

# **Tamara's Ghost**

## **PART ONE**

# Prologue

*Narrated by Missing Persons' TV Host, Bill Roscoe.*

**Who killed Tamara Terri? That's the headline across the nation. It's the question the hauntingly beautiful and vibrant Prom Queen's family and friends are asking.**

**17-year-old Tamara Terri is five foot seven with porcelain skin and shoulder-length, wavy blonde hair. Her blue-green eyes are unmistakable. Friends and family describe her as genuine, kind-hearted, generous, naïve, and trusting.**

**"She sees the good in everyone." Best friend of missing Terri, Elaine Schultz, finally spoke to reporters this morning almost six months after Tamara's disappearance.**

**"I can't tell you how many times I asked her out and got turned down." Laughs friend of the victim, eighteen-year-old Carlton Henderson. He became the prime suspect twenty-four-hours after Terri's disappearance. He was later cleared. Henderson claimed to have remained at the graduation party thrown by their mutual friend, Elaine Schultz. More than thirty party attendees confirmed Henderson's alibi.**

**Seventy-two-hours into the search for Tamara Terri, the local police department hit a wall. Their depleting list of suspects and lack of evidence or clues led to the FBI taking the lead on the missing Prom Queen's case.**

**When I sat down with Sean Johnson, Chief of Police, and lead investigator on the Tamara Terri case, he stated, "I've known Tamara for many years. She had a bright future ahead of her. The last I'd heard she was debating on nursing school in Texas or pursuing music and dance at Juilliard in New York."**

**Johnson went on to say, "Grove Hollow is a small, friendly, seascape tourist town. We aren't accustomed to our friends and family going missing without a trace."**

**This is a tragic case of a talented, beautiful, and loved teenage girl whose life and future hung in the balance while the rest of the world continued their tireless search. The search for her alive has been called off. The search for her remains and answers is still in full effect. We still have no answers regarding what happened to Tamara Terri when she left the Schultz's home Friday, May 15th at midnight. We know that someone somewhere has the answers needed to bring Tamara home and give her grieving family and friends closure.**

## CHAPTER ONE

MAY 15<sup>TH</sup>

5 P.M.

Tamara stood in front of her full-length mirror turning side to side. She wrinkled her nose and glided her palm over the hem of the short, white, Marilyn Monroe dress. She looked up at Elaine Shultz, her best friend since grade-school, seeking her opinion.

“What’s the matter with that dress?” Elaine looked her up and down and popped the last bite of carrot into her mouth.

“I don’t know. Is it too, va-va-voom, do you think?” Elaine arched a dark eyebrow at her friend then smirked.

“Va-va-voom, you say? Are you joining the convent or coming to my graduation party?” Elaine teased. Tamara chortled then groaned. She turned partially and looked over her shoulder examining the open back of her dress.

“Tamara, you’re stunning. You know this. The entire town of Grove Hollow knows this. You have more crowns and trophies from beauty pageants, prom, and homecoming, than any person I know. You look amazing.”

“Thanks, E. I just don’t want to look slutty. Like first rattle out of the box, I’m throwing away

**that homegrown, good-girl persona that's been drilled into me for the last seventeen years."**

**"I hear what you're saying. You're the last person anyone would ever accuse of being slutty. What is going on with you? I mean, really? You've been acting so weird for the last I dunno, couple of months maybe?" Elaine looked her up and down and tapped her chin thoughtfully.**

**"What?" Tamara asked sounding more defensive than she'd meant to.**

**"Mmm, someone has a secret. A secret from her best friend who shares everything with her. So, out with it. What's going on with you or rather, who?" Elaine narrowed her honey-colored eyes and dipped her chin to her chest. Tamara gave in knowing her friend well enough that she was not going to let this go. Elaine was the type to spring the question on her in public and she wouldn't use her inside voice to get her answers. Tamara chose her white, padded vanity chair and crossed one, long, toned leg over the other.**

**"You have the best legs I've ever seen in my life. If you die before me, I want your legs. Let's just switch bodies." Elaine teased making her laugh.**

**"You're ridiculous, you know that? I don't plan on dying and donating my body to you, thank you very much."**

**“That is so tragic, and you are so selfish. I’d give you my body.” Elaine played, resting her hand between her ample cleavage spilling out of the blue, peasant shirt.**

**“Yes, well, I have plans for this body, thank you.”**

**“Yeah, Juilliard, if you’re smart and we know you’re brilliant. So, look out New York, Tamara Terri is on her way to the top.” Elaine rode her hand through the air.**

**“Actually,” Tamara raised a French tipped finger up.**

**“Actually what?”**

**“Alright, I met someone. He isn’t new to either of us or anyone in town for that matter. He and I have been seeing one another off and on for about the last year and a half.”**

**“Since you were sixteen?” Elaine clarified. Tamara wrinkled her nose and moved her hand back and forth.**

**“And you’re intimate or?”**

**“That part is new. We didn’t become intimate until the start of this year. We took a break**

**because things were getting really intense between us.”**

**“Intense?” Elaine clarified.**

**“Wedding bells, love, future plans.” Tamara fidgeted nervously. Elaine nodded slowly then cleared her throat.**

**“You have a secret love interest and you kept this from me?”**

**“Elaine, I kept this from everyone. So did he.”**

**“I have to ask why? I mean, is he a fugitive from the law? Americas Most Wanted?” She teased.**

**“Well, I’m sure if he got caught with me,” She paused.**

**“Yes?” Elaine rolled her hand in front of her.**

**“He’s older than me. This is an extremely sensitive situation.”**

**“Sensitive situation and he’s older than you? And what, you think I can’t keep a secret?” She scoffed.**

**“We aren’t taking any chances right now. After graduation, we’re going to tell my parents and**

**I'll tell you. But until then, this conversation is off-limits as is the name of the guy."**

**"He's a teacher or what?" Elaine guessed making Tamara laugh.**

**"Elaine, let it go. You only have like a week to go before graduation. School is out, summer is officially upon us and bright futures are ahead of us."**

**"So, is he going to New York with you?" Tamara sighed and let her head fall back.**

**"Elaine, listen to me. Let's see how well you can keep a secret. You aren't known for this. Your favorite thing to do is to tell everyone what they got for Christmas. That's why your parents started telling you everyone got socks and underwear."**

**"Seriously? That's when I was like five." Elaine scoffed.**

**"Uh that was last December." Tamara chuckled.**

**"I've always kept our secrets." Elaine's cheeks flushed red.**

**"Fine, he remains anonymous but," Tamara held a finger up stopping Elaine's incoming questions.**



**“I’m seeing my future in a new light. I want a home and a family.”**

**“At seventeen?” Elaine scoffed indignantly then stood and paced the room. The heels of her black booties dug into the plush white carpet with each angry step.**

**“Not at seventeen, no. But he has a life here.”**

**“And what do you think the town will say when an older man has taken the prom queen off the market and ruined her future? You got into Juilliard, Tamara! And NYU! You have a bright future ahead of you!”**

**“This right here. This is exactly why I kept this to myself. You don’t control me. You don’t control my life, or my decisions and my mind is made up. It’s that simple.”**

**“Oh, it’s that simple is it?” Elaine demanded with her small, pale hands on her ripped denim jeans.**

**“Yup. This isn’t a discussion, Elaine.”**

**“No, it’s a mistake and a travesty. You got into the most elite and sought-after schools. You can be anything and do anything and you are throwing it away on some-some guy?” She demanded hotly.**

**“And it’s my life and my choice.” Tamara remained calm though Elaine was furious to the point tears were streaming down her puffy, red face.**

**“I had to fight and claw just to get accepted into a less than prestigious school and I have outstanding grades! I cannot believe you are doing this to me!” Tamara frowned and leaned back.**

**“Doing what to you?”**

**“This! Throwing your life away!”**

**“Elaine, you’re being irrational which is why I didn’t tell you about this to begin with. I won’t be telling you anything else. I won’t be telling you what school I chose to go to. I won’t be telling you about the guy or anything else to do with him. This conversation is officially over.”**

**“That’s not all that’s over, Tamara Terri. You mark my words. You are making a mistake. You are throwing your life away. I cannot believe you want to be stuck in this little Podunk town for the rest of your life and bake cookies and join the damned PTA!” With that, Elaine stormed out of the bedroom and slamming the door behind her.**

## **CHAPTER TWO**

**MAY 15<sup>TH</sup>**

**11 P.M.**

**Tamara wasn't sure she should step foot into the Schuster's house after hers and Elaine's falling out earlier. What pushed her out of the driver seat of her white, Mustang convertible were the friends she wanted to say hello to. Her white platforms crunched along the gravel driveway to the brick steps that led to the large, white front door. She could hear the party inside full swing with basing music that made her think there was a live band inside. Tamara made out the sounds of laughter and familiar voices shouting with excitement, most likely at some lunatic taking a not so bright dare. She pushed the gold handle down and swung the door open then stepped inside to what could be described as silly string, streamer and kegger chaos.**

**"Tamara!" Brown-haired, blue-eyed, quarterback, Carlton Henderson made a beeline for her.**

**"Hey Carlton." She laughed as he wrapped her in his large arms then picked her up and swung her around the room.**

**"Terri's here!" Shouts came from every room of the house announcing her arrival.**

**“You made it.” Carlton laughed and sat her down gently then rested his hand on her cheek. She saw the familiar longing in his blue eyes. She was torn between two men in her life. Carlton and her mystery man. She had to choose. She’d held back on telling Carlton how she felt about him for a while now because of the other guy. Tonight, after Elaine left, she gave a lot of thought to the choices she was making. Tamara tipped her head back and stared up at him wondering if she was in fact, making a mistake with the other guy.**

**“And here I am.” She grinned and slid her arms around his neck then tiptoed and kissed his cheek.**

**“Yup, here you are.” He stroked her cheek with his thumb.**

**“Have you been here long?” She asked.**

**“Meh, I think about an hour before you got here.” He dropped his arms around her waist and pulled her to him.**

**“Pick a school yet?” She wrinkled her nose playfully.**

**“Did you?” He leaned closer to her, taking the chance he’d been dying to for as long as he could remember.**

**“Mmm, still debating on a few things.”**

**“Such as?” He walked backwards holding her hips.**

**“Life choices.” She shrugged as he nodded, keeping his eyes on hers. Carlton led them out through the open patio doors then down the steps to the backyard. Dives off the diving board and cannonballs splashed the Olympic sized pool water over spectators.**

**“Yikes and jump back.” Tamara laughed and clutched his bicep for balance. Carlton, believing chivalry was still alive, swept her into his arms and carried her to a glass table and sat down with her in his lap.**

**“Close enough to not be called anti-social and yet, far enough away to stay dry.” Carlton kissed the side of her head and wrapped her up tighter.**

**“So,” They both started then laughed and pointed at one another.**

**“You go first.” She laughed.**

**“Ah, ah, you first.” Carlton grinned.**

**“Really, where ya headed for school Carlton or when rather?” He shrugged.**

**“I was kinda hoping to hear where you were going.” His cheeks flushed. He cleared his throat**

nervously. She had to know. She just had to know how he made her feel. Without giving it a second thought, Tamara slid her fingers into his hair and drew his mouth to hers. Her heart raced and her mind spun like she was riding the Tilt-A-Whirl as their lips met. Electricity fizzled between them as the kiss heated. They parted slowly with Carlton placing soft kisses over her lips and claiming them once again for another impassioned kiss. That kiss told her all she needed to know....

## CHAPTER THREE

May 15<sup>th</sup>

11:45 P.M.

Tamara walked out to her car to retrieve her phone. Since she didn't have pockets on her white dress, she chose to leave it in her car. Her parents were likely checking in by now and knowing them, if she didn't answer, they'd start to panic and think the worst. Her father would start picturing her as an acrobat with the circus and her mother certain her car had gone off the road and was now planted into a tree who knows where. She leaned over the driver seat and cursed under her breath when the phone slipped from her fingers. It dropped between the driver seat and the charcoal gray console.

"Great, just great." She sighed and shoved her hand down the side of the seat.

"Almost," Tamara grunted and stuck her tongue out to the corner of her mouth.

"Ah ha! Gotcha!" She grabbed the phone triumphantly just as a hand covered her nose and mouth and an arm wrapped around her waist. Tamara flailed her arms and kicked her feet, shoving off the side of the car. Her head spun and her vision blurred before darkness crept into every corner of her mind.

~ ~ ~

**They placed her gently on her leather backseat then got behind the wheel, started her car, and pulled away from the Schultz's two-story, Victorian home. They glanced in the rearview at Tamara's blonde hair splayed out behind her making her look angelic. She was unmoving though they could make out the steady rise and fall of her chest. Their black leather gloved hands gripped the steering wheel tighter as they ground their teeth.**

**"Stupid, stupid, stupid." They growled and banged their hands on the steering wheel.**

**"Why do you have to be so stupid, Tamara? This is for your own good. I won't let you ruin your life. I won't let you throw us away. You don't think I saw you with Carlton? I trusted you." Their voice trailed off as they turned onto a dirt road set deep in the woods. Two minutes off the highway, they pulled to a stop in front of a log cabin. They could hear water running and a feeling of nostalgia came over them as they stepped out of the car then folded the seat down. They scooped Tamara up careful not to shut her limp arm in the door. After she was situated across their body, they carried her up the three wooden steps to the front door then inside. They**



**chose the first bedroom on the right and laid her gently on the full-sized bed.**

**“Eventually, you’re going to come to your senses, Tamara. You’ll stay here until you do.”**

## CHAPTER FOUR

May 16<sup>th</sup>

Tamara moaned softly and pressed her fingers against her temple. Her head throbbed, mouth was dry, and her throat was sore and felt like someone had shoved a bag of cotton down it. Her arms were heavy, and her body ached. Tamara's eyes fluttered open then closed as quickly, blinded from the sunlight pouring into the room. The heat felt good on her cold, clammy skin. She opened her eyes slowly and sat up, looking around the small, simple wooden room. Was she in a cabin or a lodge? How did she get here? Tamara tried to remember the night before but aside from Carlton's kiss, that was the only thing she could remember. She vaguely reflected on something to do with her phone and her car. She swung her long legs over the side of the bed and staggered barefooted to the door. Where were her shoes? Tamara opened it slowly and peered out into an open living room, cautiously. It appeared to be empty. Was this a graduation prank? Had she come here with Carlton or someone else? Had she been drugged? She had a lot of questions, no answers and no one to ask. Tamara crept to the front door and opened it quietly then slipped out and pulled it closed behind her. Where was her car? Again, she tried

**to remember the night before but continued to draw a blank. She stepped off the first wooden porch step, taking in her surroundings. Somehow this looked and felt familiar. The hair on the back of her neck rose as she realized where she was. Her blood ran cold, her heart pounded and her mind raced.**

**“Going somewhere, Tamara?” Elaine’s voice hissed in her ear. She opened her mouth and screamed knowing it was futile. No one was going to hear her. This was the Schultz’s hunting cabin and they wouldn’t be out here for several more months. She was so weak she couldn’t fight off Elaine when she pressed a soft cloth to her face and darkness took her once again.**

## CHAPTER FIVE

March 17<sup>th</sup>

Chief of Police, Sean Johnson accepted the cup of coffee Diane Terri handed him. She sat next to her husband, Paul and folded her hands nervously in her lap, waiting for the worst. Johnson studied the white tissue poking out from between her palm and fingers.

“And where-where did you say she was last seen?” Diane sobbed the words and pressed her fist to her mouth. Sean Johnson had worked for the Grove Hollow PD for the last twenty years. Of those twenty, ten of them had been as their Chief of Police. In that time, their little town by the seaside had never experienced anything like this. People didn’t just up and go missing around these parts. It was a tightknit community where most of the time, everyone knew everyone else’s business. Yet, Tamara Terri had been missing going on forty-eight hours, and no one saw or knew anything.

“I was told that Tamara arrived at the Schultz’s house around ten p.m. on the 15<sup>th</sup>. Some say she was out on the patio with Carlton Henderson. Others say they saw her get into her car and leave. The stories are sketchy to say the least.” He gave them a sympathetic look.

**“And what does this mean as far as finding my daughter?” Paul asked the question Johnson hoped he wouldn’t.**

**“We’re doing all we can at this point, Paul. We’ve got search parties and dogs, volunteers and other police departments aiding us in the search for Tamara. All avenues are being exhausted.” He assured them.**

**“And-and finding her alive? I know that after forty-eight-hours,”**

**“Diane, stop. You’re only going to make things harder for yourself thinking like that. This is Tamara Terri we’re talking about. She’s beloved by everyone. She’s never met a stranger she didn’t like or didn’t like her. My thinking is, as much as I hate to say it, she had a bit too much to drink, got behind her wheel and drove. She likely took a corner too fast and well, we’re sure she’s out in the woods somewhere wandering around. We’ll find the car and we’ll find Tamara. We’ll bring her home safe.” Johnson patted Diane’s hand then stood and put his black hat on top of his round, balding head.**

**“I’m no good to you here. Diane you should stay home. Paul, if you’re up to it,”**

**“My daughter is out there. Of course, I’m up to searching for her.” Paul cut him off then kissed**

**Diane on the cheek and followed Johnson out the front door. Silence hung thick between them, but their quiet question was loud and clear, Where the hell was Tamara?**

## CHAPTER SIX

November 15<sup>th</sup>

Elaine hadn't been able to go out to the cabin and check on Tamara for almost three months. Not since the FBI came into town and were keeping tabs on her closest friends and relatives. Elaine had to wait until the cover of nightfall then slip out her window, shimmy down a huge oak tree that was unforgiving even with long sleeves and jeans. Then, she had to take backroads cutting through town until she made it to the Eckert's truck she'd borrowed while they were gone for the summer. She closed her eyes and started it then held her breath waiting to be converged on by SWAT. She hadn't meant to keep Tamara for this long and never thought things would get so out of control. The drive from where she was to the cabin took twenty minutes. Elaine came to a stop outside the familiar cabin and ignored the rushing water from the river on either side of it. There were no feelings of nostalgia tonight. She had no idea what she was going to do with Tamara now. She knew who'd taken her and held her captive. Elaine had blown off college easily enough stating she couldn't think right then with her best friend missing. But, how long would that last? She walked up the steps and stuck her key in the lock. Elaine was startled when the door

swung open. She swallowed hard. This was not happening. This was not happening. She repeated the sentiment over and over as she stepped into the darkness of the cabin using her phones flashlight. She shined it around and stopped on the bedroom to the right. The door was open, the bed unmade, and Tamara was gone.

“Tam?” She called out and crept through the cabin. There weren’t many places to check and each turned up empty. She was gone. Elaine mentally went through how long a person could survive without food and water. By all accounts, for as long as she’d been left here, Tamara should in fact be dead, not missing. Maybe that’s what she was hoping for subconsciously. Elaine went back outside and looked around as if expecting Tamara to jump out with, “ah ha! Gotcha!” After a few minutes, she walked down the front steps and towards the wooded area. As she walked, she noticed a large set of footprints embedded into the fresh mud. No one was supposed to be out here. Her father wasn’t due here for another week which is why she had to come when she did. Tamara couldn’t be here when her father and his friends came to stay. How would she explain that? Elaine moved swiftly towards the trees, following the prints that couldn’t be more than a few days old, if



that. Though it had been raining a lot so who was to say? She burst through the clearing and looked around frantically. It had begun to rain again, and water poured down her face. Her hair was matted, clothes were soaked and sticking to every part of her. Her running shoes made a squishing sound and slipped on her narrow feet as she ran deeper into the woods.

“Tamara!” She called frantically no longer caring who heard her. She’d be a hero and Tamara would be confused about who took her. Elaine gained speed then all at once slipped and went head and hands first down a mud-covered incline. She screeched as she slid on her belly over rocks that stabbed her and low-lying limbs that slapped and scratched her face. An ear-piercing scream escaped as she catapulted into a deep mud hole. She dropped in with a thud, bounced and was immediately sucked under. Elaine fought to get back to the surface, pushing branches and leaves away from her frantically. She gasped for air then grabbed a branch and hoisted herself up. Elaine dug the toe of her shoe into the side of the hole and slipped. She screamed and almost ended back up in the mud hole. Elaine violently crammed her fingers into the sides of the hole and clawed her way to the surface. She dragged herself out coughing and

throwing up mud and water. Elaine leaned over her knees and gasped out then gulped in air.

“What the hell was that?” She choked on her words as she maneuvered herself on her knees to face the hole. She was careful not to get too close as she peered over. She blinked several times then raised her hands and wiped away the mud and rain sticking to her eyelashes blurring her vision. She looked again then fell backwards screaming with her hands on her face shaking her head side to side.

“No! No! No! Tamara! No!” She wailed and scrambled to her feet. She peered over the edge at the lifeless body floating face down. Her blonde hair splayed out to the sides atop the muddy surface. Elaine’s scream was primeval as she pitched her head back then beat her fists into the ground. She took several calming breaths and stared at her bloody fists. Her problems were over. Tamara was dead and dead girls don’t talk. More than that, Carlton was hers. He was all hers. He’d finally given into her two months ago and now she didn’t have to worry about Tamara coming back.

“You should have left well enough alone, Tamara. Carlton was mine. You didn’t even want him.” Elaine got to her feet and cast a glance over her shoulder once more then pushed

**her hair off her face and walked from the woods triumphantly. It was over. It was finally over.**

## CHAPTER SEVEN

NOVEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>

Elaine dabbed perfume on her wrists and checked her hair and makeup.

“Come in.” She called to her bedroom door. When it opened, her heart leaped in her chest. Carlton, clad in jeans and a blue Polo shirt filled her doorway.

“You’re early.” She laughed and stood on legs that felt like jelly.

“I couldn’t wait to see you.” Carlton chuckled and walked in then crossed the bedroom to her.

“Me too.” She slid her arms around his neck and tiptoed. He brushed her lips lightly and hugged her. She knew he probably needed more time to get over Tamara. He’d been in love with her for as long as she could remember. He just needed time, she told herself.

“Give me one more second.”

“Take your time.” He called to her back as Elaine hurried into her bathroom. She hummed and opened a white drawer withdrawing her toothpaste and toothbrush. She looked up and let out a blood-curdling scream dropping the contents in her hand.

**“What happened!” Carlton ran in and literally stood right next to a mud-covered Tamara. Elaine spun to face him.**

**“You-you don’t see her!”**

**“See who?” Carlton looked around him then back at her. Elaine put both hands on her mouth and stared at Tamara dripping water and mud onto the white tile floor. Her usually perfect blonde hair now hung in wet, muddy strands around her face. Mud dripped from her fingertips. Her white dress was caked in mud and what appeared to be blood.**

**“Ta-Tam-Tamara.” She stammered out a sob and backed up but had nowhere to go as Tamara raised her finger and pointed at her.**

**“I know what you did.” Her voice hissed.**

**“I-I didn’t do any-anything.” Elaine sobbed.**

**“Elaine, honey, are you okay?” Carlton asked completely oblivious of Tamara leaning towards Elaine opening her mouth. Tamara screamed blowing the smell of death on her. She followed Elaine’s sinking body to the floor as she curled in a ball and drew her knees to her chest and wrapped her arms around them.**

**“I’m coming for you, Elaine. Everyone will know what you did. You killed me. Everyone will know.”**

**“No! No! Ghosts are not real! You’re not real! You’re dead! You’re dead!” Elaine screamed and dug her fingers into the floor.**

**“Elaine, who are you talking to?” Carlton crouched.**

**“Tamara. Tamara’s ghost.” She whimpered and put her hands over her face. When Carlton moved them, Tamara was gone. Not a trace of mud or water was left where she’d been standing. Elaine knew what she’d seen. Tamara might be dead, but her ghost was very much alive. She was coming for her... It wasn’t over after all.**

## **PRELUDE**

**Bill Roscoe stood outside the Schultz's home gesturing behind him.**

**“This is the last place Tamara Terri was seen alive. This is a tragic case of a talented, beautiful, and loved teenage girl whose life and future hung in the balance while the rest of the world searched tirelessly for her. We still have no answers regarding what happened to Tamara Terri when she left the Schultz's home Friday, May 15th at midnight. We know that someone somewhere has the answers needed to bring Tamara home and give her grieving family and friends closure.”**