sarcastically. Lisa choked back a tear. This was not the time for stand-up comedy. "The main

one, downtown, I guess,” she answered, looking up at him with one hand on the steering wheel.

“Just make a right out of here,” he said, signaling with his hands, “and then make a left on Walnut Street.”

“Thanks,” she murmured as she rolled up the window. Lisa watched with furrowed brow as the man returned to his work. She wanted to give the insensitive old guy a piece of her mind but thought, He doesn’t have a clue about my situation, and why should he care?

Walnut Street was just over a mile away. Of course, the man didn’t tell her that she needed to make a right on Fourth Street, or that there was no public parking at the station – just a fenced lot for the patrol cars. Creeping down Fourth, she found parking three blocks down, and locked the car. As she walked back to the station, she passed the parking lot and saw that it was gated, with a number of garages tucked in the back.

Lisa approached the corner building and saw the word POLICE in huge letters above the entrance. She had never been to a police station before, never been arrested, never even gotten a speeding ticket. Sighing with resignation, she walked up the front steps and opened the glass door.

She expected the police station to resemble a cop-show scene, filled with bums and criminals, but to her relief the place was almost empty. At least if she was going to go through trauma nobody else would be there to see. She walked up to the front desk, where a protective counter partitioned her from the staff officer. The gray-haired policeman acknowledged her with his eyes but said nothing, waiting for her to speak.

“It’s my husband,” she blurted, her lip quivering. “He’s missing. I haven’t seen him for days.”

“Oh, I see,” he said. Lisa wished there had been more compassion in his voice, but nothing could faze this veteran.

He'd probably seen and heard everything by now. The officer asked the first of the many questions Lisa would be bombarded with that afternoon.

"Has he ever disappeared before? Did you have an argument? Does he have any medical issues?"

"No, no, I think someone has done something to him." Lisa kept her answers vague, hoping to protect both Vincent and herself. "He was in an argument and his car was left abandoned."

"Fine, someone will be out for you," the officer said, picking up his phone. He motioned her with his hand. "Just sit over there for now."

The long day of erratic activity weighed on her as she waited but eventually a door opened and another officer appeared. "Come this way," he said, with what he must have intended to be a smile. He led her toward a metal detector, the kind they have at airports. The officer stepped aside and turned to Lisa, noticing her obvious distress. "You need to empty all your pockets and your purse," he said, with a faint trace of concern. Lisa obliged her personal belongings as exposed as her life would soon be. She felt stripped, naked and vulnerable.

The officer led Lisa through a series of hallways. She looked around as people hurried past her in the opposite direction, on whatever official business was apparently more urgent than hers. There were many doors, and the drop ceilings were spotted with water stains from leaky pipes. Between the doors, the hallways were lined with painted gray cinderblocks.

The officer finally stopped and opened a door to a dull hallway. Lisa entered and as the door closed, it occurred to her that she would never be able to find her way back if her life depended on it. The officer motioned her inside and told her to wait. She cringed as she entered the small windowless room,

bare save for a desk and two chairs. She panicked as she felt the world closing in on her, her life reduced to this dingy little cell. Why had she listened to Rob?

“So tell us what’s going on,” said a voice behind her. She turned to see two officers standing in the open doorway. This is it, she thought, I’m completely on my own. God help me.

“My husband’s van is on Birch Street and he hasn’t been seen for days,” she said, composing herself.

“And your concern is ... ?”

“It’s not like him to leave his van in that manner,” she replied, as matter-of-factly as she could.

“What manner is that, ma’am? You’re going to have to speed this up a bit,” growled the officer, who paced the floor impatiently. “What exactly is going on here?”

“I was told he had an argument with the person who owns the house his van is in front of,” Lisa replied, emotion creeping into her voice. “We think this guy did something to him.”

“Get some names and locations,” said the officer to his colleague, in a tone that made it clear who was the alpha. “We’ll send over Waters and Sims.” He turned abruptly and marched away, as the second officer motioned Lisa to the chair.

“Okay, ma’am, we need to get some more information,” he said, sitting down across the desk with a clipboard. The man was tall and muscular, with sandy brown hair. He couldn’t have been older than thirty, but his gruff manner belied his youthful looks. Lisa felt tears welling as she absorbed his serious tone. You know nothing, she reminded herself. Play it straight.

“What is your husband’s full name?” he began.

The questioning went on for what seemed an eternity. Lisa forced herself to remain calm, but she was sweating, and she could feel her heart beat in her throat. The interrogation made her feel like a runner, caught in slow motion that couldn’t catch

up with the leaders. If only the officer would wait a moment, but that wasn't going to happen; as he bombarded her with questions every nerve in Lisa's body tensed.

"Did you guys have domestic problems? Was your husband involved in anything that would put him in harm's way?"

A tremor of fear gravitated up her spine but she hid her emotions and responded, "I don't know."

"Okay, just relax for a bit, I'll be back," said the officer as he closed the clipboard and rose from his chair.

"Excuse me, sir," Lisa said, trembling. "What did you say your name was?"

"Weber," he replied simply, "Detective Weber." He left the room, closing the door behind him.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Linda Slavin, is a sought after speaker in Business and Leadership meetings, *Found Missing* is her first novel. In her authentic and transparent style, Linda shares with personnel experience the effects of domestic violence, tragedy and spirituality. In her writings she is able to convey and give her readers a glimpse into the harsh realities of domestic violence, an epidemic that is on the rise in number and intensity.

In *Found Missing, A True Story of Domestic Violence, Murder and Eternity*, Linda relives her journey. She shares a young girl's path in her first year away from home, an honor student on scholarship, caught up in a relationship through stalking practices. Her book is a true to life murder mystery with heartrending and touching experiences that shares the empowerment of human response in the midst of divine intervention. It's an experience that is beyond intuition and beyond a subconscious thought. It's a new dimension of reality.



# Human response in the midst of divine intervention

Lisa who is left by her mother at the tender age of 6 months longs for a happy family life. However, life throws her on a different course. She is stalked by Vincent, a city boy who has a reputation for toughness and illegal activities. Forced into marrying him, Lisa suffers abuse at his hands until one day Vincent's van is found abandoned and him missing. Lisa is relentless in taking into her own hands the cold case that has led to dead end journeys. She pushes hard to solve this 10-year-old mystery the only way she knows how. In *Found Missing* Lisa struggles to find meaning behind the events of her husband's disappearance revealing the aftermath of what happens when you want out but can't seem to escape your own destiny.

## FOUND MISSING

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