

# Dan's Letter™

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



FROM THE DESK OF  
**DAN ANDERSON**

## The Power of Uncertainty

Most people treat uncertainty like an uninvited relative who shows up for dinner and refuses to leave. We want clear answers, detailed plans, and guarantees that everything will work out exactly as expected.

Unfortunately, life has never been very cooperative.

The truth is, the biggest changes often happen in the space between where you've been and where you're going. It's the uncomfortable season where careers shift, relationships grow, dreams take shape, and new opportunities quietly appear.

While uncertainty feels unsettling, it also forces you to become more resourceful, flexible, and resilient than you ever thought possible.

Instead of asking, Why is this happening to me?, try asking, What is this preparing me for?

Life rarely hands you a map. More often, it simply opens one door, closes another, and waits to see whether you'll have the courage to keep walking.

- Dan A.



Summer has a way of turning ordinary afternoons into neighborhood events. Someone fires up the grill, kids race across the yard, lawn chairs mysteriously multiply, and before long everyone is standing around the cooler asking the same question.

"Got anything besides water?"

## Enter the dirty soda bar.

Despite the suspicious name, there's nothing dirty about it. It's simply an ordinary soft drink dressed up with flavored syrups, cream, fruit, and creative toppings until it becomes something worthy of its own fan club. Think of it as giving your favorite soda a promotion.

The beauty of a dirty soda bar is that everyone becomes the bartender. Instead of asking guests what they'd like to drink, let them build it themselves. Half the fun comes from experimenting. The other half comes from watching Uncle Bob accidentally invent a beverage that tastes like melted birthday candles and insisting everyone take a sip.

Start with a variety of sodas. Cola is the dependable old friend who always shows up on time. Lemon-lime soda adds a crisp, refreshing

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base. Orange soda brings a little sunshine to the party, while root beer is practically begging to meet vanilla cream. The more choices you provide, the more creative your guests become.

### Next comes the fun part—the mix-ins.

Flavored syrups transform an ordinary soda into something completely different. Vanilla, raspberry, peach, coconut, mango, cherry, and lime are crowd favorites. Set each bottle out with a pump dispenser and suddenly your patio starts looking like the hottest soda shop in town instead of your backyard.

Now it's time for the ingredient that gives dirty sodas their famous personality: cream.

Half-and-half is the classic choice, but flavored coffee creamers open an entirely new world of possibilities. Vanilla, caramel, hazelnut, and coconut all create rich, dessert-like drinks. For guests avoiding dairy, keep oat milk, almond milk, or coconut milk nearby so nobody gets left out of the fun.

Of course, no masterpiece is complete without garnish.

Maraschino cherries are almost mandatory. Add fresh strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, orange slices,

lime wedges, or blackberries for color and flavor. If you're feeling adventurous, toss in gummy bears, colorful candy, or even a sprig of fresh mint. Suddenly everyone is taking pictures of their drinks before taking a sip. Social media has trained us well.

**Presentation matters, too.** Skip the flimsy plastic cups that collapse every time someone grabs them too hard. Clear tumblers let everyone admire the swirling layers of soda and cream while colorful paper straws instantly make the whole setup feel more festive.

If guests seem overwhelmed by all the choices, **create a simple menu with a few signature combinations.** A cola with coconut syrup, fresh lime, and cream never disappoints. Orange soda mixed with vanilla syrup and cream tastes remarkably like a creamsicle. Root beer with hazelnut syrup and cream becomes dessert in a glass. Even a lemon-lime soda paired with grenadine, vanilla creamer, and cherries gives an old favorite an entirely new personality.

The best backyard parties aren't always the most expensive. They're the ones that give people something unexpected to talk about. A dirty soda bar is simple to assemble, fun to customize, and entertaining enough that your guests may spend more time mixing drinks than hovering around the grill.

## How Summer Weather Affects Your Wellbeing

Summer has a way of convincing people that life is better with sunshine, flip-flops, and an excuse to eat watermelon for lunch. There is actually some truth behind the feeling. Longer days increase your body's production of vitamin D, while sunshine helps boost serotonin, the chemical that can improve mood, sharpen focus, and make Monday seem slightly less offensive.

Warm weather also lures people outside instead of keeping them glued to the couch. A walk around the neighborhood, a bike ride, or a backyard barbecue gets the body moving and creates more opportunities to spend time with



family and friends. Exercise and laughter are both excellent medicine, and summer delivers plenty of chances for both.

Of course, summer can also remind you that humans are not designed to function like baked potatoes. Too much heat can leave you dehydrated, exhausted, and wondering why your car seat suddenly feels like a frying pan. Drinking plenty of water, wearing sunscreen, and taking breaks in the shade can prevent the season from becoming an endurance contest.

Enjoy the sunshine, stay hydrated, and respect the afternoon heat. Summer rewards those who know when to soak up the rays and when to let the air conditioner win a round.

# The Scarlet Veil

## A Victor Sage Mystery

by Dan Anderson

 [Listen to the narrated version Chapter 10](#)

### Chapter 10 The Final Cue

Victor Sage did not pursue the sound above the wardrobe room.

Inspector Sterling wished to. His hand was already on the door, his jaw set in that official shape which suggested that a corridor, once suspected, ought to surrender itself at once. But Sage only looked upward, listening until the last vibration in the boards had withdrawn into the old timber of the Lyceum.

“No,” Sage said quietly. “A man who walks above us after hearing his own danger discussed has already chosen his exit. We should learn what he feared before we learn where he ran.”

Sterling turned back. “You are becoming very fond of letting people escape, Mr. Sage.”

“Only the ones who lead me somewhere by doing so.”

Beatrice Lorrimer stood near the worktable, one hand resting beside the cream invitation she had drawn from its hiding place. Her face, which had been sharp with defiance a few minutes earlier, had settled into something closer to dread. The serpent’s eye pressed into the card seemed to watch them all without the vulgarity of movement.

Sterling folded the invitation into his notebook. “Mrs. Lorrimer comes with me. I want her statement taken while she still remembers the distinction between caution and concealment.”

Beatrice gave him a dry look. “I remember both, Inspector. It is men who confuse them.”

Sage allowed the faintest smile. “You will forgive me if I remain behind.”

“I had assumed you would,” Sterling said. “Try not to rearrange the theatre before I return.”

“I should not dream of it. The theatre appears to have rearranged itself already.”

Sterling left with Beatrice through the wardrobe passage. Their footsteps faded along the stone corridor below the stage. Only then did Clara Simmons close the door and turn toward Sage. She did not ask the question at once. Clara had the rare intelligence to let silence show its own outline.

“You did not want him here for the next part,” she said.

“No,” Sage replied. “The next part belongs to Helena Davenport.”

Clara glanced toward the ceiling. "And to whoever was above us."

"Likely. But not first."

They left the wardrobe room and climbed toward the stage by the narrow stair used by dressers and stagehands. The Lyceum was nearly dark, though daylight had entered weakly through the high windows in the audience chamber. Without music, without conversation, without the murmur of fashionable expectation, the theatre looked less abandoned than exposed. Its painted garden stood waiting beneath canvas shadows: the false marble bench, the hollow fountain, the arch smothered in ivy that curled and twisted in green abundance.

Sage stopped at the edge of the stage.

"When we stood here before," he said, "the garden seemed overworked. Too much ivy. Too much suggestion. Too much effort in a place where the audience was meant to see only romance."

"You thought it was decoration," Clara said.

"I thought it was concealment pretending to be decoration. I was nearer the mark than I knew."

They crossed the stage together. Sage moved slowly, not touching the scenery at first, but studying the arch as a surveyor might study a fault line. The ivy had been painted with skill enough to pass beneath theatrical light. Leaf overlapped leaf, green shadow folding into darker green, every curl apparently decorative. There was no serpent now, no eye, no hidden menace. Only a garden handsome enough to be false.

"Fetch the cue book," Sage said.

Clara went to the prompt corner beside the left wing. The book lay upon a slanted desk, its pages marked with slips of paper, pencilled timing notes, and the cramped handwriting of men who measured illusion by seconds. She opened it carefully and turned to the final act.

"Curtain call," she read. "Warm front. Garden held. Company bow. Then—"

Her voice stopped.

Sage looked back.

Sage took the cue book from her and read the line himself. "The letter was not merely a threat. It was an answer."

Clara bent closer to the page. "There is an additional cue written beneath it. The ink is darker."

"Read it."

"Final bow: hold house dark. Lower front amber. Strike white special through green glass upon garden arch. Three counts."

Sage's eyes moved from the book to the painted ivy.

"Through green glass," he murmured.

"It is written in a different hand," Clara said. "Not the same as the other cues."

“Stage managers write as men who have no time to be admired. That line was written by someone who wished even an instruction to have posture.”

Clara looked at him. “Then someone altered the ending.”

“Or Helena caused it to be altered.”

“The letter,” Clara said. “When the curtain falls, the light will find you.”

Sage took the cue book from her and read the line himself. “The letter was not merely a threat. It was an answer.”

“To Helena’s plan?”

“To enough of it.”

Clara watched him carefully. “They knew she meant to do something at the final curtain.”

“Yes.”

“But not what.”

“That remains to be seen.”

Sage crossed to the lighting stand near the wing where colored glass filters had been set in a shallow rack. Most were ordinary: amber, blue, rose, pale lavender. The green one was darker, almost smoky at its center, its surface faintly clouded by some chemical wash that caught the light unevenly. Sage lifted it with a handkerchief and held it toward the weak daylight.

“Not standard green,” Clara said.

“No. Treated.”

“For effect?”

“For revelation.”

Clara’s brow tightened. “Like Mrs. Lorrimer’s remark about stains appearing under heat?”

“A cousin to it. The theatre is full of such little dishonesties. Pigments that flatter under one light and confess under another. Silk that appears pure until warmth betrays it. Paint that passes for ivy until the correct glass teaches it another language.”

Together they adjusted the small work lamp. Sage fitted the green glass before it, lowered the front amber with the cautious patience of a man who respected machinery he did not entirely trust, and angled the beam toward the painted arch.

At first, nothing happened.

The light struck the ivy and made it merely darker. The arch seemed to deepen into itself. Clara stood beside the prompt desk, holding the cue book open, while Sage shifted the lamp a fraction to the right.

Then the garden changed.

It did not transform theatrically. There was no sudden apparition, no crude monster leaping from paint. That would have been easier to dismiss. Instead, certain leaves darkened while others withdrew. A vine that had seemed to curl harmlessly around the arch narrowed into a long, deliberate body. The painted ivy became a serpent by degrees, as though the thing had always been present and had only been waiting for the correct permission to appear.

Clara drew in a quiet breath. "It was ivy a moment ago."

"No," Sage said. "It was meant to be ivy until the proper light found it."

The serpent's head emerged near the inner curve of the arch, where a cluster of leaves had concealed the shape of a narrow jaw. But it was not the serpent that held Sage. It was the eye.

Small, black, and almost perfectly round, it rested among the painted leaves with a patience that made the rest of the scenery seem suddenly foolish. In ordinary light, it had been a berry, a knot in the vine, an accidental darkness. Under the filtered beam, it became unmistakable.

"The Serpent's Eye," Clara whispered.

Sage did not answer at once. He stepped closer, his own shadow cutting across the stage floor. "Not a sign painted for believers. A sign painted for those who knew where to look, and for one woman who intended to make everyone look."

Clara glanced toward the empty rows of seats. "After the final bow."

"Yes."

"The house would be dark. The audience would still be watching. The light would strike the arch."

"And the garden would betray itself."

Clara turned back to the stage. "Then Helena would open whatever this is."

"If she lived long enough."

The words settled heavily between them.

Sage touched the eye with the end of his walking stick. It did not move. He pressed again, this time with his gloved thumb. Something clicked inside the arch.

Clara closed the cue book and came to him at once. A narrow panel had sprung loose along the curve of the painted ivy, so perfectly fitted that the seam had vanished beneath leaves and brushwork. Sage opened it carefully. Within the arch was a hollow no larger than a glove box.

Inside the hollow lay a packet tied with a strip of scarlet silk.

For a moment neither of them spoke.

The packet was wrapped in cream paper. Its seal had not been broken. The wax was red, impressed with the same eye and ivy that had marked Helena's letter, Beatrice's invitation, and the veil itself. But unlike those earlier traces, this one was whole.

Clara looked at Sage. "She hid it before she died."

“Yes,” he said. “And whoever warned her knew enough to fear the curtain, but not enough to find what waited behind it.”

He lifted the packet and placed it upon the false marble bench. The stage around them seemed to hold still. Carefully, he broke the seal.

Inside were several cream invitation cards, a marked programme from an earlier benefit performance, a narrow folded slip that looked like an account record, and four letters written in the same graceful anonymous hand. Beneath them lay a note in Helena Davenport’s own writing. The first line was steady. The second less so.

Clara read over his shoulder.

*“If I do not speak tonight, let the stage speak for me.”*

Sage’s face did not change, but something in his gaze sharpened.

“She knew,” Clara said.

“She knew enough to be killed for knowing.”

He unfolded one of the letters. The words were polished, courteous, and cold.

*“No career need end in disgrace if its owner remembers who first opened the door.”*

Clara’s expression hardened. “That is not an invitation.”

“No,” Sage said. “It is a hand upon the throat wearing a glove.”

Another card bore only a name, a time, and the words *Admit one*. The marked programme had three seats circled and two names written in the margin. The account slip showed a payment transferred through a theatrical fund that, to an untrained eye, might have appeared charitable. Sage looked at the letters again, then at the cue book, and finally at the garden arch where the serpent’s eye still shone beneath the unnatural green light.

“Eye, tongue, and fang,” he said softly.

Clara looked at him.

“The eye watches,” Sage said. “That much we have seen. It selects the ambitious, the frightened, the indebted, the vain. Then comes the tongue.”

“The letters?”

“The invitations. The warnings. The compliments with a hook inside them. Words that seem to open a door while quietly placing a chain upon the wrist.”

“And the fang?” Clara asked.

Sage’s gaze moved, not to the packet, but toward the unseen dressing room beyond the stage. “Scarlet silk, Miss Simmons. Beautiful enough to be worn near the lips.”

Clara was silent for a moment. Then she said, “Helena meant to expose the eye.”

“Yes. But I begin to suspect the eye was only the part she could see.”

He returned the letters carefully to the packet.

“Then the letter sent to her before she died meant they knew,” Clara said.

“They knew she had set a trap. They did not know where she had placed the teeth.”

A sound came from the darkness beyond the opposite wing.

Not a footstep this time. A breath checked too late.

Sage folded the letters and returned them to the packet. Clara’s hand moved toward the lamp, but Sage raised one finger. The filtered beam still held the garden arch, and the Serpent’s Eye stared black and silent from the painted ivy.

“Show yourself,” Sage said.

The theatre gave no answer.

Then, from somewhere above the stage, a man’s voice whispered, low enough to be almost part of the rigging.

“You should have left it hidden.”

Then the lamp went out...

**To be continued...**

**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.

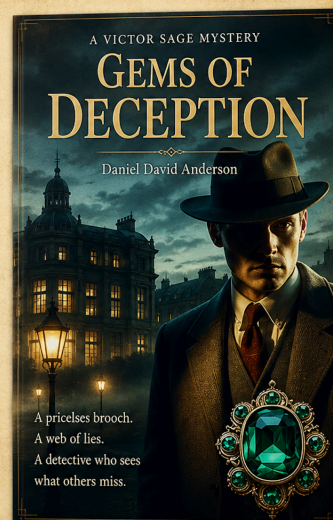
— READ OR LISTEN ONLINE —



**READ THE NOVEL**  
Start Reading Online



**LISTEN TO THE AUDIOBOOK**  
Listen Online





## The Welcome Kit That Makes Customers Know They Hired the Right Company

A strange thing happens after a customer says yes.

The owner relaxes...

Bad move.

The customer may have agreed to hire you, but inside his head there is still a nervous little committee holding an emergency meeting. Did I pick the right company? Will they show up? Will they do what they promised? Will I regret not calling the cheaper guy?

That doubt is dangerous. Leave it alone, and it starts chewing holes in the sale.

This is why every service business should have a **New Customer Welcome Kit**.

Not a boring brochure. Not a receipt. Not a stiff confirmation email written by a robot. A real welcome kit. Something that makes the customer feel smart, safe, important, and quietly impressed before you ever do the work.

**A customer who feels reassured is easier to serve, easier to please, and more likely to refer.**

The sale is not finished when the customer says yes. The sale continues through the waiting period, the appointment, the job, the follow-up, and the next time he thinks about who to call.

Your welcome kit should say four things clearly: You made a good decision. Here is what happens next. Here is what to expect. Here is how to get the best result.

Start with a short thank-you note. Make it sound human. Tell them you appreciate the trust. Then include the appointment details: date, time, service, location, phone number, and any preparation needed.

Then add a short section called What To Expect. Explain how long the work usually takes. Explain what you need from them. Explain payment. Explain what happens after completion.

**The business that explains the process controls the customer's expectations.**

And the business that controls expectations gets fewer complaints, fewer cancellations, and fewer emotional hostage situations over things that could have been explained in advance.

Next, add proof. A few customer comments. A before-and-after photo.

Then plant the referral seed. Tell them that after the service is complete, you would appreciate being introduced to someone else who needs help.

A welcome kit can be emailed, printed, mailed, or handed over in person. Create it once. Use it every time. Improve it as common questions appear.

**A welcome kit turns first-time buyers into calmer customers, better clients, and easier referrals.**

For more business-building lessons like this, grab the **FREE Special Edition of Mobility Marketer Insider™** at [mobilitymarketer.com](http://mobilitymarketer.com).



# What They Didn't Tell You

Every demolition job comes with a little mystery. Usually it isn't very exciting. A rusty pipe. A broken filing cabinet. A coffee mug that hasn't been washed since the Beatles were topping the charts. Nobody expects to discover buried treasure, but hope has a funny way of making every dusty closet seem worth one last look.

That's exactly what happened to Big Joe Wershawlik in the spring of 1983. Joe was part of a demolition crew preparing to tear down the old Trolland Building in Malden, Massachusetts. After four days of careful planning, every inspection had been completed.

The building was ready to come down.

Before giving the signal, Joe suggested taking one final walk through the empty structure. His three coworkers agreed, making a simple deal along the way: if anyone found something valuable, it would be split four ways.

It always seems strange to walk through a building that's about to be demolished. You know that soon after you leave, it won't be there anymore. The footsteps of Big Joe and the others echoed through the empty corridors. They would peer into one room, pass another by, thoroughly search another.

Room after room produced nothing but junk. Then Joe stepped into what had once been an office and spotted a tattered brown envelope lying in a dusty closet. It looked worthless. He tossed it aside without another thought until one of his coworkers said, "You might want to see what's inside."

Joe picked it up and opened it.

A few seconds later, his shout echoed through the building. His coworkers came running, expecting hidden cash or valuable jewelry. Instead, they found something no amount of money could replace.

Nearly twenty-four years earlier, Joe and his young bride, Marjorie, had been married. Like many young couples, they could afford the wedding but not the photographer's pictures. They assumed those memories had been lost forever.

Somehow, the envelope containing all 40 of their wedding photographs had remained hidden inside that building for nearly a quarter of a century, perfectly preserved and waiting for the very man who thought he'd never see them.

Joe asked if he could keep the treasure.

The crew immediately honored their agreement in the only way that mattered. They told their friend to keep every single one.

The greatest treasures aren't measured in dollars...

... they're measured in memories.



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

# DETAILING MASTERY



SCAN OR TAP BELOW FOR VIDEO



TAP  
HERE

## Clean Months of Summer Grime Off Your Car

Summer has a special talent for baking dirt, dust, pollen, bug guts, and mystery grime onto your car like it signed a long-term lease. In this video, Joey shows how to knock months of filth off fast without turning your driveway into a crime scene.

Start with the wheels, where brake dust lives rent-free, then move through the tires, trim, paint, and stubborn spots that refuse to leave quietly.

With the right cleaners, brushes, wash mitts, and drying towels, your car can go from sweaty parking-lot goblin to respectable summer cruiser before the neighbors finish judging you.

Scan or tap the QR code for the video.



# TAKE A BREAK!



## Street Corn Pasta Salad

### Ingredients

- 2 cups corn kernels (fresh, grilled, or frozen)
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup sour cream
- 1 cup crumbled cotija cheese
- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro
- 1/2 teaspoon chili powder
- 1/2 teaspoon smoked paprika
- 1/2 teaspoon garlic powder
- Juice of 1 lime
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 teaspoon black pepper
- 1/4 cup diced red onion

### Instructions

Cook the rotini according to the package directions, then drain and rinse under cool water. Char the corn on a grill or hot skillet until lightly browned, then cut the kernels from the cob if using fresh corn. In a large bowl, whisk together the mayonnaise, sour cream, lime juice, chili powder, smoked paprika, garlic powder, salt, and black pepper.

Add the pasta, corn, red onion, cilantro, and half the cotija cheese, then toss until evenly coated. Top with the remaining cheese and extra cilantro or chili powder if desired. Chill for at least 30 minutes before serving. Enjoy!

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FOR INTERACTIVE PUZZLE

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## Ralphs Italian Restaurant Famous Spaghetti and Meatballs



Check out  
**Dan's Blog™**



Walk into Ralph's Italian Restaurant and discover more than a meal. Since 1900, this Philadelphia landmark has welcomed generations with timeless hospitality, homemade pasta, and legendary meatballs crafted from a cherished family recipe. Every plate carries the flavor of tradition, every dining room echoes with history, and every visit feels like returning to an old friend's table. Some places simply feed hungry guests. Ralph's has been feeding memories for well over a century, one unforgettable meal at a time.