

# Dan's Letter™

“Please...let me introduce you to my mind...one article at a time.”



## FROM THE DESK OF DAN ANDERSON

### Perfectionism: Fear in a Fancy Suit

Perfectionism is the tuxedo your fear wears to the party. Looks classy. Eats all the snacks. Leaves you exhausted.

The perfectionist says, “I’ll start when it’s right.” Translation: never. Meanwhile, ordinary folks with crooked staplers and imperfect hair are out there building businesses, losing weight, writing books, and occasionally burning dinner.

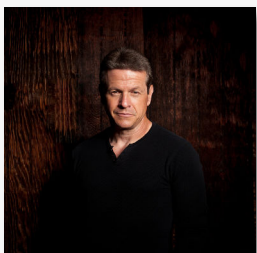
Want improvement? Fine. Want flawless? That’s the trap.

Set a sane standard. Do the thing. Ship the thing. Then fix the thing. Life rewards motion, not polishing the cannonball while the ship sinks.

And here’s the secret: people don’t need you perfect. They need you present, useful, kind, and occasionally capable of laughing when your grand plan trips over the dog.

Progress pays. Perfection sends invoices, then hides your checkbook. Put down the magnifier. Pick up the momentum today.

- Dan A.



### TAKE A BREAK!

## LONG WEEKEND AHEAD? HOW TO PLAN A FUN LAST-MINUTE ROAD TRIP



### A long weekend is a dangerous thing.

Give the average person one extra day off and suddenly he believes he must plan a military-grade expedition, complete with color-coded spreadsheets, seven hotel tabs open, and one family argument about “leaving early.” Nonsense.

You do not need a passport, a safari hat, or the patience of a saint. You need a tank of gas, a loose plan, and the willingness to see what is already sitting within striking distance of your driveway.

First rule: keep the trip short enough that it does not become a second job. A day trip or one-night escape can work wonders. You get the thrill of leaving town without returning home exhausted, sunburned, broke, and wondering why vacation feels like punishment with souvenirs.

Pick someplace one to three hours away. That is the sweet spot. Far enough to feel different. Close enough that nobody has to sleep in the car while Dad insists, “We’re making good time,” despite clear evidence that nobody is.

Now, play tourist in your own backyard.

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Every state has odd little treasures hiding in plain sight: parks, historic towns, lakes, festivals, roadside attractions, small museums, food joints, scenic overlooks, and the occasional giant fiberglass animal begging to be photographed. Search for attractions near you, state parks, weekend events, or places locals recommend but never visit because “we can go anytime.”

You know when people go? Never. So go now.

**Before leaving, check hours, admission fees, parking, weather, and nearby food options.** This tiny bit of homework prevents the classic vacation disaster: arriving at a locked gate with hungry passengers and one granola bar from 2019.

**Also, avoid obvious crowd magnets when possible.** The most famous attraction in town may come with a two-hour line, a \$12 lemonade, and children melting down like ice cream on blacktop. Lesser-known places often deliver more charm and fewer elbows.

**Be flexible about lodging.** Hotels are fine, but last-minute weekends can turn available rooms into rare artifacts. Look at small inns, cabins, rentals, or towns slightly outside the main attraction. Sometimes the better memory is not staying in the “hot spot,” but

finding the quiet little place where breakfast is good and nobody charges extra for breathing.

Pack like a sensible adult, not like you are fleeing the country.

**Bring layers, rain gear, sunscreen, bug spray, chargers, basic toiletries, and comfortable shoes.**

Add snacks and drinks unless your financial plan includes paying highway robbery prices for chips and bottled water. Sandwiches, fruit, trail mix, and a cooler can save money, time, and possibly a marriage.

**Then check the car.**

Tires, oil, brakes, battery. Boring? Yes. Important? Also yes. The only thing less romantic than a roadside breakdown is discovering your spare tire is flatter than last year’s resolutions. Keep jumper cables, a first-aid kit, and a charged phone handy.

**Take pictures.** Laugh when plans change. Pull over for the weird sign. Try the local pie. Let the weekend breathe.

The best getaway may not be across the ocean. It may be two hours away, right around the corner, waiting for you to stop making excuses *and start the engine.*

## Spring Energy Tune-Up

Spring is here, which means your body is supposed to feel renewed, refreshed, and ready to conquer the world. Instead, many folks feel like a phone at 3% battery searching for a charger.

Start with sleep. Get 7–8 hours and keep a steady bedtime. Your body loves routine, even if your rebellious inner teenager does not.

Next, move. A daily walk in the sunshine can reset your clock, lift your mood, and remind your legs they are not decorative accessories.

Dehydration makes you tired, cranky, and dangerously close to blaming innocent coworkers. Trade soda for water or herbal tea.



Eat real spring food: fruits, vegetables, protein, healthy fats, and complex carbs. Limit processed mystery snacks from shiny bags.

Finally, breathe. Meditate, stretch, or take five deep breaths before answering email.

Small wins add up. Stack enough, and spring energy shows up.

Finally, breathe. Meditate, stretch, or take five deep breaths before answering email.

Small wins create momentum. Stack enough, and spring energy shows up.

Implement these strategies and feel it!

# The Scarlet Veil

## A Victor Sage Mystery

by Dan Anderson



[Listen to the narrated version Chapter 8](#)

### Chapter 8 The Room Behind the Curtain

The feeling of being observed did not leave when the curtain settled. It clung to the Royal Lyceum like a scent trapped in velvet and timber. Victor Sage stood at the edge of the stage, looking into the darkened auditorium, while Inspector Sterling watched him with the guarded patience of a man who disliked silence but had begun to respect its use.

“The audience may not have lost interest,” Sterling said, “but the body was not found in the audience, nor upon this stage.”

Sage turned from the empty rows. “Quite so. And that is why we have been looking at too much paint and velvet.”

Sterling’s brow tightened. “You called the stage ideal.”

“For directing attention,” Sage replied. “Not necessarily for committing murder. A theatre teaches the eye obedience. Even an investigator may begin by looking where the theatre wishes him to look.”

They left the stage and crossed into the dressing corridor, where the lamps were lower and the air colder. Sage stopped before Helena Davenport’s dressing room.

“I asked Miss Simmons to meet me here this evening,” he said. “Before I returned, I left instruction at Montague Street that she should come when the house was empty and the corridor undisturbed.”

Sterling glanced toward the side entrance. “You expected to need her?”

“I expected to need order,” Sage said. “Clara remembers what men are pleased to forget.”

The side door opened several minutes later, and Clara Simmons entered carrying a small leather case and a notebook beneath her arm. Her coat was buttoned high against the damp night, her gloves already removed and folded in one hand. She took in Sterling, Sage, the dressing corridor, and the closed door in a single glance.

“You chose the hour well,” Clara said. “No one outside seems to know whether the theatre is closed, cursed, or merely ashamed.”

“Then we may rely on all three for privacy,” Sage answered. “Come. We are finished with the stage for the present.”

Helena’s dressing room received them with the stale intimacy of a room abandoned too quickly. The vanity still held its brushes, powder pots, pins, and cut-glass bottles. The chair remained angled away from the table, as though Helena had risen in haste. The cracked mirror divided every object into a true half and a distorted one.

Sage closed the door behind them. “We begin with what is certain. Helena sat here. She received the letter. She read the line. She placed the veil upon herself, or had it placed near enough to be worn. She rose. She saw something in the mirror. She never reached the stage alive.”

Sterling moved nearer the vanity. “The poison was on the veil. That much we know.”

“Yes,” Sage said. “But poison explains death. It does not explain conduct. The mirror explains conduct.”

Clara studied the crack without touching the glass. “The break begins high,” she said. “Not where a falling body would strike if she collapsed beside the table.”

Sterling leaned in. “She could have thrown out her arm.”

“Possibly,” Clara said, though her tone did not favor it. “But the force is forward and slightly right. The deepest impact is at standing height, not falling height. Someone struck this mirror while upright, or nearly so.”

Sage nodded. “Helena did not merely suffer. She reacted. She saw something in the glass, turned sharply, and struck the mirror either in alarm or in an attempt to steady herself. The mirror was not damaged by death. It was damaged by recognition.”

Sterling looked from the mirror to the door. “Recognition of whom?”

“That is the room’s first question,” Sage said. “Not who wished her dead, but who could enter so near to curtain and cause her not to scream at once.”

Clara turned from the mirror and surveyed the vanity. “Her brush lies parallel to the table edge. Powder box closed. Pins gathered. No dropped rouge, no overturned perfume. This room is too composed except where it is damaged.”

“Meaning?” Sterling asked.

“Meaning someone tidied after she fell,” Clara replied. “Not fully. Not expertly. Enough to make the room appear less interrupted than it was.”

Sage’s eyes warmed with approval. “A murderer in haste removes the weapon. A person with another purpose removes context.”

“The letter,” Clara said.

Sage indicated the cleared place beside the lamp. “Margot Blayne saw the cream envelope here before Helena went on. Penfield confirmed the line existed in his manuscript and that Helena feared its repetition. Yet Sir Alistair made no mention of recovering the letter. Pike made no mention of it. The envelope existed, and Helena had time to read it.”

Sterling's mouth tightened. "Then someone took it after the death."

"Yes," Sage said. "The question is whether that person also killed her, or whether this room had two visitors—one before death and one after."

The possibility entered the room like a fourth presence. Someone could have crossed three steps to the vanity, taken the letter, stripped away the veil, and left before panic became official.

Clara knelt near the floor where the pearl earring had been found. "Where exactly did Pike say the earring lay?"

"Beside the vanity leg," Sage answered. "Near your left hand."

Clara studied the floorboards. "If it had been torn from her ear during a struggle, it would likely have rolled. If it fell while she clutched at the veil, it might drop straight. Did anyone say whether the clasp was broken?"

"No," Sterling said. "It was intact when logged."

"Then it was removed from the ear, not torn," Clara said. "Either Helena took it off herself, which seems unlikely, or someone handled her after death."

Sage's gaze sharpened. "And handled her carefully enough to remove an earring, yet carelessly enough to leave one behind."

Sterling exhaled through his nose. "We are no longer looking at simple removal of the murder weapon."

"No," Sage said. "We are looking at selection. The veil gone. The letter gone. One earring left. The mirror broken. The room composed. Each act says something different, and therefore may not belong to the same hand."

Clara moved back to the vanity and lowered her eyes to the carved lip beneath the table's edge. "Bring the lamp closer."

Sage lifted the lamp and held it low. Its glow swept across dust, a fallen hairpin, and a narrow ridge where polish had darkened with age. Clara leaned in and pointed.

"There."

Sage bent close with a small lens and used folded paper to lift what seemed at first to be a fleck of dried color. It clung to the wood before giving way. Under the light, it showed a dull red shine.

"Wax," Sterling said.

"Sealing wax," Sage corrected. "Red. Pressed while warm, then scraped or broken away."

Clara looked at the tiny fragment on the paper. "From the envelope."

Sage turned it with the edge of his lens. The piece was too small to show the whole impression, yet a curved line remained visible, like the lid of an eye. Another trace curved beside it, like ivy or a serpent disappearing into red.

Sterling saw it. "The seal."

"The serpent's eye," Sage said quietly.

The words altered the room. The symbol had appeared first upon the veil, then upon the envelope, and now here, reduced to a broken fragment beneath the vanity, as though the room had kept one small truth from being carried away with the rest.

"This tells us two things," Sage said. "First, the letter was opened here. Second, whoever took it after her death did so hurriedly enough to leave part of the seal behind."

Sterling's expression hardened. "Then the person who took the letter stood where we stand after Helena was dead."

"Yes," Sage replied. "And close enough to know precisely what must vanish."

Clara's gaze returned to the mirror. "The phrase Penfield removed from his manuscript warned that the light would find her when the curtain fell. If those same words were in the letter, then Helena died before that public moment could arrive."

"You are assuming the letter repeated Penfield's line," Sterling said.

Sage looked into the cracked mirror, where the three of them appeared in broken planes. He could almost see Helena there again, reading the sentence, laughing because she wished to appear unafraid, then going still because the words had found the place in her memory where fear already lived.

"No, Inspector," Sage said after a pause. "We are testing whether the missing letter, the removed line, and the broken seal belong to the same hand. At present, they are walking too closely together to be strangers."

Sterling turned toward him. "By the killer?"

"By someone who could not permit the curtain to fall as planned," Sage answered. "Someone who knew that if Helena reached her appointed moment, the light would not merely find her. It would find another."

Clara closed her notebook slowly. "Then Helena was preparing to expose someone."

"Yes," Sage said. "And the murder stopped the exposure before it reached the stage."

A faint sound came from the corridor beyond the door. It was not clearly a footstep. More like the soft withdrawal of weight from an old floorboard. Sterling crossed the room and opened the door with a hard pull. The corridor lay empty beneath the dim lamps.

Sage stepped into the passage and looked toward the side entrance, then toward the stair that led upward into the backstage passages. He did not hurry. He only listened. Somewhere above them, a rope creaked once against a pulley and fell still.

Clara stood in Helena's doorway, the broken mirror behind her catching the lamp glow in thin shards. "Someone heard us."

Sage looked back at the vanity, the cracked glass, and the place where the red wax had hidden

under the wood.

“Yes,” he said. “And now they know we found the part of the letter they failed to remove.”

The Lyceum remained silent around them, but it was no longer the silence of an empty building. It was the silence of a held breath.

**To be continued...**

## Victor Sage's Case Notes

The murder no longer rests only upon the missing veil. In Helena Davenport's dressing room, Sage has found something more dangerous than poison: a room quietly corrected after death.

The cracked mirror was not the mark of a fall. It was the mark of recognition. Helena saw someone, or something, before the poison overcame her.

The missing letter matters just as much as the missing veil. Someone removed it after Helena died, but failed to erase every trace. A fragment of red sealing wax remained beneath the vanity, bearing part of the serpent's eye.

The question now is no longer only who killed Helena Davenport.

It is who feared what she intended to bring into the light.


Next month: Sage follows the serpent's eye beyond the dressing room—and into a circle of influence where reputation is guarded more fiercely than life.

Missed a chapter? - [Tap here for the Kindle version and audiobook.](#)

### Previously in the Victor Sage Mysteries

Before *The Scarlet Veil*, Victor Sage uncovered the truth behind the stolen Hawthorne Emerald Brooch in *Gems of Deception*—a case that led from glittering ballrooms to smoldering ruins, where every clue carried a cost.

If you missed the beginning of Sage's investigations, you can catch up

now:  Find both formats here → [Get Gems of Deception](#)





## PLAYBOOK >

Business owners **drag their product or service into the room way too early**. They kick the door open with features, options, packages, colors, buttons, settings, guarantees, warranties, and that special bonus nobody asked for and nobody will remember by Tuesday. It is the business version of your uncle cornering you after a family reunion dinner with 417 vacation photos. He is excited. You are scanning the room for pie, coffee, or a fake medical emergency.

**The customer does not care yet.** That is the part most advertising misses. The owner is excited because he built the service, paid for the website, survived the printer, argued with a designer named Tyler about font size, and finally got the logo centered after only eleven rounds of revisions. To him, the offer is obvious. To the customer, it is just another thing being waved in his face while he is busy thinking about lunch, bills, errands, and why his phone battery is always at 12%.

**The money is made before the product ever walks onstage.** First, you have to **make the problem visible**. Not gently. Not politely. Not with some brochure-approved sentence like, We are committed to excellence. That phrase should be taken behind the barn and retired with dignity. You make the buyer feel the irritation, embarrassment, waste, delay, danger, or missed opportunity he has been tolerating like unpaid parking tickets stuffed in the glove compartment of his life.

That is what sharp advertising does. **It does not begin with what you sell.** It begins with what the customer is already putting up with, explaining away, delaying, ignoring, or pretending is not costing him money. Bad breath was once just bad breath until smart advertising



## Sell the Problem Before You Sell the Product

turned it into social exile. A cup-at-a-time coffee machine was not demanded by civilization until someone made the old coffee pot feel clumsy, wasteful, and slightly caveman-ish. **The product became valuable only after the problem became real.**

That is the move most businesses miss. They describe the thing. They list the thing. They brag about the thing. Then they wonder why nobody rushes over with a credit card clenched between their teeth. **The customer is not buying the thing.** He is buying **escape from the problem, relief from the irritation, status after the embarrassment, speed after the delay, control after the mess, or safety after the risk.**

Your job is to point at the problem so clearly that the reader quietly thinks, **I have been living with that longer than I should have.** Once that little mental bruise gets pressed, your offer finally has work to do. Until then, your ad is just another lonely sales message standing in a crowd of lonely sales messages, holding a balloon, frowning and hoping someone notices.

So before you write another ad, stop staring lovingly at your own service like it just won a blue ribbon at the county fair. Ask the useful, dangerous question: **what must my customer realize before my offer matters?**

**That question separates money-making messages from beige wallpaper.** Until the problem is felt, your offer is just another thing for sale. **Once the problem is felt, your offer becomes the obvious next move.**

For more business-building lessons like this, read *Mobility Marketer Insider*™ at [mobilitymarketer.com](http://mobilitymarketer.com).

# What They Didn't Tell You

Every year, troubled people drag themselves into mental health facilities with the same desperate hope most of us bring to the DMV: Maybe somebody here can help me before I completely lose it.

In May of 1889, a frightened 36-year-old man sat across from Dr. Pyron and described a personal horror show.

He heard noises no one else heard. Real sounds were sometimes unbearable, then suddenly hard to hear at all. He suffered dizzy spells so violent they brought nausea and vomiting. The world spun like a cheap carnival ride operated by a lunatic.

Then, mysteriously, the symptoms would vanish for months.

Then return worse.

Dr. Pyron, doing what doctors did before Google made every patient a part-time neurosurgeon, decided the man had epilepsy. Into the asylum he went.

Problem was, eight years earlier, Dr. Charcot had written about something called Meniere's disease. It causes ringing, buzzing, hearing loss, sound sensitivity, and vertigo. In extreme cases, the noise can become so maddening a person may mutilate his own ears trying to stop it.

Yes. Their ears.

Today, Meniere's can often be treated or managed. Back then, medical news traveled slower than a committee decision. So this man was labeled mentally ill when he may have had a curable condition.

The attacks continued. The despair deepened. A year later, he took his own life.

And the world lost a genius. His name was *Vincent van Gogh*.

Maybe you thought he cut off his ear because he was "crazy." That's the convenient story. The tidy one.

But tidy stories are often wrong.

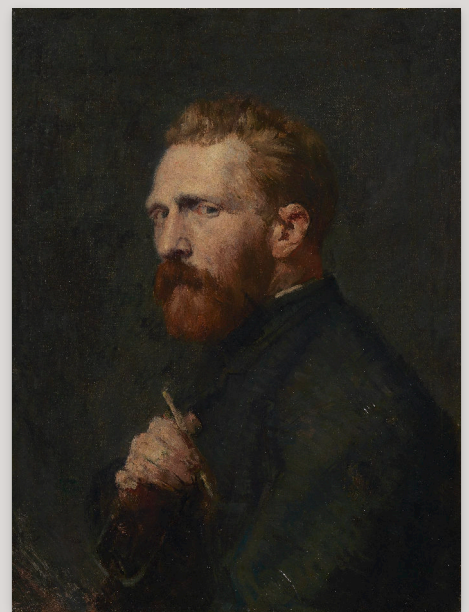
Maybe the real killer was misdiagnosis. Maybe it was pain nobody understood. Maybe it was the tragedy of information arriving too late.

Lesson?

Before you write someone off, make sure you're not mistaking suffering for insanity.

The world may be more beautiful when we take the time to understand people first.

**Now you know what they didn't tell you.**



# DETAILING MASTERY



SCAN OR TAP BELOW FOR VIDEO



TAP  
HERE

## How to Restore Chrome Bumpers to a Mirror Shine Fast and Easy

Chrome used to shine like a mirror, then life happened. Road grime, neglect, and time turned that proud bumper into something that looks like it lost a bar fight. Most people accept it. They shrug, drive on, and pretend dull metal is normal. It is not normal. It is a slow surrender.

Then something changes. The surface wakes up. The haze pulls back. Reflections return like a forgotten memory snapping into focus. A tired truck suddenly carries itself with a little more attitude. Not new, not fake, just restored to what it always had underneath.

That quiet transformation is where the real satisfaction lives.

Scan or tap the QR code for the video.



# TAKE A BREAK!



## (No Churn) Apple Cinnamon Ice Cream

### Ingredients

- 2-3 medium apples, peeled, cored and cubed
- 2 Tbsp unsalted butter
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1/4 cup brown sugar
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 2 cups heavy cream
- 1 can sweetened condensed milk (14 oz)

### Instructions

In a medium saucepan, cook the apples, butter, cinnamon and brown sugar over medium low heat. Cook for 8-10 minutes, or until the apples are softened. Allow to cool.

Once the apples are cooled, mix in the vanilla. In the bowl of a stand mixer fitted with a whisk attachment, whip the heavy cream until stiff peaks form. Slowly fold in the apple mixture and the sweetened condensed milk.

Pour into an airtight container and allow to harden in the freezer for around 8 hours.

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TAP  
HERE FOR INTERACTIVE PUZZLE

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### SOLUTION

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3	5	9	2	6	8	4	7	1
4	7	2	3	1	5	6	9	8
8	1	6	4	9	7	5	3	2



## How NYC's Best Fried Chicken Sandwich is Made



Check out  
Dan's Blog™



There is a certain confidence in a sandwich that knows exactly what it is, and this one arrives unapologetic, all crisp edges and tender center, built from dark meat that yields without effort, wrapped in a crust that shatters just enough to remind you it was earned; a swipe of rich mayo, a flash of heat from chili oil, and the quiet snap of pickles bring balance, while a toasted brioche bun holds the whole affair. Delivering comfort, texture, and indulgence in a single, deliberate bite that lingers long after the last crumb disappears.