



Dune Intelligence Division

Case Prize \$99

Level 2 case



DID TRAINING SIMULATION CASE FILE: Case 742-A – The Hawthorne Cabin Disappearance

CASE OVERVIEW

Case 742-A – The Hawthorne Cabin Disappearance

Location: Rural town of Lanesfield, Vermont

Date of Initial Report: March 11, 2025

Type: Missing Person – Suspected Homicide

Primary Investigator: DI Elise Harrow, LPD

Status: UNSOLVED

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

March 8, 2025 (Saturday)

08:45 – Ethan Caulder (32), a freelance journalist, arrives at a rental cabin in Hawthorne Woods, owned by local farmer Henry Meeks.

12:00 – Neighboring hiker Olivia Trent reports hearing a brief, sharp argument near Cabin 6 (Ethan's).

14:30 – Ethan texts his sister, “Something’s off. I think I’m being watched.”

19:00 – Weather turns cold and wet. Minor snow reported overnight.

March 9, 2025 (Sunday)

07:15 – Henry Meeks checks in via phone; no answer. Assumes Ethan left early.

15:00 – Olivia Trent hikes again and finds the cabin door slightly ajar but sees no one inside. She does not enter.

20:20 – Ethan's sister, Claire Caulder, reports him missing after no responses to texts or calls.

March 10, 2025 (Monday)

09:00 – Local police perform a welfare check at the cabin. Ethan is not present.

Coffee still warm on the table. Car is in driveway.

09:45 – Local police notify DID due to suspicious circumstances and Ethan’s known investigative work involving local corruption.

PRIMARY CRIME SCENE: HAWTHORNE CABIN 6

Location: Isolated wooden cabin, 1.2 miles from the main road. No nearby cabins within 400 yards.

Simple Scene Layout (Textual Description):

Interior: One main room (kitchenette, desk, bed), single bathroom. Rear exit to woods.

Exterior: Muddy ground due to melting snow. Single vehicle (Subaru Forester) parked on gravel path.

Notable Findings:

Coffee mug with fresh lipstick mark (Ethan lived alone).

Desk with notes and open laptop.

Rear door slightly open, lock broken from the inside.

Faint boot prints leading away from the back of the cabin into the woods (unmatched to Ethan's shoes).

PHYSICAL EVIDENCE (COLLECTED)

Item 742-A1 – Coffee Mug with Lipstick

Light mauve lipstick residue. DNA does not match Ethan.

Partial latent print (inconclusive match; degraded).

Item 742-A2 – Handwritten Note on Desk

Reads: "HM is hiding something. Town archives missing records from '93. Ask M."

Written in Ethan's handwriting.

Item 742-A3 – Muddy Boot Print Cast

Size 10 men's hiking boot, tread pattern irregular, likely worn.

Comparison pending.

WITNESS STATEMENTS

Olivia Trent (29) – Local Hiker:

"I walk past Cabin 6 most weekends. I heard a man shouting angrily on Saturday. Couldn't hear what was said. I didn't see anyone come or go. On Sunday, the door was ajar, but I figured he stepped out."

Henry Meeks (65) – Property Owner:

"Ethan said he was researching the town's old civil disputes. Odd fella, polite though. Said he might be in and out. I called Sunday morning, but no answer."

Claire Caulder (34) – Sister:

"He'd been paranoid lately. Said he found something big in Lanesfield, something about land grabs in the '90s. He didn't trust anyone local."

POLICE REPORT EXCERPT

Lanesfield Police Department — Officer L. Grayson

Report ID: #302-742

Filed: March 10, 2025

Arrived at Hawthorne Cabin 6 at 09:04 AM. Vehicle present. Front door closed, rear door open. No forced entry at front. Cabin appeared recently used. Coffee in mug still warm, laptop active, showing last document opened at 14:12 on March 8.

No signs of struggle inside. Found partial boot tracks leading northwest into forest; faded due to snow melt. No blood or immediate signs of violence.

Referred to DID due to Ethan Caulder's occupation and history of sensitive investigations.

LEGAL/PSYCHIATRIC DOCUMENT

Document Title: Therapist's Letter of Concern Regarding Patient Ethan Caulder

Source: Dr. Melinda Rho, Clinical Psychologist

Dated: February 27, 2025

Ethan has exhibited heightened paranoia in recent sessions, citing “surveillance” and alleging that certain Lanesfield residents are attempting to sabotage him. While articulate and grounded in other aspects, he appears fixated on the notion of systemic corruption and believes his life is in danger.

I recommend temporary suspension of fieldwork and further psychiatric evaluation. He refused medication.

RED HERRING CLUE

Open Browser Tab on Laptop:

“Hiking Trails with Dangerous Wildlife in Vermont”

Search was likely unrelated. There is no evidence of animal activity. No claw marks or blood. Could suggest Ethan fled into woods, but it contradicts the rest of the scene.

ADDITIONAL PERSONS OF INTEREST

Martha Layton (43) – Former Clerk at Town Records Office

Fired in 2023. Known to have corresponded with Ethan via email about “missing documents.” Recently refused further contact.

Denies involvement. Says she was “scared off.”

Deputy Kyle Reaves (38) – Local Law Enforcement

Ethan reportedly suspected Reaves of involvement in land disputes in the 1990s.

Reaves has no alibi for the afternoon of March 8. Says he was “at home alone.”

Henry Meeks (65) – Landowner

Owned land since 1989. Refused to sell to town in 1993 under contested deal.

Known to have hostile stance toward outside media.