

LOVE. MOVE. RIZE.: “Forensics”

By: Karen A. Sparks

(Disclosure: For the sake of the reader, we have removed “graphic content.”)

Psalm 88:18 “You have taken away my companions and loved ones.
Darkness is my closest friend.” -NLT

Journal Entry: Day #100, “I love you, Jesus. Help!”

My 90 days in residential therapy were complete. As Amy (my dear friend and first roommate) told me, “When you leave this place, the world will slap you in the face.”

One hundred days had passed since I began therapy and I was back at my parents’ house. I visited the cemetery every day. Now came the expectations: figuring out the rest of my life, a job interview, and then my first “re-entry” job. A job that required me to be the “face” – the first “smile” that the client sees. I was strong for a while. But as the days passed, etc., I struggled with everyday life—breakdowns in private and in public—the triggers were everywhere—the holidays, birthdays, etc. I had to deal with David’s financial debts to the IRS, bills, cars, etc.—he put everything in my name—ruined my credit, and I’m trying to start over from scratch.

I hired a running coach and joined a new running team. Another community embraced me. I ran every day. When I ran in the cemetery, I thought of how R&G used to run in that same cemetery with me before they passed away. Now I run past their headstones.

After several months, my job performance was lacking, and I couldn’t focus on anything. The pressure of “transitioning to a normal life” was more than I could handle. Although I had a new supportive community among the staff, it became too much, and I resigned after ten months. I had jumped in headfirst straight out of therapy, and I was drowning. I may have felt like a failure, but I was not a quitter.

My brain was on fire, and my spirit was dwindling. Because my dad and others protected me from being on the scene of the crime, there was still so much that had been kept from me. This haunted me. I wanted to throw somebody against the wall and force them to give me the information I deserved. It may have been a closed case to the investigators, but it was a “cold case” for me. I now had the tools, and it was time to face them down.

The following describes my struggle between 2016 and 2019. I FOUGHT HARD to get all the information. It didn’t come easy over those years but I stayed with it.

In May of 2016, six months after R&G's deaths, I had several angry phone conversations with the lead investigators, and I couldn't get what I was asking for – information, reports, photos. Finally, my dad and I had an initial face-to-face meeting with the Grayson County Sheriff's Office Investigators.

They took me into a private room with a tv screen and explained that I would only have access to three photos—one photo of David and two of the house. I was so frustrated and asked why I couldn't see more? They told me that the last time they gave multiple crime scene photos to a mother, the investigators had to call an ambulance because she went into cardiac arrest.

"We're not doing that to you, Karen. It's too much too soon." They said firmly.

Too much too soon?

I was still angry at the "professionals" who never gave me instructions or the protocol or told me where my kids' bodies were. I wanted everyone to shut up, and I didn't want to hear their "perspectives" anymore. I needed the truth and not the "version that protected me."

They should've notified me on Nov 1, 2015. A family friend who was a police officer identified Reagan and Grant's bodies, observed their bodies placed in body bags, and loaded into the ambulance. I should've been called and told to go to the morgue to identify their bodies and hold them and say goodbye. The lead investigator broke down in the morgue and had to sit outside. *I was the mother. I wanted to be with them, not some stranger!*

Is that right? Is that fair? I didn't get to say goodbye before the autopsy. Granted, I wanted information that some might never want. The trained professionals didn't notify me or tell me what to do, or give me the options. WHY? This will always haunt me. No one let me see or kiss my babies. Everyone was trying to protect me from the horror of what David did. I just wanted the truth after all the years of manipulation and lies. WHAT, YOU SAY—Too much too soon?-- HOW ABOUT.... All of this was too much too soon!

They asked if I was ready, and with my consent, they displayed two pictures of the burning house. My mind wandered to all of the houses, all of the promises David made. This was house number eight. Why did I believe him this time? Again? Why did I go with him to this 80s-style rental house away from town on a county road? Was he planning this all along?

Both pictures showed a house engulfed in smoke. The garage was gone; it had blown up. I knew precisely why the garage blew up – it's where David stored all of his "work props." The gallons of paint, paint thinner, and gas cans. Then there was the equipment which was most likely stolen or leftover from jobs he was paid for yet never completed.

Weeks later, I met with one of the fire investigators who said, "There's no way that place didn't completely explode. You would've thought he was a professional arsonist the way he dispersed the accelerant from north to south, the way David precisely planned where to throw the matches, and the path he cleared to the master bath. The open window over the vanity created the perfect backdraft – he wanted nothing but ashes to be found at the scene. He was pure evil."

Then the picture of David. The murderer, the father who killed my children, lying in a fetal position in the master bathroom – the place he turned into a crime scene. I couldn't see his face because it was pressed into the carpet. I recognized the white polo with a "church logo" and

khaki shorts. He was barefoot, and blood stained his right ear. It was him. Months of seeing him in my nightmares, I'd convinced myself he'd somehow escaped and was on his next con, living a new life and plotting against me. In each expert opinion (seeing many deaths), the investigators emphasized that he showed the signs of dying a horrible death. They described the distortion in his face. They'd seen it many times in those who had died that way. They reassured me that Reagan and Grant showed no signs of struggle or pain with the same expert confidence.

To his right were two blacked-out figures— later to be identified as Reagan and Grant.

By December 2016, while most moms were helping their kids spell "North Pole" on their envelopes to Santa, I was opening an envelope from the Dallas County Southwestern Institute of Forensic Sciences. I closed the door to my bedroom and sat on my bed with Reagan's and Grant's baby blankets. I opened the two separate Autopsy Reports of my two children. The first sentence read, "This affidavit is in compliance with Texas Rules of Criminal Evidence"... Reagan's report was six pages, and Grant's was seven pages. I was not prepared to read such a detailed description of my children's deaths. I asked for it, demanded it, and now I had to face it and go through it!

My beautiful, bright children were reduced to a narrative describing body parts and body systems. They became a statistic with a case number.

Case No. — in the matter of
Small, Ashley Reagan, deceased.

(They got her name backwards, which added to my anger.)

Case No. — in the matter of
Small, Grant David, deceased.

My eyes were scanning each word, every phrase, medical and criminal terminology -

9 years old White Female

8 years old White Male

Date of Death: 11/01/2015 (Actual)

Time of Death: 04:00 PM (Found)

Examination Performed: 11/02/2015 07:50 AM

The body is identified by toe tag...

The body is that of a well-developed, well-nourished, white (female)
(male) child whose appearance is compatible with the stated age of (9)
years, and (8) years.

...There is good preservation in the absence of embalming...

...The body is cold, rigor is fully developed...

...patchy soot deposition on the arms, legs and face...

EVIDENCE OF INJURY

...first degree burns with blisters...

EVIDENCE SUBMITTED...

BODY CAVITY

INTERNAL EXAMINATION ...(EACH MAJOR BODY SYSTEM)

BIOHAZARD BAG...

POSTMORTEM...

CONCLUSIONS: ...died as a result of smoke inhalation.

MANNER OF DEATH: Homicide

I sobbed through the night and until morning, reading each word, number, and punctuation mark that had become the final reports of my children on this earth. Over a dozen names of strangers with official titles and signatures verified it all.

In 2017, the lead investigator called me and told me he had the crime scene items David left in the front seat of his car. These items included a suicide letter, over thirty pawn tickets, and a "Christian" marriage workbook from the movie "Fireproof ." These are the items he had laid neatly in a stack on the front seat of his White Nissan Sentra that was conspicuously parked about 20 yards away from the house. The backseat had junk everywhere and an extra set of clothes and shoes. But the way he neatly stacked these specific items made it obvious he wanted them to be found. His cell phone was found on the vanity in the main bathroom above Reagan and Grant. There were two entries in the marriage workbook that were purely performative – always the "actor" on stage. Once again, he was trying to portray himself as the victim and sell his narcissistic, psychopathic bull**** to the very end. Again, blaming everyone but himself! Oh, just two entries out of a forty-page workbook – TYPICAL of David—he wrote something to make himself look good. We later discovered incriminating emails, letters, Craigslist ads, etc that uncovered the path he had chosen into the abyss of evil and darkness.

A year after their deaths, I called around and found three pawn shops that had specific items that were special to Reagan and Grant. Now I had the tickets from each of these Pawn Shops. My Dad and I went to each shop and retrieved the following items:

- Grant's dirt bike.
- Both of their scooters.
- Reagan's Vera Bradley purse and backpack.
- The Kindle that they shared.
- Each of their Nintendo DS video game consoles.

Like everything at the crime scene that was salvageable, there wasn't much left, but it was all that was left of them.

Dead but still on stage, David addressed the suicide letter to me.

November 1, 2015

*The following is only an "excerpt", not the full suicide letter from David to me...

K, My Lady,

All you had to do was be nice and work with me to prevent this outcome. I warned you, I asked you, ... you are out to destroy me, but I hold the ultimate trump card. OUR KIDS! ...This outcome is all on you! You are responsible for the deaths of Reagan, Grant, and your loving husband...

Three years later, in August of 2019, forty-five months after their deaths and thirty-nine months after our initial meeting with the investigators, we met again at the Grayson County Sheriff's Office. *And, I got results.* I finally received the full twenty-two-page Investigative Report from eleven different Sheriff's Deputies and Firemen plus 120 Crime Scene Photos on a flash drive and the Pre-Autopsy Photos via email. These reports are the eleven actual individual accounts of each investigator and what they saw at the crime scene. Each account was written in graphic detail following the same criminal procedural format. It also included the Dispatch Call Information. The conclusion from each investigator was that of a double murder and suicide.

The flash drive I received in August of 2019 included crime scene photos of the house, Reagan and Grant, their dogs, and the monster who killed them. In September of 2019, one month later, I petitioned the Dallas County Medical Examiner's Office and received, by mail, their "Investigative Narrative," which is the internal Coroner's documentation of detailed findings. It is not a public document. Therefore, an attorney was required to request a copy.

My dad had one condition for me before we looked at any information and the photos. The condition was that he would read every report and look at every photo before I saw them. He wanted to make sure that he gave me a fair warning to prepare me for what was to come. I reluctantly agreed and decided to review everything at my dad's office.

His office was in the press box at the football stadium that's located next to the middle school and two elementary schools.

The press box is in a football stadium with several occupiable levels overlooking the football field. On game nights, it's a combination of a community party room and broadcasting booths with PA, radio, and tv. It's full of coaches, school employees, booster members, where food is served, and the announcers call the game.

Today's a weekday, and it's empty – only the two of us.

I sat on the bottom level of his office in the press box, where the tv and radio broadcasters sit. He sat on the top level a few steps above me to shield me from the pictures on his computer. Dad went through the crime scene photos taking notes on a yellow legal pad of every image that he thought may trigger me. As he did that, I was reading through the investigative report again. I read through it at least twice before we traded places. David's blueprint to murder our children was right in front of me. He did not snap, instead, he had become more and more evil through the years.

County Sheriff's Office
Public Call Sheet

Call Type: Structure Fire

Date: 11/01/2015

Time: 2:27 PM

Address: ---

Method: By Phone

Operator #1

Priority: Urgent

Call # --- 14:29:43 REQUESTING MUTUAL AID FROM SURROUNDING CITIES

...ON SCENE POSS ONE ADULT AND 2 CHILDREN

County Sheriff's Office

Investigative Detail

Case Number: 12-----

By: Investigator #1 11/04/2105 9:31 AM

Investigator #1 Scene Report

Re: Structure Fire

I (Name of Investigator Redacted), was notified by dispatch that the City Fire Department requested a deputy to the above location in reference to a structure fire with at least three deceased persons inside along with two dogs.

...I arrived on scene and made contact with the Incident Commander. He Advised that inside the residence they located three bodies, one being an adult male and two children inside the master bathroom. He stated the door was slightly open when the bodies were discovered and he gave instructions to shut the door to keep the fire out and any evidence from being destroyed.

Case Number: 12-----

By: Investigator #2 11/01/2105 5:00 PM

Investigator #2 Scene Report

Re: Photo Walk-Thru

I began taking photos of the house...

...I noticed a filing cabinet just to the left of the entry door into the master bedroom to be opened and I was advised it was this way when the fire department made entry. I was advised the fire department had to remove it from the walkway in the hall. I was advised it appeared as though someone had intentionally blocked the hallway.

...The Incident Commander stated the leg of the female had to be moved slightly in order for the door to be shut.

...immediately inside the bathroom, lying on the floor I saw the body of a

female child who was lying flat on her back facing up. A small male child was lying directly on the south side of the female. A male subject approximately 40-50 years of age and was lying in a crouched position facing the floor with his knees drawn up under him near his chest. His head was pointing toward north, and feet pointing toward south, farthest from the door.

...while walking through the house I could smell a strong odor of gasoline.

...Then I went outside to photograph the White Nissan...in the driver's seat was the divorce paperwork and a handwritten note that said, "The fight is over!!!"

...Upon the arrival of Judge #1 I assisted in the recovery of the bodies and took photos of them and the area during and after they were removed. Investigator #3 interviewed one neighbor who at the end of the report stated, "...Dave's demeanor had changed so drastically that she could only describe him as a 'Time Bomb.'"

The audio recordings of this interview have been attached to this case report for Review. Still in the press box, Dad then handed me the flash drive and his notes. We traded places, and he said, "Make sure you go through each of my notes before you look at any of the pictures."

He stayed with me while I looked at the photos. We wept and held each other at certain critical moments. No matter what notes were taken, no matter who previewed them, even if they were through the eyes of a grandfather (R&G's POP), there was no way to prepare me to see the actual photos of my children dead at the crime scene.

The first few photos are of the house, but as I click the right arrow button on my laptop's keyboard, I see them one by one. The main bathroom, the crime scene. Then, my dead children.

What a f***** coward! What a f***** monster! How are these images in existence? He left my babies by the door closest to the fire, and he had a cloth next to his face because he was trying to avoid the smoke. He left them by the fire and was farthest away from it. I hate him! I have never felt such hate and rage!

The Pre-Autopsy Photos were next. My whole body went limp, and the groaning got deeper and louder. Staring at them in the Pre-Autopsy photos was another level of difficulty because I can see the physical markings of what happened to their precious bodies.

Why did I want to go this deep and see all of this? I don't want to be left in the dark. I want to know every detail because these are my babies. I want to know what he did to them. I want to make sure that the investigators tell me the whole truth. I want to know what he did to them and how the fire affected their bodies. My talented, beautiful, funny, loving children - my little gymnast and quarterback...dead in some lonely cold room, lying on a blue tarp about to have their bodies dissected because of an evil coward. And now, three years later, I am looking at their photos, wondering how this could be?

Press boxes were once my playground as a coach's kid, and it was for Reagan and Grant as a coach's grandkids...but not this dark day. My dad and I came to a semblance of peace, and I left with the files.

The day only got darker as I drove home in the middle of school pick-up. At the stop sign was the crosswalk where parents passed holding their children's hands, and here I was clutching a twenty-two-page report and a flash drive with 120 photos, including those of my children dead at the crime scene.

Psalm 34:18 "The LORD is close to the brokenhearted; he rescues those whose spirits are crushed."

Like other bereaved moms and dads, we won't have the milestone moments with our children.

Present Day:

I'll never watch them score a winning touchdown or medal in high school sports from a press box with my dad, or see them walk down the aisle, or have children of their own. But, I know they packed a lifetime into 8 and 9 years. They stared death in the face and my kids will forever be my heroes. My prayer is that their legacy will save others.

We have a "Small" time to "spark" a passion to live for a purpose. Reagan and Grant lived their eight and nine years to their fullest! They LOVED big, they HAD A BLAST, they PLAYED hard, LEARNED, and they never quit. They "sparked" something in me and in those around them...I won't let that flame go out as long as I'm alive. I am no longer a "Dead Woman Walking."



This our last email for our Love. Move. Rize. in 2025 Spring Fundraiser!

Please support this ministry by giving financially to ensure we can continue helping as many as possible. Access to Spiritual, Mental, Emotional, and Physical health resources are vital. You will be blessed to be a blessing!

Here are quotes from two anonymous survivors of domestic abuse and two bereaved moms that were helped by TGRM:

"Karen ~ Thank you for constantly inspiring and reminding me to never give up and to keep going. I love you dearly, and I'm so proud of you and all the ways you're allowing God to use your story to reach others. Love Never Ends."

"I've suffered from domestic violence, severe depression, and suicidal behavior in my past, and Karen and The Great Root Movement demonstrates hope, love, and the rebuilding of lives."

"Thank you for holding my hand."

"Thank you for sharing your story. I can get out of bed. I have hope."

ROOTED= In God's Love.

LOVE= Yourself and Others.

MOVE= Through Your Pain and Move Forward.

RIZE= To Your Purpose.

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To read the full email articles in pdf form go to our TGRM Give page.
Thank you!

Love. Move. Rize.,

Karen A. Sparks

President, [The Great Root Movement 501\(c\)3 Nonprofit](#)

Race Director, [Love Never Ends Trail Series](#)