

# Decades later, few clues in Swedish nanny case

By: [R. Marc Kantrowitz](#) January 23, 2020



A homeless man searching for whatever treasures might be found on the city streets of Boston or in one of its large, dirty dumpsters happened upon a bound black trash bag. When he opened it, an arm popped out. When the police opened it more fully, they discovered the unclothed upper half of a body.

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On a Friday between June 19 and June 25, Swedes throughout the world celebrate one of their most festive holidays, commemorating the longest day of the year when it essentially stays light the entire day. After a long winter of darkness ruling the skies and clock, the native population is ready to let loose.

Twenty-year-old Karina Holmer, having arrived in Boston in March, looked forward to celebrating with her newfound friends, although truth be told she didn't need the holiday as an excuse to party. An outgoing and attractive blond, she quickly made friends who, like her and many other young people, were anxious to go out and meet new acquaintances.



KARINA HOLMER

Her group often met in the loft of Karina's boss, a commercial photographer who spent the week working and living in South Boston. On weekends he returned to his condo in suburban Dover, which he shared with his wife, an artist and professor at a local university; their two young children; and Karina, their newly hired nanny. Like clockwork, every Friday he would travel from Boston to Dover while Karina traveled in the opposite direction. Friday, June 21, 1996, was no different. What *was* different is that this trip would be Karina's last.

As was her practice, she met a few of her friends, all fellow nannies, in the loft, where they socialized and got ready to go out. A local club, Zanzibar, located at the top of Boylston Street across from the Boston Common, catered to a young and foreign crowd. It typically was hopping on weekends.

Arriving with three friends, Karina easily gained entrance using her fake ID. Once inside, the drinking, dancing and partying moved into high gear. Two of her friends met a couple of young men from the Mideast and left with them. A third friend, a stunning nanny from Medfield, drank too much, passed out, eventually recovered, and left with one of the bouncers.

Karina, who had also consumed a lot, left Zanzibar and milled around the large alley with hundreds of other partygoers, deciding where to go next. Trying to re-enter Zanzibar, she was fatefully turned away as it was closing.



The dumpster in Boston where part of Karina Holmer's body was found

As witnessed through the tired and drunken eyes of her alcohol-addled fellow bar-goers, people, like careening pinballs at an arcade, quickly popped in and out of Karina's orbit: A homeless man with whom Karina briefly danced. An older large man dressed in a Superman T-shirt with a similarly attired large white dog. A muscular man from the club with whom she briefly spoke across the street. A man with a small dog. Two, or was it four, men in a car who either forced or didn't force her inside. Or was it a taxi?

The only thing certain was that Karina Holmer was alive at 3 in the early morning hours of Saturday and dead in a dumpster on Sunday morning around 11.

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The distance between Zanzibar and where Karina was found is a straight shot, a mere 1.3 miles down Boylston Street. She had been strangled to death with some type of ligature and then cut through the middle of her torso, right below her ribs and above her pelvis, with a saw. Her blood-spattered body bore little signs of a struggle. Forensic tests revealed she was not pregnant. Swabs of her mouth and fingernails revealed nothing. A partial fingerprint was recovered from the two large industrial-sized 50- to 60-gallon bags that contained her body.

With that, and with no crime scene, the police went about seeking suspects.

Superman with the large Superman dog was fortuitously stopped for speeding while driving to his home in Andover, which he shared with his mother. He received an alibi-creating ticket. A year later he killed himself.

The homeless man had neither the means nor the ability to carry out the heinous crime.

Her Dover employers, who had been alerted by Karina's friends that she had not returned to the loft, immediately called the police when they heard the news report of the discovery of a young blond woman. A search of the South Boston loft turned up nothing, nor did the search of the contents of a nearby dumpster fire in Dover, which mysteriously caught fire on the Monday after the murder.

A police officer whom she occasionally dated had a rock-solid alibi, being away on one of the islands that weekend.

A heroin-addicted musician who lived a few blocks away and wrote and sang S&M-themed songs was also ruled out.

### **Epilogue**

The liquor license to Zanzibar was suspended because the club had served underage patrons. It closed shortly thereafter.

The bottom half of Karina's body was never found, nor was a crime scene ever identified. There was no DNA. The partial fingerprint proved useless and well might have been that of the homeless man who found her.

Notwithstanding the interviews of hundreds of people, the police today stand where they stood decades ago. Nagging at them is a letter Karina sent to a friend in Sweden complaining that "something terrible [had happened]" that she would later share.

She never got the chance.

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