**Journalist’s Account: Draft 2**

**Instructions for Final Draft:** you wrote your first draft as a fly on the wall with no people on the scene. Now, I want you to put your detective in the crime scene. Your excerpt will begin in much the same place as it did in Draft 1, except now it will begin with detective entering the crime scene (office). So in addition to showing the reader the crime scene, you will also depict your detective viewing the crime scene. **You will not describe the detective’s every single action or thought;** instead you want to use the detective as a means of emphasis, and to increase the dramatic impact of your piece.

**The Detective’s Perceptions**: you have two possibilities—1) Describe the detective’s actions *“externally,”* giving only what is directly observable. Any perceptions or thoughts would be conveyed through direct “quotations” (taken from hypothetical report, interviews, or newspaper articles). 2) Do a very close *“internal”* narration, going inside the detective’s head to give his thoughts. (These perceptions also must be grounded in hypothetical “research”—report, interviews, newspaper articles, etc.—even though that won’t be explicit spelled out in the body of your article.)

You may decide to limit yourself to one method of showing the detective’s thoughts, or you may use a combination of both techniques.

**Examples Drawn From Our Sample Readings**

External:

* “Just like with a girlfriend,” an MP sergeant described it later. “As if he was crying on her shoulder.”
* Ivory reached the apartment at 4:10 A.M. There was, he noted, “quite a stir in the neighborhood. People were coming to their doors, coming to the house, to see what had happened.”
* …probably the steam iron. “We could see that from the blood spray pattern,” Gruber explained. “So it wasn’t like people were running around and trying to get away; they were hit when they were down, helpless.”

Internal:

* “Gruber stepped into the home. There was something unreal about this; this home simply didn’t look like the scene of a homicide.”
* “The kitchen was crowded with candles, chips and dip, hors d’oeuvres. Gruber sniffed and turned towards the kitchen. The oven was still on; the burners had been turned down to simmer while pots of food cooked. Everything smelled wonderful; nothing had even begun to burn.”
* “Hank Gruber looked toward the bay window with its curving window seat, and his chest tightened. He forced his eyes down to the rug and saw that it was spattered in spots…”
* The investigators stepped carefully past the debris left by the Seattle Fire Department’s Medic One crew…”
* “The apartment was littered with notes. Felt and Hansen gazed around the apartment and saw them.”
* “Hansen and Felt moved around the apartment. Hansen noted a scuff on the hallway of the kitchen area, just a slight gouge in the plasterboard, probably a bullet ricochet. He saw an ashtray and a calendar on the dining room table. Bending to read, he felt the hairs rise on the back of his neck.”

**Other Guidelines, FAQs, & Suggestions**

1. You may use your own name for your detective, or you can make up a fictional name for your detective (whose age, gender, etc., need not match your own). That being said, your detective is a mere guide to the crime scene; don’t let him become the major character who steals the show. Do not invent a history or background for your detective, or go into long, personal digressions about him.
2. Your detective can help you focus the reader’s attention and create dramatic emphasis, but don’t overuse her. (Overuse will dilute the impact of this device.) Use your detective sparingly and with care.
3. Your crime scene is much less complicated that our sample excerpts. The *Fatal Vision* crime scene involved three murders, a surviving victim, and several rooms of the house, so there were a dozen cops plus EMTs milling about. Therefore McGinniss needed to cover a lot, including dialogue between people, and their actions, which you will not have. Your crime scene is quite different. This is only a *possible* missing person’s case and as bad as it looks, it has not even been conclusively established that a crime has taken place.
4. Your detective’s job was only to visually observe and record the crime scene; therefore, that is all that you may show her doing. (Do not have her picking things up or processing evidence, etc.)
5. Some of you have asked if you can write an introduction that sets the scene or shows your detective’s arrival. The short answer is yes, you can if you like, though it is by no means required. If you do so, keep it to a paragraph or less. (See the Ann Rule excerpt’s description of the neighborhood and exterior of the house for an example.) Remember: you want to get inside that crime scene as soon as possible…
6. I want to stress again that you must not mention Louisa Sutton’s death. The only reason I mentioned it was because it's part of the *rhetorical situation* facing you as a journalist.  But you can't mention it. You are writing about the crime chronologically, and at the moment you are writing about - the discovery of the office crime scene - her death was unknown.  (You're writing an article “excerpt”; you have to imagine that if you were writing the entire article, you would cover the developments of the month following her disappearance and thus eventually come to the discovery of her remains.) That being said, while you can’t mention her death, you can suggest the possibility that something horrible or even fatal has happened to her.
7. The Cheese Factor: remember that your goal is to emulate the high quality journalism we’ve read from the *Best American Crime Writing* series. When trying to create emotion in the reader, it is very easy to resort to melodrama and, for a lack of a better word, cheese. You want to engage your readers’ emotions, but you don’t want to be corny or resort to overblown schmaltz. This can seem like a shortcut to genuine emotion, so it’s an easy trap to fall into. And I will acknowledge that some of the raw material I’ve given you to work with – the missing bride-to-be—easily lends itself to melodrama. But you want to aim for something more subtle and restrained, while still grabbing the reader emotionally.

**Remember Your Overall Goals:**

Your goals are the same as draft 1. The only difference with this draft is that you have more available tools that you can use to accomplish these goals. 1) Bring the crime scene to life for the reader. 2) Help the reader see Louisa Sutton as a real person. 3) Try to engender an emotional response or connection.

**Draft 2 Tools That Can Help You Achieve Your Goals:**

1. Thoughtful use of your detective.
2. “Exploding the Moment” exercise: use this technique to create a dramatic close-up or slow motion moment. (Can be used to suggest the significance of an area of the crime scene, or Sutton’s character, or to engage the reader’s emotions.)
3. As we discussed in class, not only can your detective have a presence (that she was trying to avoid in her detective’s report) but your journalist’s voice or persona may also shine through at times, despite the fact that the journalist won’t use “I”. For an example of this, see Ann Rule’s “The Last Letter” on pages 444, 445, & 447—the “impeccably furnished” apartment, the “irony” of the children and flower pictures, the “contradictions” of the “Guns, flowers, blood, love notes.” If you do decide to let your journalist’s unique perspective peek through at times, like the use of your detective, do so sparingly.