

## **2024 CSI Arizona State Competition**

### **Crime Scene Scenario**

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2024, your team is called at 7:00 am to respond to 9876 East Friendship Lane #1004 for a possible homicide. You are told there is no body at the scene but based on evidence and witness testimony there is enough to investigate it as one.

When you arrive, you are told that patrol officers received a check welfare call on Sam Guardell from his sister. She stated she has attempted to call her brother for the past few days but was unable to reach him. He has had addiction issues before so she was worried he may have relapsed. When she arrived, no one answered but the door was unlocked. She entered the apartment and noticed a mess, but her brother was not there. While looking around for him, she saw a bloody knife under a chair, his cellphone on the table, and his wallet. She suspects something bad may have happened.

Patrol officers contacted the upstairs neighbor who stated he heard some noise from the apartment a few days ago, but has gotten into several arguments with Sam, so he didn't go down to talk to him. Once the noise stopped, he didn't think about it anymore. No other neighbors answered their doors.

**Your teams' task is to determine what happened to Sam.**

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### **Responding Officer Report**

The info below is the information you received from the patrol officers:

Incident # 2024-851971  
9876 E Friendship Lane #1004  
Phoenix, AZ 85412

#### **Victim**

Sam Guardell  
2/25/1994, 30 years old  
B/M 5'11" 187 lbs. Haz/Blk  
Tattoos on left arm and both legs

#### **Victim's Sister**

Karla Rivera  
2345 E Taylor St  
Avondale, AZ 85887  
623-345-0989  
8/6/1989, 34 years old  
H/F 5'6" 155 lbs. Grn/Bro

#### **Upstairs Neighbor**

Nate Getsum  
12/3/1996, 27 years old  
W/M 6'0" 204 lbs. Bro/Bro  
9876 E Friendship Lane #2004  
Phoenix, AZ 85412  
305-826-3909

- Police officers received a possible shots fired call from the apartment complex at 12:18 am from an anonymous caller but nothing specific and no victims. Officers eventually responded and drove around the area trying to find a scene or victim/s. They did not find either, so they went to the next call.
- During the canvass of surrounding apartments, no one else from apartment complex saw anything.
- Two residents heard some noise but thought it may have been a party or the game on TV.

## **2024 CSI Arizona State Competition** **Medical Examiner's Autopsy Report**

Prepared by: Dr. Michelle Bithybuk

- Cause of death: Exsanguination
- Manner of Death: Gunshot
- Caucasian Male
- Height: 180.34 cm
- Weight: 84.8 kg
- Subject is in beginning stage of decomposition due to being in outdoor elements for approximately 3-4 days.
- There was a gun shot wound to the upper right chest. The projectile punctured the left aorta which caused extreme exsanguination and most likely immediate death.
- Projectile was removed and preserved.
- Hair stand found inside the gunshot wound, appears to be a red dye blend.
- Epithelial cells were found under fingernails of right thumb and index finger

### **Toxicology Report**

Alcohol	.21 BAC
Marijuana	100 ng/ml THC
Cocaine	.487 mg/L
Fentanyl	.9 µg/L

## **2024 CSI Arizona State Competition** **Witness Statement- Neighbor**

- Has lived in apartment for 2.5 years.
- Has 2 jobs as a waiter and bartender (waiter/bartender at Longhorn Steakhouse) Usually comes home around midnight or 1am
- Had a roommate until about 6 months ago but left because of a fight with the victim over a parking spot. That roommate moved in with his girlfriend.
- Had known the victim since Sam moved in about 2 years ago
- Victim was kind of a jerk, especially when he was drunk.
- Victim lived alone; I think but always had people over.
- Victim partied a lot with people coming over
- We have had several arguments about music or noise. Nothing physical or violent, just yelling. It comes and goes, nothing consistent. I told him I would tell the manager the last time.
- A few days ago, I heard some noise. It was Monday night. Sounded like people were there, maybe some kind of partying. I never saw anyone but sounded like 3-5 people.
- I got home early around 11:30pm because we were overstaffed for the game. I was tired so I just put my headphones on and went to sleep
- It has been quiet for a few days. I figured he left and went to stay somewhere else.
- When I came home from the store today, I saw all the cops and they asked the same questions you are.

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### **Witness Statement- Sister**

- Brother has been in minor trouble before but nothing serious.
- He has lived in this apartment about 2 years, lived with her for about a year. Before that he lived with my mom. He got this place because he liked to bring “friends” over to drink and do drugs. Me and my mom couldn’t take it anymore.
- Not sure how he made his money. He had a job working at a carwash, then some music store, and then Circle K for a while. He would keep meeting people who would “hook him up” with jobs for money. Not sure what that meant, and I didn’t want to know really.
- He had an alcohol and drug problem for a least 5 years now. We tried to get him help but he would start then stop when he thought he didn’t need it anymore.
- We talked on the phone often, so when he didn’t call/text or answer his phone the last few days, I got worried. He has done this in the past when he would go off with some “friends” and disappear for 3-4 days at a times, but I’d get random texts at least. But this time seemed different, it was nothing, so I came over around 6:00 am.
- I knocked 4-5 times, tried looking through the windows but saw nothing. I then tried the doorknob and it was unlocked. I opened the door and saw a mess. It smelled horrible, definitely bleachy and trashy. I called out his name, but no one answered. I checked the apartment, but he wasn’t there. I saw his cellphone on the counter, and I got nervous because he always has his phone with him. I saw a knife with blood on it when I was walking out, that’s when I got scared and called the police.
- Sam’s vehicle is a blue, 2016 Jeep Grand Cherokee. I don’t know the plate number.
- Last time I spoke to him was Saturday morning around 11:00am

## **2024 CSI Arizona State Competition** **Witness Statement- Maria (Suspect 1)**

- Lives off unemployment right now but looking for a job.
- Maria met the victim a few months ago while going to the Circle K for cigarettes. They had gone to some parties together. They drank and did meth several times.
- She would occasionally meet up with him because he always knew someone to get meth from.
- She met up with him the day of the Final Four, he asked if she and her friend wanted to come by his place to watch the game, he had a bet that Purdue was going to win
- She came by Uber with her friend Ronny and her friend "D". Sam seemed a little annoyed, but they all started drinking.
- She didn't like Sam as a boyfriend, but they had hooked up a few times over the last few months.
- During the night, D made on advance on Maria which she rejected. D made a big deal about it since "I know she's cool with it".
- Sam made a comment to D about him being a jerk and threaten to "kick his ass"
- D stood up and threated him back. They both got into a fight and wrestling on the ground. During the fight Ronny got scared and started screaming at them to stop.
- Then D elbowed her in the head and began hitting her in the back while she covered her head. Sam grabbed a knife and stabbed D in the shoulder. He yelled, crawled to his backpack, grab a gun and pointed it at Sam. He called him a punk, yelled "don't walk away" and D shot him in the chest. He grabbed the knife out of his shoulder and covered it with a kitchen towel.
- It got quiet, Ronny said we needed to call the police. D said, "hell no, we need to clean this up". He made me clean his cut and we taped a towel to his cut to stop the bleeding and he changed his shirt with something Sam had.

- He pointed the gun at me and Ronny and told us he would kill us if we didn't do what he said.
- We found Sam's car keys and he made me drive to Walmart. He told us we needed to get some things to clean up and hide the body.
- It was a blue SUV; I know it was Jeep because of the logo on the steering wheel.
- We bought some towels, a brown plastic sheet, a set of bed king sheets, and 1 big bottle of bleach. We paid in the self-checkout, so "no one had to see us".
- We use Sam's card. D gave it to me and said, "use this".
- We went back to the apartment. We were crying and telling him we can just leave but he kept yelling saying no one is leaving while pointing the gun at us. The gun was beige.
- We put Sam in the plastic sheet, then rolled him up and put him on the bed sheet, then rolled him up. We taped it and we all carried it to the trunk of Sam's car. After we went back in the apartment and started cleaning the blood with bleach. We saw cops driving around outside so we stayed quiet. Then hurried up put everything into a dark garbage bag; we put it in the trunk and left.
- We drove out to the desert somewhere and left the body there for "the animals to eat" according to D.
- We drove to the Filigree QT and left the car.
- Me and Ronny left. D said if we said anything to anyone, he would find us and kill us. We were scared and just left.
- I don't know where he went. We walked down the street and grab a ride from some guy to my place.
- We just stayed there and after a couple of days, Ronny left.

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### **Witness Statement- Derek (Suspect 2)**

- Goes by “D”
- Bad attitude. “Doesn’t remember “many things.
- I met Ronny at a party a few weeks ago. We ‘ve been hanging out since. She asked if I wanted to go this this dude’s house to watch the game on Sunday, she said he would have some stuff to smoke, maybe more.
- We took an Uber. When we got there is was good, just hanging, drinking, smoking, having a good time. I said something to Maria about maybe hooking up later and her boy Sam got all pissed off and got in my face. I’m not going to let someone disrespect me like that, so I punch him. We started fighting, Ronny got in the way. I thought she as swinging on me also and stated hitting her. Then Sam stabbed me. I got my gun from the backpack. Sam backed away, grabbed his phone, and I shot him. It was self-defense. I don’t remember what he said.
- I wasn’t going to get caught so we cleaned up the place. I needed the girls to help and they agreed. We went to Walmart and bought some supplies for cleaning. I don’t remember what we bought.
- Maria paid for it. We rolled him up in the plastic and then the sheet, took him out to the trunk and came back to clean up the blood. I poured the bleach on the blood. We heard the cops in the area, so we left quickly. We drove around until we went to the desert. We dumped him off the side of the road somewhere. I left the car at the QT and got out of the area. Went back to my place and forgot everything that happened.
- Both girls were there with me. They came up with the plan. They told me to dump the body because they were scared.
- I gave the gun to my friend, Charlie.
- I threw the bag into the dumpster at the QT.



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### **Witness Statement- Veronica (Suspect 3)**

- Goes by Ronny
- Works as a nail tech assistant at Jade's Hair and Nails
- Dyes her hair red every three weeks, sometimes it is blue. She uses BeautyMe products
- I met Maria from the streets, just hanging out. And Derek at a party a few weeks ago.
- He was cool and kept buying me drinks and drugs. Maria told me about this guy who wanted to hang out at his place for some game. She said bring "D" (Derek). We took an Uber over there on Monday.
- When we got there, it was cool. We were drinking, smoking and having a good time. Sam was into the game because of some bet. I saw D hanging around Maria a lot, but I didn't care because he wasn't my boyfriend. He kept trying to get with her, but she would shoot him down. Not sure what happened but D and Sam started fighting. I yelled at them to stop but they didn't. I tried to get in between them to break it up, but D hit me over and over again.
- When it stopped, I finally got up and saw a knife in his arm and he was yelling at Sam. He grabbed his backpack and got a gun. He pointed it at Sam. Sam was backing up and telling him to calm down and they could talk about it. D then just shot him from across the room. We all screamed and just stood there. I went to get my phone to call the police, but D pointed the gun at me and said not to move and put the phone down.
- He said we needed to clean up the place or we would all go to jail for life. We went to Walmart to get something to hide the shooting. We got some plastic sheets, towels, and bleach. He gave Maria the card to paid. I assumed it was his, but I think it was Sam's.
- It was a dark SUV; I don't know what kind.
- We used the self-checkout, so we didn't talk to anyone.

- We went back to the apartment and rolled the body in the plastic then regular sheet. He made get some tape so he could tape it closed. We all carried it to Sam's trunk. We went back to clean the floor.
- It was gross, he poured bleach everywhere and we just wiped the floor until it was clean. He said he saw this on TV, and it would kill any DNA. When we were done, we put everything in a black garbage bag and put it inside the car. The police were driving around the complex, but they never stopped us, so we left before they came back.
- We drove somewhere way outside the city and dumped Sam's body. He drove us to the QT on Filigree St, told us to get out and if we said anything to anyone, he would kill us. Me and Maria just walked away. I saw him carry the bag of towels behind the QT.
- Some guy we met drove us to Maria's house and started crying and fell asleep. I stayed at Maria's for a day or so.
- Sometime on Wednesday I went back to my house. I've been scared ever since that he was going to kill us, so I haven't left my place since.

### **Extra Info**

- No one at Walmart recognized any of the three suspects
- Could not find anyone from QT who could recognize the three suspects.
- Uber confirms rides.

## **2024 CSI Arizona State Competition** **Case Solution**

Maria Torres

H/F 5'5" 135 lbs.

6/23/2000, 23 years old

Tattoos on shoulders

Derek Hightower

11/25/1994, 29 years old

I/M 6'1" 200 lbs.

Right/left sleeve tattoos

Veronica Ward

9/15/2002, 21 years old

B/F 5'7" 145 lbs.

Tattoos on hands/ankles

Maria and Veronica know Sam from prior parties. They came over on April 8<sup>th</sup> to watch the Final Four game. They also invited their friend Derek. They all were hanging out smoking drugs and drinking. At some point, Derek made a comment to Maria that Sam took offense to. They got into a physical fight. Veronica tried to break it up but during the fight Veronica was hit in the face by Derek and he began hitting her more for trying to stop him. Sam grabbed a knife and stabbed Derek in the back. Derek went to his backpack, grab his gun and shot Sam in the chest. After everyone calmed down, Derek forced Maria and Veronica to help him dispose of the body. They took Sam's vehicle and wallet, and went to Walmart to buy some bleach, bed sheets, towels, and a plastic tarp. When they returned they wrapped Sam inside the tarp, then wrapped it with sheets and carried

him into the trunk of the Sam's car. They began cleaning the scene with bleach. Veronica stated they need to call the police; Derek pointed the gun at her and told her he would kill her and Maria too if she did. They saw police officers driving around the complex, so they rushed out of the apartment to avoid them. They drove the SUV to the desert and dumped the body. They drove the car back to the city, parked it at a QT and left it there. Derek threw the bag of dirty towels in the dumpster of the QT.

Derek once again threatened Maria and Veronica and just walked away. Maria and Veronica left together but later went their separate ways until contacted by the police.