CRIME BEFORE COFFEE

FIVE UNSOLVED CASES

Five exclusive mysteries for your morning coffee - each with one stubborn question that still refuses to go away.

FREE CASE CLUB EDITION

A note before we begin

True crime is about real people, not just puzzles. Crime Before Coffee uses public institutional sources, avoids graphic detail, and labels uncertainty clearly. These brief case snapshots are intended for education and discussion. They are not investigative findings.

What you will find

- A concise account of what is documented.
- The clue that keeps the case alive.
- The question investigators and the public still cannot answer.
- Five case files that do not appear in After Dark: Volume One.

Five minutes. Five mysteries. Pour the coffee.

CASE 01

The Notes No One Can Read

Ricky McCormick was murdered in 1999. In his pockets were two coded notes that even FBI cryptanalysts could not decipher.

What is documented

On June 30, 1999, authorities found 41-year-old Ricky McCormick dead in a field near St. Louis, Missouri. Investigators treated the death as a homicide. Two handwritten notes recovered from his pockets were filled with letters, numbers, parentheses, and other symbols. The FBI later asked the public for help after its own cryptanalysts were unable to break the code.

The clue that lingers

Investigators believe the notes may have been written within days of McCormick's death. The FBI has said that understanding them could reveal information about his movements before he was killed - yet the system he used has resisted standard cryptanalysis for years.

THE QUESTION

Do the notes describe McCormick's final days - and could decoding them still point toward his killer?

CASE 02

Three Girls, One Locked Car

Three girls went Christmas shopping in Fort Worth in 1974. Their car stayed behind. They did not.

What is documented

On December 23, 1974, Mary Rachel Trlica, 17, Lisa Renee Wilson, 14, and Julie Ann Moseley, 9, disappeared while shopping at Seminary South Shopping Center in Fort Worth, Texas. Texas DPS still lists all three as endangered missing persons, with foul play possible.

The clue that lingers

The vehicle they used was found in the shopping-center parking lot, locked, with the keys gone. Texas DPS says the girls never made contact with their families. Decades later, all three remain listed in the state missing-person system.

THE QUESTION

How did three girls vanish from a busy shopping center while the locked car they arrived in remained behind?

CASE 03

After Closing Time

A bowling alley was closed for the night. Three people were still inside - and an unknown man was there too.

What is documented

At about 11:50 p.m. on January 27, 2002, Erin Golla, Robert "Bobby" Zajac, and James Springer were shot to death inside the closed AMF Broadway Bowling Alley in Littleton, Colorado. Erin and James were employees closing the business; Bobby was a frequent customer. The FBI describes the shootings as an apparent robbery.

The clue that lingers

A friend arriving to pick up one of the victims entered the bowling alley, found them, and called police. The FBI continues to seek information about the unknown man the victims encountered before they could leave.

THE QUESTION

Who was the unknown man inside the closed bowling alley - and why has he remained unidentified?

CASE 04

The Graves on West Mesa

A dog found a bone on an Albuquerque trail in 2009. The discovery grew into one of New Mexico's largest unsolved homicide investigations.

What is documented

In February 2009, a woman walking her dog on Albuquerque's West Mesa noticed a bone protruding from the ground and alerted police. Investigators ultimately recovered the remains of 11 women and one unborn child from makeshift graves. Authorities identified all 11 women and continue to investigate who killed them.

The clue that lingers

Albuquerque police have continued seeking information and a reward remains available for information leading to an arrest and successful prosecution. A February 2026 city remembrance again stated that the murders remain unsolved.

THE QUESTION

Who killed the women buried on West Mesa - and what missing evidence could finally connect the graves to a name?

CASE 05

The Girl on Highway 18

Nine-year-old Asha Degree disappeared before dawn in 2000. Witnesses later reported seeing a young girl walking alone along a rural highway.

What is documented

Asha Degree disappeared from her home in Shelby, North Carolina, on February 14, 2000. Her father had checked on her during the night; by morning she was gone, with no sign of forced entry. Investigators received reports of a young female walking along Highway 18 around 4 a.m. The FBI and local partners continue to investigate.

The clue that lingers

In 2001, construction workers found Asha's book bag roughly 30 miles from the last reported sighting. It contained items investigators said did not belong to her, including a concert T-shirt and a children's book from her school library. The discovery created more questions rather than an answer.

THE QUESTION

What made Asha leave home before dawn - and what happened after the last confirmed sighting?

Your next case is waiting

These five cases are exclusive to this free edition. Crime Before Coffee: After Dark - Volume One opens seven different unsolved case files with timelines, evidence maps, competing explanations, responsible-reading notes, and reader worksheets.

FREE GUIDE: 5 exclusive case snapshots
AFTER DARK VOL. 1: 7 different, deeper case files
No duplicate case chapters.

No hype. No invented certainty. Just the facts, the gaps, and the questions that remain.

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Sources and reading trail

Ricky McCormick. Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Cryptanalysts: Help Solve an Open Murder Case"; FBI Vault, Ricky McCormick records. The FBI states that two encrypted notes were found with McCormick after his 1999 murder and remain undeciphered.

Fort Worth Missing Trio. Texas Department of Public Safety Missing Persons Clearinghouse bulletins for Mary Rachel Trlica, Lisa Renee Wilson, and Julie Ann Moseley. All three remain listed as endangered missing persons; the vehicle was found locked at the shopping center with the keys gone.

AMF Broadway Bowling Alley triple homicide. Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Triple Homicide Investigation - Colorado." Erin Golla, Robert "Bobby" Zajac, and James Springer were killed inside the closed Littleton bowling alley on Jan. 27, 2002; the FBI continues to seek information.

West Mesa homicides. City of Albuquerque / Albuquerque Police Department, "West Mesa Homicide Investigation"; City Council remembrance update dated Feb. 2, 2026. The remains of 11 women and one unborn child were recovered; the murders remain unsolved.

Asha Degree. Federal Bureau of Investigation, "Looking for Asha" and "Search for Asha Continues"; Cleveland County public records. Asha disappeared from Shelby, North Carolina, on Feb. 14, 2000, and the investigation remains active.

Facts and case status were checked against public institutional sources on August 26, 2026. Crime Before Coffee is not affiliated with the cited institutions. If you possess genuine information about an active case, contact the responsible law-enforcement agency rather than this publication.