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**By
Jack Rosewood**

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True Crime Stories

12 Shocking True Crime Murder Cases

True Crime Anthology Vol.4

By

Jack Rosewood

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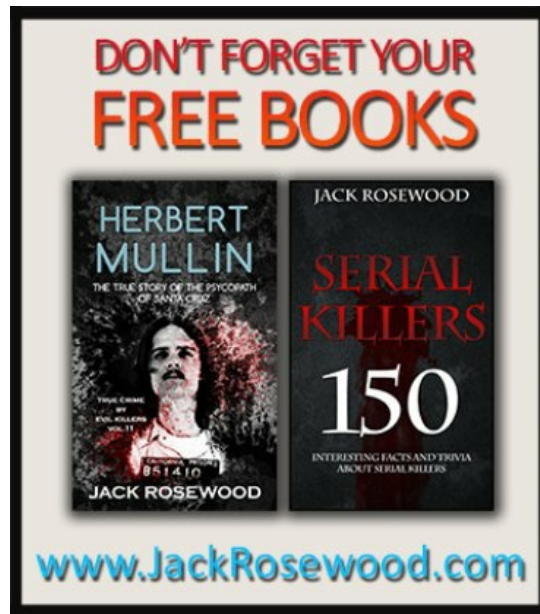
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DISCLAIMER:

This crime anthology biography includes quotes from those closely involved in the twelve cases examined, and it is not the author's intention to defame or intentionally hurt anyone involved. The interpretation of the events leading up to these crimes are the author's as a result of researching the true crime murders. Any comments made about the psychopathic or sociopathic behavior of criminals involved in any of these cases are the sole opinion and responsibility of the person quoted.

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150 interesting trivia about serial killers and the story of serial killer Herbert Mullin.

Introduction

In the annals of criminal history, most cases are open and shut. A crime takes place, the police investigate, an arrest is made, and the accused is either acquitted or convicted of said crime. Some criminal cases make for interesting prime time specials or cable network documentaries, but few invoke mysteries that persist for any length of time.

But some crimes are so puzzling and perplexing that the mystery surrounding them takes on a life of its own. It is these mysterious crimes that often have the greatest impact on all involved.

Crime in general has profound effects on the victims specifically and the greater society in general. Murders, in particular, leave behind gaping psychological wounds that often only begin to heal when the perpetrator is caught and convicted for his/her crimes.

But what happens when the murderer is never identified? Or worse yet, what happens when the victim is never found, as if the person vanished into thin air?

These are the type of crimes that tear at the social fabric of a community more than any other – crimes where a suspect is never identified, a body is never found, or a reason for the crime is never determined.

The world is full of many mysteries and within the pages of this book you will be introduced to twelve of the most intriguing and amazing mysteries in modern criminal history. Some of the cases here involve multiple crimes where coincidences seem to link what are otherwise unrelated cases. Investigation of these cases reveals that sometimes although events may be creepy, they are in fact coincidences; while in other cases the jury is still out.

A number of high-profile disappearances are also given consideration in the following pages. While a mysterious fog of uncertainty still hangs over one of these cases, excellent police work and modern science helped locate other missing individuals.

Finally, this e-book considers a number of unsolved murder cases that were

all but forgotten about and went “cold,” only to heat up and get resolved years, even decades, later through advances in science and new eyewitness testimony.

The world is truly and amazing place full of many mysteries, which includes the criminal world as you will see in this intriguing and exciting e-book.

Chapter 1: A Killer Coincidence? The Mary Morris Murders

In the 1984 science fiction classic *The Terminator*, a murderous cyborg from the future played by Arnold Schwarzenegger, hunted women in Los Angeles named Sarah Connor in order to stop a woman with that same name from giving birth to a man who would kill the cyborg's masters in the future. The plot was totally outlandish and not meant to portray or emulate any real event or situation, but a pair of murders in Houston, Texas in 2000 shocked area residents and to sci-fi fans it appeared to be a case of reality imitating art.

In the span of less than one week, two women both named Mary Morris were murdered in eerily similar ways in Houston. Once the local media made the connections between the two women's names, then other connections were quickly made: the two women looked alike, the manner of their murders was similar, and their bodies were discovered in similar locations. With that many similarities most people were convinced that the murders were somehow connected.

Was a serial killer using the *Terminator* as an inspiration for his sick homicidal fantasies?

The residents of Houston were on edge in the late months of 2000. Anyone could be the killer, and any woman named Mary Morris could be the next victim!

Mary Henderson Morris

Mary Henderson Morris was a forty-eight-year-old wife and mother who worked hard as a loan officer at Chase Bank in Houston. She and her husband had built a good life for themselves and lived in the reasonably affluent Houston neighborhood of Spring Valley. They were hardworking, successful people who were well liked by the neighbors, friends, and family. By all accounts, the couple had a good relationship and neither was involved in drugs or criminal activity, which makes this part of the case the most puzzling.

The morning of October 12, 2000, began as any other in the Morris

household. Mary woke up first, got ready for work, and left the house about six am. But Mary never made it to work.

Mary's husband of five years, Jay, usually spoke with her several times during the day on the phone, so he began to worry when the afternoon came and he had yet to hear from his wife. Mary's daughter from a previous marriage, Marilyn Blalock, and Jay filed a missing person report early that evening about the same time a burned car was discovered in a vacant field.

A call was made to the Harris County Sheriff's Department at about 10 am that morning about what was believed to be burning debris or leaves. Later in the day, police arrived at the wooded area to find that it was not debris or leaves that were burning, but an automobile. After the fire was put out the sheriff's department determined that a charred female body was inside. It was the body of Mary Henderson Morris.

The fire made it impossible for coroners to determine the method of death, although it was quickly ruled a homicide. A search revealed that Morris' purse and wedding ring were missing, which suggested robbery, but too many questions remained.

If it were a robbery, why was her car not taken? Why would a robber, or robbers, go to such lengths to conceal part of their crime?

The crime was obviously not a carjacking because the car was burned. Even if it were an attempted carjacking gone bad, there would have been no reason to take the car and its owner to a remote location, kill the owner, and then burn the car.

And why was the car dumped and burned in a vacant lot?

The more investigators looked at the case, the less it made sense.

There were also no witnesses to her abduction or murder.

Due to the circumstances, authorities quickly determined that this was no ordinary murder case, but little did they know how extraordinary the case would become.

Just four days later, after the Morris family put Mary to rest on October 16,

Blaylock made the painful, yet seemingly simple journey to the coroner's office to retrieve some of her mother's personal effects.

Instead she walked into an episode from the *Twilight Zone*.

"They told me they still had Mary Morris' body," recalled Blaylock. "I was freaking out. I was thinking we just had the funeral. I saw the remains, and I was looking at something that wasn't even my mother."

It turns out that the woman Marilyn Blaylock saw on the coroner's table was not her mother, but was in fact another woman named Mary Morris—Mary McGinnis Morris!

Mary McGinnis Morris

In many ways other than just the name, Mary McGinnis Morris shared a number of similarities with Mary Henderson Morris, which makes this case all that more eerie. Although Mary McGinnis was a bit younger than Mary Henderson at thirty-nine years old, both women were attractive, gregarious brunettes. Mary McGinnis was also a professional woman who shared a nice suburban home with her husband.

On October 16, 2000, the Harris County Sheriff's Department found the body of Mary McGinnis Morris badly beaten with a single gunshot to her head in a location about twenty-five miles from where Mary Henderson Morris was found days earlier.

Mary McGinnis was also found murdered in her car in a vacant lot in Harris County. Although the vacant lots were located on different ends of the county, both spots had an eerie familiarity.

In life and death, the two women shared some uncanny similarities, which raised the obvious question—who would want to kill the two Marys?

Suspects and Theories

Although authorities were at a loss trying to find suspects and reasons for the murder of Mary Henderson Morris, they quickly zeroed in on two potential perps for the Mary McGinnis case.

At the time of her death, Mary McGinnis worked as a nurse practitioner and

medical director at Union Carbide in Houston. Her supervisors noted that she was a good employee who got along with all of her co-workers and likewise almost all of her co-workers liked Mary, with the exception of one—Duane Young.

Duane Young was a nurse who worked alongside Mary, and as their time working together progressed, he apparently became obsessed with her. Young's obsession with Mary began innocently enough; he hung around her desk at work and engaged her in conversation whenever he could. The behavior at first seemed to Mary McGinnis to be more of a "puppy love" type situation than that of an obsessed maniac, but eventually Young's façade of a "lost puppy dog" was lifted to reveal the stalker that he was. As Young's menacing looks and comments towards Mary reached a creepy crescendo, she found the words "death to her" scrawled on her desk calendar. After numerous complaints to her bosses about Young's inappropriate and borderline illegal behavior, which was verified by co-workers, the stalker nurse was fired on October 13, just two days before Mary disappeared. The note scrawled on Mary's desk proved to be the last straw.

Weeks before her disappearance and death, Mary McGinnis bought a handgun that she kept hidden in her car. Owning a gun in the United States, especially in the state of Texas, is no big deal, and some even consider it not just a right, but an obligation. Mary McGinnis, though, was never a hunter or gun enthusiast, so when she started packing a pistol, her closest friends and family members knew that she was frightened of something or someone. Although Mary was a bit of a private person, she apparently felt that the threats from Young, or perhaps someone else, were grave enough that she needed to be armed because she did tell a couple of her closest friends about the handgun. Mary was no expert in firearms, so her husband gave her the gun and showed her how to use it.

Also, the day Young was fired Mary's employers told her to stay home in order to defuse the situation, which turned into a scene anyway, as Young demanded to see Mary and had to be escorted out of the premises.

October 15th was the last day Mary was seen alive.

By all accounts it was another Sunday for Mary McGinnis; she ran a number

of errands and visited a friend named Laurie Gemmell. According to Gemmell, McGinnis called her from a store during the afternoon to tell her, "There is someone here who is giving me the creeps." Not long after that call, McGinnis then called 911.

The transcript of the 911 call has never been released to the public, but a detective who worked on the case and heard the tape said that it, "had their blood chilled listening to it."

After the 911 call, Mary McGinnis' trail went cold.

When Mary did not return home that evening, her husband of seventeen years, Mike, filled a missing person report. In an unfortunate twist that brought Mary McGinnis' case together with Mary Henderson's, the body of McGinnis was found shot to death in a vacant lot outside of Houston.

Despite the similarities of both women being found murdered in their cars, the method of murder was clear in the McGinnis case—she had died of a single gunshot to the head from her own gun.

At first glance, it looked like a suicide, but as homicide investigators examined the scene more closely, they learned that the scene looked staged and it was instead a poor attempt to throw them off. Mary had been beaten and gagged, and her car keys were left outside the car.

Investigators quickly learned about Duane Young, who then went to the top of their suspect list. But as homicide detectives looked into Young's background, Mike Morris soon joined Young as a person of interest.

Morris supplied investigators with samples of his DNA and gave initial interviews, but he declined to take a polygraph exam, hired an attorney, and refused to cooperate with investigators as the case dragged on. Morris also refused to allow his sixteen year old daughter to be interviewed by police. Since it is a person's constitutional right not to talk to police in the United States, Morris did nothing legally wrong in that respect, although his actions placed him further under the police radar.

The more investigators focused on Morris, the more they learned that there was trouble in paradise at the Morris household. Although it was never

proved, allegations of infidelity by both Mike and Mary surfaced. Infidelity is always considered as a motive in spousal murder. Whether it is murder to get rid of a spouse in order to be with a paramour, or done out of anger towards a cheating spouse, unfaithfulness must always be considered motive by police. The infidelity motive seemed to go nowhere but it was not long before more perplexing inconsistencies came to light.

It was learned that Mike had taken out a \$500,000 life insurance policy on Mary, which alone is not enough to convict or even get someone arrested for murder, but greed is one of the most common motivations for murder throughout history.

Then there was the mysterious phone call.

Records indicate that on the afternoon of October 15th, about two hours after she called 911, Mary received a call on her cell phone from Mike. Mike claims that he did in fact make the call when he was with his daughter at a movie, but that the call went straight to voice mail. Records show that the call was answered and lasted for four minutes. Morris claimed that the phone company must have made a mistake! Although it is possible that the phone company could have made a mistake, it seemed extremely convenient for the suspect in a murder investigation that such a mistake, which is nearly unheard of, would happen at this critical juncture.

Mary McGinnis was also not robbed. In fact, the only valuable item that appeared to have been taken from her was a ring, which was later found in the possession of their daughter. Mike later told investigators that his wife had lost the ring before her murder and that he and his daughter had found it in the house later.

The final piece of circumstantial evidence that points towards Mike Morris as the perpetrator in his wife's murder is the actual murder weapon. The gun that was used to kill Mary McGinnis was actually Mike's gun. He gave the gun to Mary after Duane Young's stalking reached its peak, and only he and some of Mary's closest friends even knew about the gun or where she hid it underneath the seat.

Clearly, many of Mary's friends, law enforcement, and the people of Houston in general began to think Mike was good for his wife's murder, but the

evidence was just not there to make an arrest, never mind win a conviction in front of a jury.

Eventually, Mike and his daughter moved back to his native West Virginia where he still presumably lives to this day.

But even if Mike Morris or Duane Young was responsible for the murder of Mary McGinnis Morris, the elephant in the room remains: was her murder connected to Mary Henderson Morris'?

A Hit Gone Wrong?

Once the theory of a homicidal cyborg from the future that came to Houston to kill women named Mary Morris was eliminated, investigators were left trying to determine if the two crimes were connected or just some strange, macabre coincidence. It is difficult to get past the two victims similar names, appearance, the type of location where the bodies were discovered, the manner in which they were killed.

Because of the plethora of similarities, many have concluded that either Mike Morris or Duane Young hired a hitman to kill Mary McGinnis, but in a cruel case of mistaken identity also killed Mary Henderson.

An anonymous caller to the *Houston Chronicle* said: "They got the wrong Mary Morris," in reference to the murder of Mary Henderson Morris.

But investigators remain unconvinced that the two homicides are related.

"As far as the dates go, they are so close they could be linked," said Harris County sheriff's detective Wayne Kuhlman. "But when someone is hired to kill someone, they are going to have their information and know their habits. Hit men don't just go out with nothing."

As of 2016 both cases remain cold.

Sometimes reality is stranger than fiction.

Chapter 2: The Disappearances of the Palmer Brothers

It seems that in the world today one is never far from another person. In the decades just before World War II, the most industrialized nations witnessed a rapid migration of their populations from rural to urban and suburban areas. Because of that trend, most of us have to travel a distance to truly get away from the noise of civilization. Even denizens of rural areas are usually not very far from their closest neighbors and only a short drive to the nearest town or city. In areas that are more remote, such as the American west, freeways, trains, and airplanes connect formerly isolated areas to the rest of the world.

The American state of Alaska may be an exception to this rule.

Alaska, the United States' forty-ninth state, is aptly named the "Last Frontier" because of its vast expanses of territory that has rarely, if ever, been walked on by human feet. The size of Alaska is immense; it is comprised of 663,268 square miles of land, which makes it by far the largest American state and larger than all but twenty of the independent nation-states of the world.

In contrast to Alaska's vast size, its population is relatively modest. With only 710,231 inhabitants, Alaska ranks forty seventh out of fifty American states in population and nearly half of those reside in the Anchorage metropolitan area.

Alaska's vastness has become somewhat of a pop culture phenomenon in recent years, with a number of television shows being produced there, such as *Tougher in Alaska*, that chronicle the harshness of the Alaska frontier. The book and movie *Into the Wild*, based on the true life adventures of Christopher McCandless, also depicted the beauty and range of the Alaskan frontier while also showing its potentially dangerous side.

If there is anywhere in the industrialized world where one can get lost, it is Alaska!

In fact, in the United States, Alaska has the dubious distinction of having the most missing persons per capita, more than twice the national average.

People disappear into the Alaskan wilderness every year and some, such as Christopher McCandless, even do so willingly, which at first glance makes the next case seem like just another missing person file from Alaska; but further examination of the Palmer brothers' disappearances reveals another set of bizarre coincidences that are stranger than fiction.

A Family of Men

The Palmer family seemed to be made for life in Alaska. A family of men, the siblings included oldest brother Chris, middle brother Charles “Chuckie”, youngest brother Michael, and sister Hannah. The three boys and their sister grew up together in Wasilla, Alaska, which has become famous in recent years for being the home of former Alaska governor and vice presidential candidate, Sarah Palin. The three Palmer brothers enjoyed spending time with each other and engaging in typical Alaskan activities including hiking, fishing, hunting, and snowmobiling. They enjoyed the rugged frontier lifestyle of Alaska and all it has to offer.

Life in Alaska was good for the Palmer family, until things took a bizarre and tragic turn on June 3, 1999.

The Disappearance of Michael

Fifteen-year-old Michael Palmer was enjoying his summer vacation from school the same way many American boys his age do—hanging out with his friends and pushing the boundaries of his parents and the law. On that night, he slept over at a friend's house, and after his friend's parents went to bed the crew snuck out of the house to see what kind of trouble they could get into.

Michael and his friends went to a few different parties that night and engaged in some drinking, although his friends would later say that none of them, including Michael, were too drunk to navigate their bicycles. The group spent their time at the parties drinking some beer, visiting with friends who they had not seen since the end of the school year, and trying to make time with girls. At one party, a fight broke out that Michael was involved in, but he was not believed to be the reason for the fight, and like everything else during the night, it was not considered out of the ordinary—just some tough Alaska

boys blowing off some steam.

After a couple hours of party hopping, the boys decided to ride their bikes back to the home of the boy they were supposed to be staying the night with. Although the nine-mile ride was fairly long, Michael and his friends were all in good shape and used to such long treks across the vast Alaskan outdoors. The boys rode in single file with Michael taking up the rear, but when they arrived at the house, Michael was nowhere to be seen.

Michael Palmer had vanished into thin air!

The boys later told authorities that they thought Michael had changed his mind and decided to ride home to sleep in his own bed, so they did not report him missing until later the next day. Once Michael was reported missing, the local authorities and the Palmer family began their search in earnest.

Local police quickly found Michael's bike in a river, but were quick to state that they did not believe he drowned. The boy was athletic and knew how to swim, the river was fairly shallow, and a log jam down river would have caught his body if he did in fact drown.

The next major clue was even more puzzling. Michael's shoes were found wet and neatly placed side-by-side next to an airstrip about 200 yards from the river. No airplane had taken off the night of the boy's disappearance and the neat placement of the shoes suggests that Michael placed them there. They were not strewn about as if there had been a struggle.

But some started to believe that Michael was the victim of violence that began at one of the parties he attended on June 3. The police interviewed and gave polygraph examinations to everyone who was known to have been at the parties, with special attention given to boys involved in the fight that was mentioned earlier. Everyone passed their polygraph exams.

It should be noted that people often "beat" polygraph exams, but those who do are usually adults who are often seasoned criminals, not high school boys who got into a fist fight. Besides, how many teenagers can keep a secret? It seems that if one of Michael's classmates had something to do with his disappearance then someone would have said something by now.

But the disappearance of Michael Palmer quickly grew as cold as an Alaskan winter.

The Disappearance of Chucky Palmer

Perhaps the worst part of losing a loved one to a disappearance is the unknown. For years the Palmer family wondered what had happened to Michael. Was he abducted and murdered? Did he become disorientated and wander deep into the forest where he died? The disappearance of Michael Palmer faded from the memory of the people of Wasilla but was never totally forgotten. Conspiracy theories based on no credible evidence began to circulate, and before too long Michael's disappearance became legendary in that part of Alaska. But to the Palmer family, the loss of their youngest brother was never legendary; it was the source of constant pain and a void that could not be filled.

As the years passed by, the other Palmer children became adults and started families of their own. They never forgot about Michael, but the pain of losing him diminished somewhat, and the family finally looked to be moving on. The siblings remained close in adulthood, especially brothers Charles "Chucky" Jr. and Chris, taking part in many typical Alaskan adventures in the outdoors.

But the thought of what happened to their youngest brother was never far from their minds.

"Two brothers aren't supposed to go missing from the same family," is what oldest brother Chris said when the seemingly impossible happened – his brother Chucky vanished into thin air in much the same circumstances as Michael.

On April 10, 2010, nearly eleven years after Michael disappeared, Chucky, Chris, and some of their friends went on a snowmobile trip on Bald Mountain, about an hour outside of Wasilla. April in Alaska is still cold enough to support winter sports; but spring is usually right around the corner, so the most hardcore Alaskans often like to get one last skiing, snowmobiling, or ice fishing trip in during that month.

In the morning, it seemed to the Palmer brothers that they had picked a good day for their end of the season snowmobile trip. The weather was nice, and

there was plenty of snow left on the mountain for the men to make plenty of trails, but before the men even got started, signs pointed towards an impending tragedy. Oldest brother Chris, who was a much more experienced snowmobiler than Chucky, had to stay behind because the handlebars on his snowmobile snapped. Not wanting to miss out on possibly the last chance of the season to snowmobile, Chucky continued on with his friends. Interestingly though, Chucky, who was admittedly the weakest snowmobiler in the group, brought up the rear of the convoy much like his brother Michael did with his friends eleven years earlier.

Unfortunately for the Palmer family the result was the same!

Chucky, like Michael, disappeared into thin air. As soon as Chucky's friends noticed that the thirty-one-year-old was missing, they retraced their tracks and searched Bald Mountain for their friend. As minutes turned into hours, the situation became more desperate, and professional search teams from Alaska Mountain Rescue were called in to find the missing Palmer brother. Snow and low visibility hampered the search teams, but once the snow stopped searchers located Chucky's snowmobile.

Chucky's snowmobile was found off the main path in a drift with no footprints nearby. Many people think that the lack of footprints is the most eerie aspect of the case, but there is no reason why there would be any since Bald Mountain was the recipient of over two feet of snow at the time.

The search continued after the snow melted, but no body or further clues were ever discovered on Bald Mountain. It was as if the mountain just swallowed Chucky whole.

With Chucky's mountain disappearance, the remaining Palmer family and the entire world for that matter, is left wondering how this is possible and what are the chances? Even if foul play were responsible for the disappearance of one or both of the Palmer brothers, the chances of that happening twice in the same family must be extremely small. Most people could never imagine such a thing happening once in their family, never mind twice.

Perhaps Chris Palmer best summoned up his family's tragedies in layman's terms: "I never thought I'd have to deal with this shit ever again."

The world will probably never know what happened to the Palmer brothers,
but they are proof that lightning can strike twice!

Chapter 3: The Liquid Matthew Case

Some of you reading this may have been to a dinner party theater production, which have become popular over the last several years. If you have not been to one of these productions, the concept is interesting: as the diners enjoy a meal, a play takes place that usually involves some type of murder mystery. The audience/diners are often encouraged to get involved by offering their clues and/or theories concerning the crime.

In the end, the caper is solved, the cast takes a bow, and everyone goes home full and satisfied with an interesting night out.

Several of you have also probably taken part in a scavenger hunt at some point in your lives. Some of the most elaborate scavenger hunts take place over several miles of territory and sometimes, like dinner party theater, involve a fictional crime that has taken place. In order to solve the fictional crime you have to locate a clue, which then leads you to the next clue in another part of town and so on and so forth. The clues are often written as cryptic poems that, to those not involved in the game, would seem very bizarre and creepy.

For those of you who have been a part of a dinner party theater or a crime based scavenger hunt, you probably have fond memories of the event.

But what if your scavenger hunt somehow miraculously became part of a real murder investigation?

That is exactly what happened in suburban Miami on December 6, 1983. The case became known as the “Liquid Matthew Case” because of cryptic writings that were found at the scene of an apparent homicide.

A Body and Cryptic Clues

On the morning of December 6, 1983, residents of the quiet Miami suburb of Hialeah, Florida awoke to the grim display of what appeared to be a corpse on the side of a road. Local police were quickly called to scene and after searching the body, determined that the male had fallen victim to murder. The body showed signs of strangulation, but little more than that could be determined. The victim had no identification on him, and area residents did

not know who the man was. At first, the police could only say that the man was a Hispanic John Doe.

Homicide detectives cordoned off the area and began their search for the usual forensic evidence—a murder weapon, footprints, or even a blood trail.

But the evidence they found proved to be truly unsettling, even for veteran detectives.

Taped to a nearby sign, investigators noticed a bag, and within that bag was a handwritten note that said, “Now the motive is clear and the victim is too. You’ve got all the answers. Just follow the clues.”

At first, the investigators believed the note was some type of prank. What else would explain the cryptic note being found at the scene? After all, only in *Batman* movies do criminals leave riddles at the scene for law enforcement to solve. In fact, some police officers on the scene thought that it may be the work of some sort of scavenger hunt, although that would not explain the dead body laying just feet away. But when they found another note taped to the back of a nearby speed limit sign, they began to fear a psychotic killer was on the loose in suburban Miami.

“Yes, Matthew is dead, but his body not felt. Those brains were not Matt’s because his body did melt. For Billy threw Matthew in some hot boiling oil. To confuse the police for the mystery they did toil,” read the contents of the second note.

The police were confused and confounded with the cryptic message. What did it mean? Was Matthew the name of the Hispanic John Doe? Was a man named Billy his killer?

As the authorities struggled to find answers in the bizarre murder mystery, which became known as the “Liquid Matthew Case,” the public became extremely frightened when the details emerged. The residents of sleepy Hialeah were just as confused as the police and afraid that a thrill killer or serial killer was operating on their streets.

Residents of the community began to barricade their homes and arm themselves for a potential showdown with a serial killer, and the local police

began working overtime to solve the enigmatic crime.

But the investigation soon turned up a benign explanation for the notes.

The Explanation

As the police investigation into the Liquid Matthew Case progressed and its details were made public, it was learned that the notes were actually part of a Halloween murder mystery game/scavenger hunt sponsored by four area churches. It turns out that the notes and the game fell victim to the rainy south Florida climate. After the game was completed, organizers failed to pick up all of the notes because heavy rains that swamped the Miami area.

As for the victim?

Police eventually identified “Liquid Matthew” as a Columbian sailor named Francisco Patino Gutierrez. It is believed that Gutierrez was probably killed in one of the many drug smuggling schemes that were prevalent in Miami during the 1980s, but the details remain unknown.

With that said, local authorities can say unequivocally that Gutierrez’s murder and the cryptic scavenger hunt notes were not connected in any way. He was not boiled to death and whatever his killer, or killers, name was, it was clear that the person had no intention of even remotely identifying himself.

The Liquid Matthew Case was just one big bizarre coincidence.

Chapter 4: The Brighton Trunk Murders

The “Queen of Watering Places”

The city of Brighton, United Kingdom, often known colloquially as “Brighton Beach”, has been one of the prime destinations for the British for over 200 years. Brighton boasts of some of the nicest beaches in Britain, relatively warmer temperatures compared to the rest of the country, and a plethora of bars, nightclubs and concert venues. Because of these things, Brighton has earned the nickname the “Queen of Watering Places.”

Besides being a top vacation destination, Brighton has also been known as a safe, peaceful city. Outside of a spate of counter-culture youth violence during the 1960s and ‘70s—which was made known to the world through the rock band The Who’s 1973 album *Quadrophenia* and a 1979 film of the same name, as well as the popular Stray Cat’s song “Rumble in Brighton”—and the Irish Republican Army bombing of a hotel in 1984, crime in Brighton has been historically low.

Therefore, Brighton’s idyllic setting makes this next case, or series of cases, especially interesting.

During the course of just over 100 years, Brighton was the scene of three bizarre, similar yet unrelated murders. Another murder that took place in London shared many of the hallmarks of the other three murders and was also determined to be unrelated. Collectively, these four murders are known as the “Brighton Trunk Murders.”

Due to their mysterious and bizarre circumstances, any one of the trunk murders could probably be given its own entry in this anthology. When considered as a group, due to the coincidence factor, the Brighton Trunk Murders are probably the strangest case examined in this book.

The 1831 Murder

In 1831, Brighton was in the middle of one of its early boom periods. Tea, spices, and gold were flowing into England from its lucrative colonies in India and South Africa, which resulted in a trickle-down effect of wealth whereby the middle class was growing at a phenomenal rate. The result was good for Brighton, as members of the growing middle class were able to

travel to the beachfront community on new rail lines and spend their disposable income in the city's bars and shops. Life was good in Brighton, and most of its inhabitants were happy.

Celia Holloway was an exceptional woman for her time; she was a painter on the chain pier who was not reliant on her husband John. She spent her days painting the ocean, beaches, and anyone who passed by. Celia was a happy, independent woman who lived in a time when it was not common for women to have those views or lifestyle. The progressive-minded Brighton seemed to be the perfect place for her to pursue her interests while she was happily married to John.

But sometimes things are not as they seem.

Apparently, John was not happy being married to a liberated woman, so he murdered her, placed her body in a trunk, and then buried the trunk under Lover's Walk. John Holloway was quickly arrested for his wife's murder, convicted, and hanged all within a year. Justice was quick in nineteenth century Britain.

So began the long, bizarre saga of the Brighton Trunk Murders.

Minnie Bonati

Although the next murder in the series of Brighton Trunk Murders took place in London, which is about fifty miles from the sea resort city, the circumstances of the crime are eerily similar enough to the others that it warrants being included in this macabre list. On May 7, 1927, an attendant at the Charing Cross train station in London became concerned with a foul smell emanating from the luggage room. Upon investigating the odor, he soon learned that source was a luggage trunk. Correctly believing that he may have stumbled onto a crime, the local police were called to investigate.

The police discovered a grisly scene—a dismembered body with each piece wrapped in paper. Also included in the trunk were several items of clothing, including a pair of underwear marked “P. Holt.”

The circumstances of the discovery shocked and frightened Londoners when it became public. The average Londoner at the time was a street-smart person and no stranger to crime. Theft, prostitution, and even murder were all crimes

that Londoners were used to hearing about in 1927, but this was quite different. Most of the murders that took place in London at the time were cases of criminals preying on each other, personal and/or financial grudges, or of someone ending up in the wrong part of town. Murders with this level of brutality were almost unheard—almost.

It was less than fifty years earlier, in 1888, when five women were raped and murdered in London's east end in the "Jack the Ripper" murders. In 1927, when the dismembered body was found in the train station, some of the older residents of London were reminded of the Jack the Ripper case and wondered if there might be some connection.

But the London Police quickly dismissed any such outlandish claims as they quietly pieced together the identity of the victim.

After a thorough investigation, police learned that the woman to whom the underwear belonged was still alive, but that one of her former employees, thirty-six-year-old Minnie Rolls/Bonati, could not be located. Fearing that the case would go cold, investigators went public with the details and soon a taxi driver came forward who said that he gave a ride to a man with a large trunk in tow to the Charing Cross station on May 6.

Police eventually identified the man as thirty-six-year-old real estate agent John Robinson. Under pressure during police questioning, Robinson eventually admitted to the murder and dismemberment stating: "I met her at Victoria and took her to my office. I want to tell you all about it. I done it and cut her up." Robinson claimed self-defense to the police. He said that after he brought Bonati back to his office, for some reason she attacked him, so he defended himself with a coal shovel, hitting her in the head with a fatal blow. He then dismembered her body in the office, placed it in a trunk, and called for a taxi to take him to the train station.

Perhaps he believed that since Bonati was a prostitute no one would care and he could get away with the murder, but the dismemberment was much too much for the civilized nature of early twentieth century London.

The mountain of physical evidence, along with his confession, was too much for Robinson to overcome in trial. He was quickly convicted and executed on August 12, 1927, just over two months after the murder.

The “Girl with the Pretty Feet”

By 1934, the luster of Brighton beach had worn off a bit as the United Kingdom, along with most of the industrialized world, was in the midst of the Great Depression. The crowds that had flocked to Brighton’s beaches dwindled as the average British citizen found saving what little money he had more important than a weekend at the beach. To most people at the time, the Great Depression seemed to have made Brighton’s golden age a thing of the distant past, which was further exacerbated by a series of macabre events that began in June of that year.

On June 17, an unclaimed trunk at Brighton train station was noticed by an employee. The employee, William Vinnicombe, was not alarmed so much by the trunk being left at the station, but more so by the foul odor coming from it. Perhaps aware of the 1927 murder of Minnie Bonati, Vinnicombe called local police to investigate the trunk’s contents.

Chief inspector Ronald Donaldson quickly learned that like the Bonati case, he was staring at the dismembered corpse of a woman!

In fact, the trunk only contained the woman’s torso, head, and arms; the legs were recovered in a suitcase the next day at another train station.

Unlike the Bonati case, there were few clues to the dead woman’s identity tucked into the trunk. A piece of paper with the word, or name, “Ford” was found in the trunk, but it was never determined if it was connected to victim, if it was a “red herring”, or possibly some random paper that ended up in the trunk. A coroner’s examination determined that the woman was around twenty-five years old and pregnant. A cause of death was never determined. The manner of death could have been an accident, but the brutal dismemberment of the body clearly pointed towards homicide. The Jane Doe quickly became known as “the girl with the pretty feet” because her feet were believed to be those of a dancer’s.

But someone would notice if a dancer was missing—at least that is what investigators believed. Unfortunately for the girl with the pretty feet, no one came forward on her behalf, which led many to believe that the victim was a prostitute.

Going on the prostitute theory, investigators scoured brothels and red light

districts and began to focus on a family doctor who often performed illegal abortions on the side, often for prostitutes. The suspect was a man named Edward Massiah, who lived in the neighboring town of Hove.

Although Donaldson suspected Massiah, the medical examiner who performed Jane Doe's autopsy was not so sure, as he noted that the dismemberment did not appear to be the work of a professional.

Massiah was also apparently well connected with local police and politicians.

Donaldson's superiors forced him to back off of his investigation of Massiah, who then quietly moved to London where he continued to practice medicine, both legally and illegally. Any doubts concerning Massiah's influential connections were put to rest when a woman whom he performed an abortion on died, but he was never charged.

Massiah retired to the Caribbean in the 1950s and the case of the girl with the pretty feet was never solved.

As strange as the case of the girl with the pretty feet was, it was made even stranger when it was revealed that another trunk murder case was taking place in Brighton at the same time!

The Murder of Violette Kay/Saunders

Forty-two-year-old Violette Kay and Minnie Bonati shared some dubious distinctions—they were both prostitutes who were both murdered, dismembered, and then shoved into a trunk. It is doubtful if either Kay or Bonati ever saw herself working as a prostitute and there is no possible way that either could have foreseen the awful circumstances in which their lives ended.

Violette Kaye, also known as Violette Saunders, worked as a prostitute in the Brighton area and dated a twenty-six-year-old man known as Toni Mancini, although his legal name was Cecil England. For legitimate work, Mancini worked as a bartender and bouncer at local bars, but his true passion was in the world of crime. He was known to the local police as a low level player in the local criminal underworld—a thug who the heavier players could employ to do dirty work.

Although Mancini worked as a bouncer and occasional heavy for underworld figures, the majority of his violence was reserved for those closest to him. He was known to slap his girlfriends around in front of others if they did not do as he pleased, but Violette Kaye was a bit different than his other girlfriends. Kaye was known to stand up to Mancini's threats and violence and would even fight back.

Kaye and Mancini's relationship was volatile to say the least.

The fact that Kaye was nearly twenty years older than her paramour contributed to the turbulent nature of their relationship, as she was lacking in self-esteem and jealous to the point of violence. Kaye and Mancini frequently drank copious amounts of alcohol, which then turned their drinking sessions into shouting matches and sometimes fisticuffs. It was during one of these drinking sessions that Violette Kaye was seen alive for the last time.

On the night of May 10, Kaye and Mancini were drinking heavily at Mancini's place of employment, the Skylark Café. As the drinking binge progressed, Kaye accused Mancini of having an affair with a young female employee at the bar named Elizabeth Attrell. Questions by Kaye turned into loud accusations as she began to become more intoxicated, and before she and Mancini left for the evening, the two were witnessed shoving each other.

That was the last time anyone saw Violette Kaye alive.

In the days after May 10, Mancini acted extremely suspicious, giving some of Kaye's personal effects to Attrell and telling Violette's friends and family that she had suddenly moved to Paris. Kaye's sister then received a telegram that claimed to be from her sister in Paris, but it was later revealed that the message was in fact sent from Brighton.

Mancini then took up residence in an apartment near the Brighton train station, in the days after the dismembered body of the girl with the pretty feet was discovered.

As the local police searched the area around the train station for clues to murder of the Jane Doe, they eventually conducted a house to house search, which led them to the apartment of Toni Mancini. Once inside Mancini's apartment, they were quickly overwhelmed with the smell of decay.

They found the body of Violette Kaye stuffed into a trunk at the foot of Mancini's bed!

The public was surprised at the eerie turn of events. How could there be two extremely brutal, yet similar, murders committed at the same time in the quiet vacation resort town of Brighton?

Certainly Toni Mancini must be the killer of both women, right?

The police quickly determined that Mancini was not the perpetrator of the Jane Doe murder; it was just simply another bizarre coincidence in the series of "trunk murders" as they became known. They were confident, however, that Mancini killed Kaye in act of anger on the night of May 10. An autopsy, which was conducted by the same doctor who examined the remains of the girl with the pretty feet, concluded that Kaye died from a blow to the head.

Mancini went to trial for Kaye's murder in late 1934, which the prosecution believed would be an open and shut case. The fact that Kaye's rotting corpse was discovered in Mancini's apartment was thought to be damning evidence alone, but for good measure the prosecution paraded a litany of witnesses who all testified to the defendant's seedy nature. Former and current girlfriends, one who testified that Mancini tried to get her to give him a false alibi to the police, and criminal associates all gave proof, in the prosecution's eyes, that Mancini was the type of person who would murder his girlfriend.

But the strategy backfired.

The defense acknowledged that their client had a criminal background, which is why he attempted to hide Kaye's body *after* he found her dead. The defense further argued that the true perpetrator was probably one of Kaye's many "clients" who was still on the streets of Brighton.

The jury agreed with the defense and acquitted Mancini of all charges.

But the bizarre case of the Brighton Trunk Murders does not end there; Mancini admitted on his deathbed in 1976 that he was in fact responsible for Kaye's death, although he claimed it was an act of self-defense.

The Brighton Trunk Murders truly left an enduring psychological impression on the people of the United Kingdom. For a number of years after the

Mancini trial, the British quit referring to their beloved beach getaway as the “Queen of Watering Places” and instead called it the “Queen of Slaughter Places.”

Today, the memories of the bizarre string of murderous coincidences that took place in and around Brighton are fading into the distant past. Most of the younger generation does not even know about the Brighton Trunk Murders, and the popular resort town has once again claimed its spot as Britain’s prime beachfront vacation spot.

That is, until the next body is found in a trunk near the train station.

Chapter 5: The Abduction and Murder of Annie Le

America's Ivy League colleges are known for their strict academic requirements and as factories that produce world leaders in the fields of business, science, and politics. The campuses of Ivy League universities are full of history as the halls are named for famous Americans and their architecture is often centuries old. Truly, Ivy League schools are in a world of their own.

The residential neighborhoods that have grown up around the nation's Ivy League schools are usually pretty safe. For instance, Dartmouth is located in the bucolic setting of New Hampshire and Harvard and Princeton are located in low crime suburbs of major cities. Columbia is located in Manhattan, but since the 1990s the crime rate has been very low in that city.

Yale University is a different story.

Yale University, like its Ivy League brothers, is an incredibly fine academic institution that has graduated a number of brilliant minds from around the world; but it is also located in the middle of New Haven, Connecticut.

Since the Puritans first arrived there in the seventeenth century, New Haven has attracted several waves of immigrants. Irish, Italian, and Jewish immigrants immigrated there in large numbers during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and then groups from within the United States, such as blacks from the South, and Puerto Ricans, have moved there in the later twentieth century. The immigrants made New Haven a hard-scrabble, blue collar city that has experienced growing pains over the years.

One of the growing pains New Haven has experienced is a high crime rate.

Gang and drug violence has contributed to place New Haven in the top twenty of the most dangerous American cities per capita, where it enjoys the dubious distinction of being grouped with some of America's more notorious cities, such as Detroit, Chicago, and Memphis. New Haven's high crime rate has been a source of problems for Yale University for a number of years and made national headlines when Yale graduate student Annie Le mysteriously vanished from an on-campus laboratory on September 8, 2009.

A Woman with a Promising Future

In September, 2009, Annie Le was a woman with an incredible future in front of her. At twenty-four years old, Le was a doctoral student of pharmacology who was engaged to be married on September 13. She enjoyed being a student at Yale and was well liked by her friends and colleagues. Le was looking forward to marrying her fiancé Jonathan Widawsky and beginning her life in “the real world.”

The petite Le was a highly ambitious young woman who grew up in the San Jose, California area. Le was from a traditional, yet Americanized Vietnamese-American family that placed a high value on education and family, which she dutifully followed in her own life.

From an early age Le showed a keen interest in science and medicine. She volunteered in her community, studied hard, and was always there for family members. Eventually, her hard work paid off, as she graduated as the valedictorian of her high school class and was accepted to the University of Rochester where she earned a BA in bioscience in 2007.

The bright and ambitious Le was then accepted into the pharmacology graduate program at Yale where she was studying enzymes in order to develop treatments for diabetes and cancer.

But all of the hopes and dreams of this bright young woman were needlessly dashed in a bizarre crime that became the focus of national attention.

The Crime

Despite being located in the middle of a high crime city, Yale University is equipped with several levels of security. University police regularly patrol the campus looking for any student in need of help and investigating anything that may seem out of the ordinary. Property crimes have been high at Yale compared to other campuses in the state of Connecticut, but violent assaults and homicides are almost unheard of, which is no doubt at least partially the result of campus police patrols.

Yale University also has other security measures in place to protect its students and staff.

A number of close circuit television cameras strategically placed around the

campus record the movements of people in and out of the campus buildings, and many of the buildings can only be accessed with a current Yale University identification card.

Both of the last two security measures played an important role in the Annie Le case.

The morning of September 8 began just as any other for Annie Le. She woke up, had breakfast in her apartment, and then took public transportation to Sterling Hall on Yale's campus where she had an office. She left her purse, phone, and other valuables in her Sterling Hall office and then went to conduct research at the on-campus laboratory around 10 a.m.

Cameras in the laboratory captured images of her entering the building, but not of her leaving.

Le usually returned home in the afternoon, so when she failed to come back to the apartment, her roommate reported her missing around 9 p.m..

Campus, local, and state police, along with the FBI, immediately locked down the campus laboratory and began an exhaustive search for Le. It appeared that one of Yale's brightest stars had been abducted from campus.

The case immediately attracted media attention. A bright, attractive Ivy League student had disappeared from campus with no trace. Le's anguished family and her fiancé appealed to the public for help in press conferences, but as the country watched and hoped for the safe return of the graduate student, some doubted the circumstances.

Some people began to question if she was really abducted and began to propose that maybe she willingly chose to disappear. Perhaps the stress of her rigorous studies combined with doubt about her impending marriage made Le become a runaway bride. Those closest to Le dismissed such theories by pointing out that she only showed hope and excitement for her future and never displayed any signs of doubt towards her marriage. There was no way that Annie Le would have ruined her future and hurt family and friends in such a way, they said. Unfortunately, on September 13, the day of Annie Le's planned wedding, the thoughts of her family and friends were confirmed – the young graduate student's body was discovered in a basement wall of the

laboratory.

The Killer

An examination of Le's partially decomposed body revealed that the young woman had been strangled to death and was sexual assaulted. Initially, authorities cast a wide net in their potential suspect pool, which included friends, co-workers, and acquaintances of Le's, but once her body was discovered in the basement of the lab they knew that the killer was someone she worked with.

On the afternoon of September 10, before Le's body was discovered, graduate student Rachel Roth, who also worked in the lab, noticed what appeared to be a blood smear on a box of towels. Roth alerted authorities to the find, and while she waited for police to arrive she noticed twenty-six-year-old lab technician Raymond Clark acting strangely. She said he repositioned the box of towels so that the apparent blood smear was not visible and then cleaned a drain that did not appear to need cleaning.

Clark then told Yale police that he talked to Le in the lab on September 8, but that she left the building just after noon.

The video surveillance clearly showed that Le never left the building, and Raymond quickly became a person of interest in her disappearance. The police also noticed some scratches on Clark's face, but he claimed that he received the injuries from a cat.

Although arrows of suspicion began to clearly point towards Clark early in the investigation, authorities still did not know if they had an abduction, homicide, or runaway bride on their hands.

Further investigation of the laboratory turned up a discarded lab coat that was stained with what was later determined to be blood, some bloody clothing, and work boots with Clark's initials.

Le's body was eventually discovered when the odor from decomposition became apparent to investigators, who then brought in cadaver dogs that located her corpse. Authorities obtained a warrant for Clark's hair, blood, and fingernails on September 15th, which was then matched to some of the items discovered in the lab and on Le's body. The lab technician was arrested on

September 17th when he then failed a polygraph examination, which proved to be the final nail in his homicidal coffin.

After a series of pre-trial motions, at the urging of his parents Clark pleaded guilty to Le's murder in March, 2011. The judge sentenced Clark to forty-four years in prison with his release date in the year 2053.

If Clark survives natural causes and the clutches of hardened career criminals, he will be seventy years old when he is released.

Unanswered Questions

The abduction and murder of Annie Le is both a tragic and bizarre tale on so many levels. The tragic nature of the case is obvious: a bright young woman who had so much to offer the world was viciously murdered before her life had a chance to get underway.

The case was bizarre from start to finish.

Her apparent abduction from the supposed safe confines of an Ivy League science lab to the revelation that she was murdered and "hid" inside the lab were all details that make sure this case will never be forgotten.

But perhaps the most mysterious aspect of the case revolves around the killer, particularly what drove Clark to kill Le.

At his sentencing, Clark appeared genuinely contrite as he fought back tears and made a statement to the court.

'Annie was and will always be a wonderful person, by far a better person than I will ever be in my life. I'm sorry I lied. I'm sorry I ruined lives. And I'm sorry for taking Annie Le's life,' said Clark at sentencing.

Despite showing remorse for the horrific act, Clark never told the court why he killed Le.

Raymond Clark was a lab technician who did not get along well with the graduate students and scientists that worked in the lab, as some described him as a "control freak." One lab researcher said that Clark would get upset if others did not follow the smallest rules of the lab, such as wearing shoe covers. "He would make a big deal of it, instead of just requesting that they

wear them," said one of the scientists.

Some believe that Clark, a man with limited education who was little more than the laboratory's janitor, felt extremely inadequate around the graduate students and scientists and therefore would make a major issue about minor problems in order to exert some power. On the day he killed Le, Clark sent her a text message requesting a meeting to discuss the sanitary conditions of the cages of the mice that were used for experiments.

Did Le meet with Clark and say something that set the man off into a murderous rage?

If that is the case, there is little in his past to suggest such a thing, and the two worked together for about four months with no signs of turmoil or acrimony. Friends of Clark's were all quick to point out that they were extremely shocked when they learned he murdered Le.

"This is not the Raymond Clark that I know," said Clark's childhood friend Maurice Perry. "I've known him so long. I just can't picture him doing something like this."

Neighbors also described Clark, who lived with his girlfriend and a dog, as thoughtful and considerate.

Yale University president Richard Levin also showed surprise, although his statement was no doubt to at least partially cover himself and the university from a law-suit by Le's family. Levin stated: "His supervisor reports that nothing in the history of his employment at the university gave an indication that his involvement in such a crime might be possible."

Unfortunately, Raymond Clark proved that when it comes to murder, anyone is capable and anything is possible.

An Eerie Footnote

We all know that words we say, if not chosen correctly, can have a tendency to come back to haunt us, but in Annie Le's case, words she *wrote* continue in many ways to haunt Yale's administration.

In February 2009, just months before she was murdered, Annie Le wrote a short article in Yale Medical School's *B Magazine* titled: "Crime and Safety

in New Haven.” Le’s article focused on what Yale students can do to protect themselves from the crime in New Haven.

She wrote: “In short, New Haven is a city, and all cities have their perils, but with a little street smarts, one can avoid becoming another statistic.”

Unfortunately for Annie, no amount of street smarts could help her avoid the peril in the laboratory that ultimately made her a statistic.

Chapter 6: The Disappearance of the McStay Family

As detailed in this book, disappearances are not that uncommon and some, such as the vanishing of the Palmer brothers, are downright creepy. No matter how bizarre some missing person cases are, most tend to involve just one person. Whether the person involved got too intoxicated and wandered off, succumbed to the effects of Alzheimer's disease, or was the victim of a homicide, the vast majority of disappearances only involve one person.

Logic and statistics dictate that the chance of more than one person disappearing at the same time from the same place is extremely low. For instance, if a group of people wander from their camp into the wilderness, the chances are pretty good that either one of the campers will be found by a search party or one of the group will make his way back to the camp. The same goes for an abduction-homicide; it is extremely difficult to abduct and murder multiple people at the same time, even if there are multiple killers involved.

These facts are what make the 2010 disappearance of the McStay family in Fallbrook, California both peculiar and frightening.

By all accounts, the McStay family—which was comprised of forty-year-old father Joseph, forty-three-year-old mother Summer, four-year-old boy Gianni, and his three-year-old brother Joe Junior—were an average American family. They lived a relatively comfortable life in a quiet suburban neighborhood that was paid for with the profits from Joe's contracting business and Summer's work as a real estate agent.

The McStays never mentioned to family or friends that they were taking a trip, and they were not known to have any enemies, which is what made their sudden disappearance frightening and the subject of nationwide media attention.

The Disappearance

Joe and Summer never indicated to their friends and family that anything was wrong in their household or that the family was planning on taking any

extended trips. In fact, the family had just celebrated Joe Junior's third birthday on January 31, and by all accounts the family appeared happy and content, which made their sudden disappearance all the more mysterious.

After repeated calls from Joe's brother Mike went unanswered, Mike entered the home through a window on February 15 to investigate. The family dogs were in the backyard unfed and there were signs that the family left quickly because food was left out. Mike then called local police to report the strange circumstances and officially begin a missing persons investigation.

The initial police investigation turned up a number of clues, but they only added more mystery to an increasingly enigmatic case.

Although the left out food and the unfed dogs indicated that the McStays left their home in a hurry, there were no signs of a struggle. With the help of Mike and other family members, the police were also able to ascertain that nothing valuable was missing, so a scenario of a home invasion/burglary was quickly ruled out.

The Fallbrook police and San Diego Sheriff's Department quickly canvassed the neighborhood and interviewed all of the McStay's family, friends, and neighbors, which then resulted in a couple of more important clues.

A neighbor's security camera caught images of a car leaving the McStay residence at 7:47 p.m., but the car did not belong to either Joe or Summer! Unfortunately, although technology has come a long way, the resolution of the camera was not good enough to identify the image/s of anyone in the car or the car's license plate. For the time being the mysterious nighttime visitor to the McStay home was a dead end, but it possibly fit part of a bigger picture that had yet to be painted.

The police next interviewed Joe's friend and business partner, Chase Merritt, who said that he received a call from him at 8:28 p.m.. Merritt let the call go to voice mail, as he claimed he often did, because if it was important or work-related then Joe would leave a message.

Joe did not leave a message.

The next major break in the case came on February 8, when the family's

Izuzu Trooper was found in the San Ysidro neighborhood of San Diego, which is just north of the international border of the United States and Mexico. The discovery of the McStays' family car was thought to be a big lead, but ultimately raised more questions than there were answers.

Did the McStays simply go to Mexico for a vacation? If so, why did they not tell any of their family or friends? Why did they leave their beloved pets in such a sorry condition? And perhaps the most important question: why would they go to Mexico in the first place?

Tijuana, which is the major Mexican city just south of the border, is a popular destination for many Americans, but it would not be a stretch to say that the city is not exactly family friendly. Tijuana is more known for its brothels, strip clubs, and availability of drugs—both legal and illicit—than it is for any family attractions. Tijuana is clearly not a place where most people would bring two young children.

And why would the family leave their car and walk into Mexico?

There seems to be no reason why they would have done this. Some people argued that perhaps the entire family was trying to get “lost” and moved south of the border to do so, but it no doubt would have been easier to do so with the family car, at least for a while. They could have always sold the car at a later time.

The location of the car on the border raised more questions than there were answers, and many of the McStays' family and friends began to believe that the car was staged at the border by other people, possibly for nefarious reasons.

As family and friends began to doubt that the McStays were in Mexico, police uncovered another clue that once more turned the investigation upside down. A forensic search of the family's computer revealed that on January 28, internet searches were made about travel in Mexico, specifically what type of documentation children would need to enter the country.

Perhaps the McStays, for whatever reason, simply had enough of life in America and decided to leave on a whim to Mexico. After all, Summer and Joe were known to be free spirits, so maybe the situation was not so

nefarious.

Or maybe they had to leave town quickly for more ominous reasons.

The McStays' family and friends remained unconvinced that Joe and Summer would have taken their children to another country without telling anyone, but without more evidence there was little that the police could do.

The disappearance of the McStay family would remain one of the most highly reported missing persons cases in recent American history.

Media Attention and Investigation

As the clues and circumstances of the disappearance of the McStay family emerged, the situation became one made for the media. Images of the attractive couple and their cute little boys were repeatedly flashed across television screens, newspaper articles, and webpages.

The case quickly came to the attention of one-man crime crusader John Walsh, who hosted the popular weekly show *America's Most Wanted*. Walsh's show profiled notorious criminals who were on the run, as well as missing children, which Walsh often became emotional about since his own son was abducted and murdered by a serial killer in 1981. The McStay family disappearance seemed tailor-made for *America's Most Wanted*, so the case was profiled on a June 2010 episode. A number of viewers called into the tip line after the episode aired, but unfortunately they all turned out to be dead ends.

The McStay case was also featured on the similarly themed show, *Unsolved Mysteries*, hosted by late actor Dennis Farina, but again, the tips that were generated led nowhere.

As the months that the McStay family was missing turned into years, the police, John Walsh, and Dennis Farina were not the only people investigating their disappearance; former radio talk show host and author Rick Baker also threw his hat into the ring.

Baker began investigating the case independently from the police shortly after the family went missing. He interviewed friends, family, and potential witnesses and came to some interesting conclusions in his book, *No*

Goodbyes: The Mysterious Disappearance of the McStay Family. Baker's interest in the case began when he interviewed Mike McStay on his San Diego radio show in 2011. After the radio interview with McStay, Baker compiled a list of potential sightings of the family and followed up on them, which took the radio host throughout Latin America.

Four days after the McStays vanished, a video of a family of four crossing the U.S.-Mexican border on foot surfaced, but it could not be determined who they were. After that report, more and more tips of sightings in countries such as the Dominican Republic, Belize, and Haiti kept a glimmer of hope alive for the friends and family of the McStays.

Baker packed his suitcases and went to a number of the exotic locales to follow up on the leads. "I've traveled around the world to what I thought were verified sightings," said Baker, but ultimately none of them panned out.

The supposed Latin American connection led many to believe that violent drug cartels may have been responsible for the family's abduction, even though there were no signs that either of the parents owed drug debts. There was also no evidence that apart from some occasional marijuana use either of the McStay parents ever took "harder" drugs such as cocaine, methamphetamines, or heroin. Joe and Summer McStay just did not fit the profile of drug cartel victims.

The location of the McStay's Izuzu also did not seem like the work of a drug cartel to Baker. "Why did they stage the car? A cartel is not interested in staging anything," said Baker.

Baker's observation is correct in regards to cartel activities south of the border, but it is commonly known that the cartels keep more of a low profile in the United States and refrain from some of their more blatant acts of extreme violence. With that said, it does seem like a lot of effort for gang members to go through to somehow cover up the abduction of a middle class American family.

As Baker's independent investigation continued, the police began to focus on a suspect who was right under their noses.

A Suspect Emerges

Charles “Chase” Merritt, now fifty-nine years old, was a friend and occasional business associate of Joe. The two men worked on a number of projects in the area installing fountains, which was Joe’s specialty, and were generally known to get along well.

Decorative water fountains that are often seen in the yards and driveways of expensive homes are what Joe specialized in and how he was able to provide for his family. Business slowed during 2008 and 2009, as it did for the entire construction industry nationwide, but at the time of the McStay family disappearance business was picking back up. Joe was finally able to start saving some money again for his family, and he was also able to hire more employees and give some work to his friends such as Charles Merritt.

Although Merritt and McStay did not spend too much time together outside of work—after all, Joe had a family to look after—by all accounts they got along fairly well and considered each other colleagues and friends. Also, a large part of Merritt’s income was derived from work McStay sent his way, so at first glance it seemed unlikely that he would have anything to do with Joe and his family’s disappearance.

But Merritt was the last known person to see Joe.

Merritt told police that he met Joe at a Chick-fil-A restaurant in the afternoon to discuss some potential future contracts and receive payment for some completed jobs. He claimed that McStay seemed fine and that the two left and went their separate ways after the brief meeting. As the last person to see Joe McStay, a certain amount of suspicion was cast Merritt’s way, but that alone is not enough to arrest someone for a crime, which is if a crime in fact took place.

But it turns out that Merritt also had a bit of a shady past.

Merritt was a convicted felon who had a rap sheet that included burglary and possession of stolen property. His last conviction came in 2001. Although Merritt had a criminal record, all of his convictions were for non-violent offenses and no one that knew him indicated that he was capable of abducting four people. He was not known as a violent person and had no known altercations with Joe.

The case into the disappearance of the McStay family continued to go off into several directions, and as time went by media interest began to wane. Many in the McStay family began to question if they would ever know what happened to their loved ones.

Then on November 13, 2013, the case took an unfortunate turn.

The Discovery

San Bernardino County in southern California is the largest county in land mass in the United States. Although the county is also quite populated, with over two million inhabitants, most of those people live in towns such as San Bernardino, which are just outside of Los Angeles County in the far western end of the county. Once you get east of San Bernardino, the county is a vast sea of desert and mountains that stretches all the way to the state lines of Nevada and Arizona.

It is exactly the type of place where a person can easily go missing, alive or dead.

On November 13, a motorcyclist discovered the remains of the entire McStay family in two shallow graves outside of the town of Victorville. The search for the McStays was finally over, but the case then evolved into a homicide investigation.

Although the bodies had apparently been in the ground since the time of their disappearance, the dry desert climate preserved the bodies of the adults quite well. An autopsy determined that the parents, and more than likely the children as well, were killed by blunt force trauma to the head, although the bodies of the children were too degraded to tell for sure. A sledge hammer recovered from one of the graves was probably the murder weapon.

Charles Merritt was arrested the next day for the family's murder and in pre-trial hearings it was revealed that the police had amassed a mountain of evidence on him during their investigation.

Much of the evidence against Merritt is circumstantial, but it is voluminous and appears quite damning.

The investigation into Merritt's background discovered that the contractor

with a modest income liked to spend several days at a time in the area casinos.

And Merritt was not winning!

To pay for his gambling losses, Merritt wrote over \$21,000 in checks on Joe McStay's business account and then cancelled McStay's QuickBooks accounting membership on February 8, 2010, the day the McStay's Izuzu was discovered near the international border.

The circumstantial evidence against Merritt further piled up when it was discovered that he withdrew thousands more from Joe's business account during the period from February 9, 2010, well into March, to pay for extended trips to area casinos.

Merritt's DNA was also recovered from the family's Izuzu, which can certainly be argued away as he was an associate's of Joes, but when taken with the other evidence, looks to be the final straw in the camel's back of circumstantial evidence.

Merritt now sits in the San Bernardino County jail and faces the death penalty if he is convicted. Perhaps in an effort to stall the inevitable, Merritt has fired five different attorneys, which has caused considerable delay to the trial. Although the surviving members of the McStay family are glad that an arrest has been made, the loss of their loved ones will always weigh heavy on their hearts.

Although it looks like all arrows point towards Charles Merritt as the killer, some doubt if he is the sole perpetrator. One argument is that it would be too difficult for one person to kill four people, even if two of them were children. The reality is that Joe trusted his business associate and he therefore never saw him coming, so to speak. Once the McStay parents knew what was happening, they probably complied in order to save their children and by the time they got to the desert outside Victorville, it was too late.

In a case as strange as the McStay family disappearance, conspiracy theories are bound to take hold, and even if Merritt is convicted and put to death, some will continue to doubt that all the facts have come to light.

The true tragedy of the McStay murder case is that they were murdered by someone they trusted who killed them for the oldest motive known to man—greed.

Chapter 7: The Rayna Rison Murder

In recent years, cold cases that were solved through advances in science have been featured on popular documentary television shows such as *Forensic Files* and *The New Detectives*. These shows stress the unbiased nature of DNA in contrast to the often un-credible accounts of witnesses. The reality is that many criminals are smart enough to leave no traces of physical evidence. Crafty criminals often wear gloves to conceal their fingerprints and destroy the bodies of murder victims in order to destroy any physical evidence that could point towards their guilt. Bodies are also often moved from the scene of the murder to another location by the murderer in efforts to confuse homicide investigators. And sometimes criminals just get lucky and no physical evidence is left at the crime scene, or what little was, has been degraded by the time forensic investigators find it.

Because of the sometimes crafty nature of killers, oftentimes investigators are forced to rely upon the age old evidence of eye-witness testimony. The problem with eye witnesses is that humans can be notoriously unreliable at times. People might be scared to offer testimony, or they may feel some sort of misplaced loyalty toward a criminal.

But sometimes, if given enough time, circumstances and a guilty conscience will lead to unknown or once thought unreliable witnesses to help solve a murder.

This is what happened in the 1993 murder case of Rayna Rison.

A Promising Future

Located about an hour's drive east of Chicago on Interstate 80, LaPorte County, Indiana, is known for its low crime, affordable housing, and generally being a good place to live. The people of LaPorte County take pride in their homes and schools and are known for being friendly, helpful people.

Sixteen-year-old Rayna Rison was one of LaPorte's friendly inhabitants.

Rayna enjoyed spending time with her parents, Bernie and Karen, and she was particularly close to her sister Wendy, who was one year her junior. Rayna excelled in school and was known to be a popular girl who got along

with most of the disparate cliques that are often found in American high schools.

In her spare time, Rayna worked part-time at the Pine Lake animal clinic in the town of LaPorte. The veterinarians she worked for stated she had a natural gift for the position and would no doubt someday realize her dream of becoming a veterinarian and opening her own clinic.

But that dream was shattered when she vanished from the animal clinic on the night of March 26, 1993.

When Rayna failed to come home that night her parents and sister began to worry. The responsible sixteen-year-old always checked in with her parents, especially if she stayed all night at a friend's. Rayna's parents called around to her friends, but no one had seen her.

It was as if she had vanished into thin air.

The local police and sheriff's department soon got involved, and the search for Rayna Rison became a missing person case.

The Search for Rayna

Friends and family of Rayna joined together with local law enforcement to find her by searching local ponds, rivers, and fields. Her family also plastered the area with flyers that had recent pictures of Rayna. The extensive search quickly paid off when Rayna's car was located a day after her disappearance in a rural area of LaPorte County, but there were no signs of Rayna.

An examination of Rayna's car seemed to reveal nothing that could help investigators: there was no blood present, and there was no damage to the car. It was as if she simply drove the car to that location and then left it for whatever reason. The discovery of the car raised a lot of red flags, but the local police were quick to point out that at that point they only had a missing person case on their hands.

The disappearance frightened residents of LaPorte County and also brought media attention to the area.

Rayna's disappearance was featured three times by John Walsh on *America's Most Wanted* in just one month, and Oakland Athletics owner and part time

LaPorte resident, Charlie Finley, offered a \$25,000 reward for Rayna's safe return.

To some outside LaPorte County, Finley's interest in the case appeared to be grandstanding, but the locals knew he was sincere. Yes, the billionaire had a tendency to be flamboyant at times—one of his best known accomplishments was bringing the rock band The Beatles to Kansas City during their limited American tour in 1964—but he also had a legitimate love for LaPorte County. Finley donated much of his money to support schools in the county and even lived in the area while he owned the Athletics. But despite the immense media attention, profiles on *America's Most Wanted*, and the reward offered from Finley's own pockets, the police received no credible leads as to Rayna's whereabouts.

Then, about a month after her car was discovered, the body of Rayna Rison was found in a lake in LaPorte County.

The investigation then shifted from that of a missing person case to a homicide, but unfortunately for the authorities, the fact that Rayna's body was submerged in water for so long meant that it would be more difficult to lift forensic evidence from the scene or Rayna's body.

The autopsy determined that Rayna died of strangulation, and although DNA profiling was becoming more widely used by law enforcement in 1993, no forensic evidence was taken from her body. Police could not even say for sure if she was killed at the location where she was discovered or dumped at the scene. There were also *apparently* no eye witnesses to the murder.

Who would kill such an innocent girl?

The Case Goes Cold

As time moved further away from the discovery of Rayna's body, her murder began to slowly fade from the public eye. Her family held vigils every year and her case had an occasional mention on *America's Most Wanted*, but by 1998 it seemed as though the killer would never be caught.

But then an arrest was made.

Rayna's brother-in-law Ray McCarty, who was twenty-eight at the time of

her murder, was arrested and charged with the killing in 1998.

Lori McCarty, who was married to Ray, was Rayna's older sister, and although there was a considerable age difference between the two, the younger sister often spent a lot of time around the McCarty house. Rayna also became close with Ray—too close.

When Ray was twenty-four, he began molesting twelve-year-old Rayna, which resulted in a pregnancy when the girl was just thirteen. McCarty used the typical method of operation of a child predator by first appearing as a friend to Rayna and then using a combination of compliments and threats to sexually molest her. He was eventually convicted of molesting Rayna, served time in jail, and was then placed on probation. The local police were particularly interested in the fact that McCarty threatened Rayna and her parents' lives if she ever revealed the truth of his despicable acts.

She did report him and was later murdered.

Almost immediately, McCarty was the top suspect. Besides his past crimes and threats against Rayna, he was unable to account for his whereabouts during the time Rayna was abducted. Despite the circumstantial evidence against McCarty, there was no physical evidence and no eye-witness that could place him with Rayna the day she disappeared.

Perhaps feeling a bit of pressure, the LaPorte county prosecutor's office charged McCarty with murder in 1998, but released him fifteen months later when it was clear there was not enough evidence to convict him.

Investigators either had to find more evidence against McCarty or look for new suspects.

Was Rayna the victim of a local serial killer?

Larry Dewayne Hall was described by many as polite and mild mannered, yet beneath the calm exterior lurked a raging serial killer. Larry Hall was a native of Wabash, Indiana, who worked as a janitor and enjoyed taking part in Civil War reenactments in his free time.

He also enjoyed killing women.

Hall confessed to killing a number of women, and some authorities believe the count may be as high as forty. They think that as he traveled the country taking part in battle reenactments, he was also killing women. So far, Hall has not garnered as much attention as other more well-known serial killers, but that may change if more murders are definitively attributed to him.

In 2010, a book written by Christopher Martin titled *Urges: A Chronicle of Serial Killer Larry Hall* was published that argued Hall may be Rison's killer. He pointed out that Hall and McCarty knew each other in grade school, which suggested that there may have been collusion in Rayna's murder. Martin also stated that a police search of Hall's home turned up a box of birth control pills with Rayna Rison's name on it, although investigators said that none of the drug stores in the area had a prescription for Rison.

He was also apparently out of the area doing a reenactment when Rayna disappeared.

It was never explained why Hall had those pills in his possession, but some investigators believe it was part of one of the killer's sick fantasies. Hall, like many other people in Indiana, simply followed Rayna's case and got some sort of perverse pleasure out of fantasizing about the details of her death. LaPorte County authorities were adamant that there was no way Hall was Rison's killer.

To the public, it seemed as though Rayna's killer, or killers, may never be caught. But behind the scenes, as Martin was attempting to finger Hall, the police were about to nab the killer.

Old Loyalties are Shattered

The criminal underworld is an interesting place. Yes, there is a criminal code where it is a big no-no to be a "snitch" or informant for the police, but it is also a society where every man is out for himself; loyalties are often tenuous and subject to change depending on the situation a criminal may find himself in, such as the capricious nature of his cohorts. A criminal who is tight-lipped and loyal to another person at one time may find that loyalty detrimental to his own life in the future.

The criminal underworld is also a domain driven by fear.

Some of the most successful criminals keep their underlings under control through extreme acts of violence that are perpetrated either on others for the underlings to see, or on the underlings themselves. A criminal is less inclined to give the police information on one of his associates if the person is known to employ extreme violence against his enemies.

In the cold case murder of Rayna Rison, the crime was ultimately solved not through forensic evidence, but by the police breaking through the warped sense of loyalty and violence that pervades the criminal underworld.

Thirty-eight-year old Jason Tibbs was arrested in August 2013 for the murder of Rayna Rison. The arrest came as a surprise to many in LaPorte County who expected her killer to be an outsider like Dewayne Hall, but it turns out that he was in fact at the top of the suspect list at the beginning of the investigation.

At the time of Rayna's disappearance and murder, Tibbs was eighteen and had briefly dated Rison. It was quickly determined that Tibbs still held a flame for Rayna as indicated in letters that he wrote to her in which he said he would "go to almost any extreme" to date her again. A ring that was identified as belonging to Tibbs was also found in Rayna's abandoned car.

Also, in the years after Rayna's murder, Tibbs developed a reputation as a violent thug in LaPorte County.

When Rayna's sister and former classmates graduated from high school and went on to start careers and families, Jason Tibbs graduated from the school of hard knocks. Tibbs had encounters with the police throughout the 1990s and was known as a tough guy within the local criminal underworld. A combination of fear and misplaced loyalty helped protect Tibbs from justice for two decades, but time began running out for him in 2008.

Ricky Hammons was fourteen when Rayna Rison was murdered. Like Tibbs, he was a bit of a juvenile delinquent who enjoyed skipping school and smoking pot, and also like Tibbs he immersed himself in the LaPorte County's criminal underworld during the 1990s. In 1999, at the age of twenty, Hammons shot and killed a man in rural LaPorte, which landed him in the Wabash, Indiana, state prison with a forty-five year sentence.

Life had not gone well for Ricky Hammons.

Then in 2008, for reasons that are debated, Hammons reached out to LaPorte County detectives with information in the cold case murder of Rayna Rison. Tibbs' attorneys argued that Hammons made up the information for a reduction to his sentence but LaPorte County prosecutor denied that stating, "There was no deal with a witness despite the suggestion there was."

A man has a lot of time to contemplate his life behind bars.

Perhaps feelings of remorse and sympathy for the Rison family combined with no reason to fear Tibbs anymore made Hammons come forward. It may also be that he just wanted to get even with Tibbs for some reason. Tibbs was known to intimidate and bully younger delinquents in LaPorte County, so maybe Hammons finally saw his chance to get even. Regardless of his reasons, Hammons statements to LaPorte County investigators quickly got the ball rolling that led to Tibbs' arrest.

Hammons told the authorities that on the night of March 26, 1993, he was smoking marijuana in the hayloft of a pole barn when a car pulled in that was driven by his sister's boyfriend, Eric Freeman, with Jason Tibbs along as passenger. He said that Tibbs then opened the trunk of the car where he could see what appeared to be a body wrapped in a blanket. Freeman argued with Tibbs over what happened before Hammons then snuck out of the barn.

Although Hammons' statement appeared to verify what many LaPorte County investigators originally thought, more evidence was needed to corroborate his story in order to make an arrest. The next step was to locate Eric Freeman.

Locating Eric Freeman was easy, as he too was incarcerated on a murder conviction.

Where it is possible that Ricky Hammons may have been driven by a combination of remorse and sympathy to come forward with information in the murder of Rayna Rison, Eric Freeman was clearly driven by fear, the fear of spending the rest of his life in prison.

Although Freeman is currently serving time in prison for murder, he, like

most murderers, will probably be paroled someday. The likelihood of him ever being released would be severely diminished if he was convicted of another murder, so Freeman quickly decided to talk under one condition, that he receive immunity from prosecution for the murder of Rayna Rison.

Unlike in movies and television shows, prosecutors in the real world are usually loathe to award full immunity to criminals in order to obtain their testimony in court. Shaving a few years off an impending sentence is standard, but sometimes full immunity is awarded if the person in question played a significantly lesser role in the crime or there are other mitigating circumstances.

Serving time on a previous murder conviction is clearly a mitigating circumstance since Freeman was going nowhere anytime soon.

Freeman's statement to police and subsequent testimony at Tibbs' murder trial corroborated Hammons' statement and also filled in some important details.

According to Freeman, he rode with Tibbs to the Pine Lake animal clinic so that Tibbs could speak with Rayna and hopefully persuade her to start dating him again. The conversation quickly turned into an argument as Rison was adamant that she did not want to date Tibbs as she was seeing someone else.

Despite Freeman's testimony, the next part of the story remains somewhat enigmatic. For some reason, after she had a heated conversation with Tibbs, Rayna agreed to get into the car with him and Freeman. Freeman then said that he drove the two to a rural area where their argument continued until Tibbs realized he could not win so he then overpowered the girl and strangled her to death. The two men then put Rayna's body in the trunk of the car and drove to the barn to contemplate their next move. It was at this point that Hammons saw Freeman and Tibbs.

After a heated argument over what he had done, Tibbs convinced Freeman to help him dispose of Rayna's body. Freeman claimed he helped Tibbs because he feared going to prison and what the killer might do to him. He also felt a sense of loyalty to his troubled friend. But nearly twenty years later, Freeman feared spending the rest of his life in prison more than his former friend.

On November 7, 2014, primarily due to the testimonies of Hammons and Freeman, Jason Tibbs was found guilty of the murder of Rayna Rison and sentenced to forty years in prison. Under the Indiana Department of Corrections parole system, Tibbs will probably serve just under twenty years.

Despite the length of the saga to bring Rayna's killer to justice and what many believed was too lenient of a sentence for Tibbs, the Rison family has finally found some peace and closure.

"Hopefully now my family can find some semblance of peace from what we've been through for the last twenty years," said Rayna's father, Ben Rison.

Chapter 8: The Murder of Sara Lynn Wineski

The murder cases that grab the most headlines tend to be ones where the victims are truly “innocent” and in the wrong place and the wrong time. Part of the shock in those types of cases comes from the sense that no matter how safe a neighborhood one may live in, there is always the potential to be the victim of a heinous crime. Indeed, it is relatively rare, even in cities with high crime rates, for people not involved in criminal activity to be murdered.

When people do hear about criminals and people from the lowest rungs of society being murdered, the response is often differential at best. The philosophy holds that the police are here to protect law abiding citizens, not the criminals and other assorted “scum.”

But the reality is that the police are here to protect all members of society, no matter what a person’s situation currently is. No one is disposable and every life has value, even the lives of criminals and prostitutes.

The best police officers around the world hold this attitude, which was put into action by the St. Petersburg, Florida, Police Department when they discovered the body of forty- nine-year-old prostitute Sara Lynn Wineski.

Around 11 p.m. on May 21, 2005, residents who were staying at the St. Petersburg Ronald McDonald House were awoken up by sounds of screams. Oftentimes in large American cities such sounds go unnoticed, but possibly because of the proximity of the Ronald McDonald House, a resident called the police. The police responded to the scene, but after they saw no signs of an assault or other criminal activity they moved on to other calls.

The next day, the body of Sarah Lynn Wineski was discovered under a deck of the Ronald McDonald House. She had been raped and strangled to death, but other than the ear witness who called into the police the night of the murder, there were no witnesses to the crime.

Police immediately suspected that Wineski, who was homeless and had been working as a prostitute, fell victim to a serial rapist who had been operating in the area. A background check of Wineski revealed that she was new to the Tampa Bay and knew few people, so it was believed that she did not know

her killer. Random murders are the toughest to solve, but the St. Petersburg police had one powerful piece of evidence that the killer left behind—his DNA profile.

But the police needed a suspect to link the DNA to, which could take years or might never happen at all.

Sara Lynn Wineski

Sometimes it is easy to write off and forget about crime victims like Sara Wineski. We tend not to give a second thought when crime happens to criminals, the homeless, or those who live “on the other side of town”, and when they become victims little is usually said. Sometimes, these people get mentioned in the local press but are often never named. Wineski’s killing probably would have been glossed over in the local Tampa Bay press as well, if it were not for the location of her murder. A murder at the Ronald McDonald House, where family members of children undergoing treatment for serious illnesses stay, surely gave unfavorable attention to St. Petersburg.

When she was murdered, Sara Wineski had hit rock bottom. Her life had spiraled out of control through a series of bad relationships, drug use, and criminal activity, but things were not always that way. Wineski was a mother of four and had four grandchildren, and her family still loved her despite her plethora of demons.

“We have wonderful memories of her,” said Candice Chessman, one of Wineski’s daughters. “And her murderer stole the hope that we all carried in our hearts that we would have the chance to make more memories with her someday.”

Wineski had only recently arrived in the Tampa Bay area in an effort to get a fresh start, but with no money or contacts in the area she quickly turned to her old drug habits and prostitution. Prostitution was an easy and quick way for Wineski to make money for her drug habit, although it ultimately was the source of her final demise.

Much of society may have given up on Sara Lynn Wineski, but the St. Petersburg police did not.

A DNA Match

The homicide detectives of the St. Petersburg police department were just as dedicated to catching the killer of Sara Lynn Wineski as any other murderer, and they knew that the small bit of DNA they lifted from Wineski's body would probably be the key to catching him.

Chances are someone who would commit such a terrible crime had either done so before or would again at some point in the future. Despite that grim prospect, it meant that there was a good chance of eventually catching Wineski's killer. The police entered Wineski's killer's DNA sample into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS) and waited for a match. The CODIS database was established after the DNA Identification Act became law in 1994. CODIS is an FBI program, but samples are taken from all fifty states, the federal government, and the District of Colombia. At first, samples were taken from convicted sex offenders in various states, but over the years the database has grown to include persons convicted of all felonies, and in some states, those even charged with felonies and some misdemeanors. Each individual state determines its own criteria for who is required to give DNA samples, but by 2006 every state had joined the CODIS database on some level.

2006 also happened to be the year when the DNA from Wineski's body was matched to a suspect!

In many ways, the trajectory of Raymond Samuels' life was similar to Wineski's. He suffered from a variety of personal issues, was a drug user, and was homeless and only in the Tampa Bay area for a very short time when Wineski was murdered. But unlike Wineski, Samuels chose to take out his rage on others.

The DNA taken from Wineski's body was definitively matched to Samuels.

It turns out that Samuels was easy to locate. In 2006, he was incarcerated in an Ohio prison with a lengthy sentence for a violent home invasion of an elderly couple. When Samuels entered the Ohio Department of Corrections after his conviction, a sample of his DNA profile was taken and entered into the CODIS database.

Detective Mike Kovacsev of the St. Petersburg police department had not given up on finding Sara Wineski's killer and routinely took the time to enter

the DNA of the unknown male taken from the victim into the CODIS database. In late 2006, they matched the sample to Samuels, but waited several more years to charge him.

There were still too many questions that had to be answered before formal charges could be brought, foremost whether Samuels and Wineski knew each other. After all, Wineski was a known prostitute and the DNA sample taken from her body may have been the result of a consensual, paid sexual encounter. Kovacsev and other detectives from St. Petersburg traveled to Ohio to interview Samuels, but the convict asserted his Fifth Amendment right and refused to talk.

Kovacsev was confident that he had his man and kept the Wineski family continually updated about the case.

“The family was understanding,” said Kovacsev. “It’s not like we had someone out on the street. He was in custody so he wasn’t going anywhere.”

Forensic technicians ran more tests on the DNA recovered from the scene to make sure they had the right man and, most importantly, they were also able to match DNA taken from a belt believed to be the murder weapon to Samuels.

Samuels was charged with first degree murder in the death of Sara Wineski in 2013 and currently sits in the Pinellas County jail in Florida awaiting trial.

Wineski’s family is grateful that Kovacsev and the other detectives from St. Petersburg did not forget about their loved one, despite her past.

“As a family, we are not in denial about where she was in life, but it is important to us that people know that her life was not a waste and not something anyone had the right to take from her,” said Candice Chessman. “She was not always homeless and alone.”

Chapter 9: The Murder of Little Anna Palmer

As detailed in the last story, the murder of anyone, no matter his or her background, is always a terrible thing. But the murder of a child clearly brings out a slew of emotions in even the most stoic of people.

What type of person could kill an innocent child? This is a question that psychiatrists, psychologists, and penal experts have attempted to answer now for decades through interviews and examinations of known child killers. Unfortunately, all the studies have apparently failed to unlock the secrets to what makes a child killer tick because the murder of children keeps happening.

With that said, child murder is still a relatively rare phenomenon, and children who follow basic safety rules are usually exempt from the worst category of criminals, which makes the next case all the more frightening.

In 1998, ten-year-old Anna Palmer was like any other kid her age—she liked to spend time with her friends, pets, and family. Most importantly, Anna followed her mother's safety rules, but none of that helped the poor little girl when she was brutally murdered on her family's porch in broad daylight on September 10, 1998.

The Crime

September 10th began just like any other in the Palmer household in Salt Lake City, Utah. At around 5 p.m., Anna called her mother Nancy at work to ask if she could play outside with some neighborhood kids. The Palmer's neighborhood was very safe and everyone knew each other, so it was common for all the kids to meet up and ride bikes or play games like hide and seek. Fifth grader Anna was allowed to take part in the neighborhood activities as long as she told her mother where she was going and came back home at a specific time, usually before dark. Nancy told Anna that it would be fine, but that she should be home by 7 p.m. when she arrived home from work.

When Nancy came home at 7, she was surprised to see Anna lying on the front porch, but when she got closer her surprise turned to horror—little Anna was stiff and in a pool of blood. The petrified mother immediately called 911

and attempted to conduct CPR on Anna, but the poor little girl's throat was gashed and her spinal cord was severed. Anna was dead before Nancy got home.

An autopsy revealed that Anna was beaten and stabbed five times. Either the gash to the throat or the stab to the spinal cord could have killed her. Anna was also sexually assaulted.

After the initial shock of the horrific murder wore off, the mood of the residents of Salt Lake City turned to fear and anger. If such a despicable murder could happen to a girl that seemingly followed all the safety rules and who lived in a safe neighborhood, then no child was safe. The people were also angry, and in the religiously conservative state of Utah, people had biblical retribution on their minds.

The Salt Lake City police had to move fast to catch Anna's killer.

The Investigation

Homicide detectives with the Salt Lake City police department immediately went to work by canvassing Anna's neighborhood and interviewing her friends and family. The case was as bizarre as it was heart wrenching due to the circumstances of little Anna being abducted and murdered all within a matter of minutes, near a busy intersection, and during daylight hours. Despite those facts, no one had seen her taken or murdered.

Or did they?

Detectives quickly put together a timeline for the last two hours of Anna Palmer's life, which helped bring to light a suspect.

After she got off the phone with her mother, Anna walked a few houses down to meet her friend Loxane Konesavanh. The two girls went to a local park and spent most of the next two hours swinging. When it got close to 7 p.m., Anna, being the safe girl who followed her mother's rules, began to walk back home with Loxane. The two girls then noticed that a man was following them, so remembering "stranger danger," they let him pass and said nothing to him. Loxane said that when the man passed them, he turned and glared at Anna.

The two girls then stopped at the yard of fourteen-year-old Amie Johnson to see her new kitten. Loxane then went home a different way than Anna, but Anna was apparently accompanied by the man the two girls had seen before.

“He creeped me out personally,” said Johnson, who witnessed the mysterious man walking with Anna. “I looked back and Anna was walking home, and he was still walking behind her like a crazy person. I looked again and no one was there.”

Adult neighbors also reported seeing a young man who fit the girls’ description lurking around the area earlier in the day. Witnesses said he looked drugged or drunk, but none knew who he was. A man matching the description was also seen walking around the scene of Anna’s murder.

Did the killer return to the scene of the crime?

The lead sounded promising to investigators, but identifying the creepy stranger would prove to be extremely difficult. Detectives interviewed everyone who lived in the neighborhood and paid special attention to all known sex offenders. In total, the Salt Lake City Police Department interviewed over 200 people in connection with the murder of Anna Palmer.

Anna’s family also got involved by making public appeals via the media for anyone with any information about the little girl’s murder to come forward to the police. Further incentive was added with an \$11,000 reward for information leading to the killer’s arrest and conviction, but still no one came forward. The case quickly became cold.

Although the case may have gone cold, little Anna took an important clue from the killer that ultimately led to his arrest. Despite her size, the little girl ferociously fought her attacker by scratching him, which left some of the killer’s DNA profile under her fingernails.

1998 was still early in terms of the CODIS database, but forensic experts with the Salt Lake City police dutifully collected a sample where it would be entered at a later time.

Matt Breck

In 1998, California native Matt Breck was nineteen with no direction in his

life. He originally came to Utah with his brother Tom after Tom's friend, Todd Clark, told the two that they could find steady employment and a chance to start over in the Beehive State. Not long after they arrived in Utah, Tom found steady employment, but things did not go that way for Matt.

Clark said Breck thought of himself as a tough guy who would rather spend the day drinking than working. He also said that Breck tried to pick fights with people and liked to carry knives, which he proudly showed to anyone interested. Clark's wife was particularly creeped out by the younger Breck and claims she told a police officer she knew to take a look at Matt when she heard about Anna's murder. Around the time Anna was murdered, Breck was charged with a violent felony in an unrelated case, but had the charged lowered to misdemeanor and served very little time in jail.

Most importantly, no DNA was taken from Breck during his short stay in the county jail.

After he got out of jail in Utah, Breck headed north to Idaho, but instead of getting a new start, his criminal behavior got more extreme. He was convicted of a burglary charge in 1999, served two years, and was released in 2001. Not long after his release, he was picked up on a child molestation charge and given a lengthy prison sentence.

A sample of his DNA was also taken and entered into the CODIS database.

The CODIS system needs to be constantly updated, and agencies that are looking for a match from a DNA sample need to continually check the system—emails are not sent when/if a match is made.

In late 2009, detectives from Salt Lake City finally received the news they were waiting for—a match had been made in the CODIS system to the DNA recovered from under Anna's fingernails. Authorities then went to the Idaho prison where Breck was incarcerated and questioned him about the murder of Anna Palmer. He admitted that he lived in the neighborhood at the time, but denied involvement in her murder or of even knowing the little girl. It was at that point that police knew they had their man.

Breck was then extradited to Salt Lake City and charged with first degree murder and aggravated sex abuse of a child. Utah is a death penalty state and

if the death penalty was created for any one person, it would be Matthew Breck. Feeling the anger of the residents of Salt Lake City upon him, Breck took the sensible option and pled guilty to murder in 2011 in order to receive a sentence of life without parole.

Some think that Breck got off easy, but the reality is that as a high-profile child killer, his life in a maximum security prison will not be easy. Breck will be sent to one of Utah's tougher prisons where he will probably have to spend most of his life in a protected wing where he will have few luxuries and only be allowed out of his cell for limited periods. If he decides to enter general population, if he even has that option, where he will be afforded more luxuries and freedoms, he then runs the risk of being beaten, raped, or even murdered by any number of inmates. Child killers are at the bottom of any prison hierarchy, which means that Breck will constantly have to watch his back.

Whether Breck chooses to take his chances in the prison's general population or he checks into protective custody, he most certainly has a miserable life ahead of him.

The tragic and strange case of Anna Palmer's murder could only have been solved through scientific advances, namely the CODIS database. As Sam Gill, the district attorney who prosecuted Breck said: "It was through science that this poor girl, who was tragically and horrifically murdered in our community, was able to basically point to her killer."

Chapter 10: The Strange Murder of Roy McCaleb

One does not have to search the internet very long to find stories of spousal murder. The reasons for spousal murder are varied and diverse—greed, jealousy, infidelity, and anger are some of the more common reasons—but sometimes the motive is not so clear and the circumstances are even murkier.

On September 22, 1985, fifty-year-old Ray McCaleb was shot to death as he slept in his Houston home. When police arrived at the scene, it appeared to be a case of a burglary gone wrong, but soon after interviewing Ray's wife, forty-three-year-old Carolyn, investigators realized that they were about to embark on a very strange homicide case.

A Carjacking and a Murder

Houston, Texas, is a large American city with typical American problems, crime being at the top of the list. The violent crime rate in Houston is fairly high, but as with most American cities, one can avoid most of the crime by staying out of certain areas. The McCalebs lived in a middle income neighborhood where crime was relatively rare and violent home invasion murders were unheard of. Still, it was the big city and random crime can happen to anyone.

But once homicide investigators took a statement from Carolyn, they began to see that this was no ordinary murder, and it was probably not random. The account that Carolyn McCaleb gave to the police of her husband's murder was so strange that police initially thought that it was too bizarre to make up.

According to Carolyn, she was carjacked and raped by a barefoot man with a knife ten days before her husband was murdered and then, somehow, the rapist learned her address and came back.

On the night Roy was murdered, Carolyn claimed that the rapist came into her room where he tortured and raped her for some time before he found the pistol that she kept under her pillow. The rapist then went into Roy's room, who was heavily sedated from a recent back surgery and also convalescing from a heart attack, and shot him in the head at point blank range in total darkness. The killer then ran for the door when he bumped into Carolyn and dropped the gun, which she then picked up and fired two shots at him, but

missed.

Obviously, the story had more holes in it than a slice of Swiss cheese, but the inconsistencies continued to pile up and cast even more suspicion in Carolyn's direction.

The first question that police asked Carolyn was why she did not report the rape and carjacking that supposedly took place ten days prior to her husband's murder. With a straight face and in a calm demeanor, Carolyn simply said that she did not want to upset her husband who was recovering from recent health problems. The answer was suspicious, but suspicion alone is not enough for an arrest, so police began to investigate the carjacker story.

Almost immediately, homicide detectives had a difficult time locating a suspect in the crime because Carolyn's description of the killer was not consistent. In fact, Carolyn said the killer-rapist was white in her first statement, but then later said the assailant was black. When asked how she could get such an important and major detail wrong, she said that being in the south, she was embarrassed and did not want people to think she had an affair with her attacker.

Other details of Carolyn's account of the murder simply did not add up.

Carolyn, Ray, and the supposed killer were not the only people in the McCaleb house that night. Carolyn's son from a previous marriage and his girlfriend were also present when the murder took place. Neither saw an intruder in the home, although both were awake at the time Carolyn claims he made his getaway.

Then there was her behavior after the police arrived.

Carolyn's account was described as rehearsed and for the most part terse. She then took a shower, even though she was explicitly told that doing so would damage any physical evidence from the rape. Although she did go to the hospital after her interview with police, she left before doctors could perform a thorough examination. Finally, she refused to take a polygraph examination.

To most people in the Houston area it appeared that Carolyn was her

husband's killer, but despite the circumstantial evidence, Harris County prosecutors were unwilling to charge her without some tangible, physical evidence.

It would be a long time before Ray McCaleb's killer was brought to justice.

The Years Pass By

As the years after Ray McCaleb's murder turned into decades, the case slipped out of the minds of most Houstonians, but the Harris County prosecutors did not forget. Although there was a plethora of physical evidence in this case—they had the murder weapon and the body of the victim—the circumstances prohibited the prosecutors from charging Carolyn. Yes, her story sounded phony, but they had nothing to prove otherwise. But that did not stop the prosecutors from working on the case. A succession of prosecutors continued to quietly keep the case open.

And they were not looking for the mysterious barefoot rapist.

Carolyn was the authorities' only suspect from the beginning, and as they researched the woman's past, they were astonished with what they found!

It turns out that Ray was Carolyn's eighth husband, and she was still legally married to her seventh when Ray was murdered. It turns out that when she left husband number seven for Ray, she took the unlucky guy's \$4,000 tax refund check for good measure. The information was enough to get Carolyn charged with bigamy, but was still a long way from homicide.

Further investigation revealed that Ray and Carolyn were only married for a year and a half and that Carolyn was the sole beneficiary of his estate and insurance policy.

Carolyn clearly had a motive to murder Ray.

With the mountain of circumstantial evidence stacked against her, many began to wonder why the bigamist had not been charged with murder. Many people have been charged and convicted with less evidence. What made the woman who became known as Carolyn Krizan-Wilson so special?

It turns out that in the years after Ray's murder, Carolyn inserted herself nicely into the local law enforcement establishment.

Two of Carolyn's sons went on to become officers with the Houston Police Department, and somehow Carolyn was able to land job as a civilian employee with the same department. No doubt Carolyn's connections with the police department were a mark in her favor, but they ultimately did not stop Harris County prosecutors from charging her with murder in 2008.

The charges were big news in the Houston area, and the ensuing court proceedings proved to only add to what was becoming a tabloid television type atmosphere surrounding the case.

Carolyn's attorneys argued that too much time had passed and there was no solid forensic evidence to tie their client to the crime, so the charges should be dropped. In a surprise move to many Houstonians, Judge Kevin Fine agreed and threw the case out of court, but Harris County prosecutors proved relentless and appealed the decision. A Texas appellate court reinstated the charges in 2012, and word of a plea bargain began to surface shortly thereafter.

In 2013, Carolyn Krizan-Wilson was a shell of her former self. Frail and suffering from Alzheimer's disease at the age of seventy-one, prosecutors came to a deal with Krizan-Wilson's attorneys. Krizan-Wilson agreed to plead guilty to Roy's murder in return for a six-month jail sentence and probation for ten years.

Many thought that Krizan-Wilson should have spent the rest of her days in prison, but prosecutors were quick to point out that in the world we live in today that is obsessed with physical evidence, a hung jury or acquittal was a real possibility. Although some of Ray McCaleb's family did not share that sentiment, others were just glad to see Krizan-Wilson finally admit her guilt.

"She is willingly admitting that she murdered him and that's something we've known all these years," said Ray McCaleb's daughter Pam Nalley. "I think that means more to me than anything."

Chapter 11: Robert Zarinsky – A Serial Killer Nabbed by DNA

There are some people among us who should never walk the streets free. These men, and sometimes women, are career criminals who do untold amounts of damage to society for sometimes long periods of time before they are usually sent to prison, only to be released one day so that they can return to the streets and prey on more victims. For every crime that these predators get caught committing, there are several more that they get away with, often including murder.

Robert Zarinsky was one such career criminal and predator. When he was not incarcerated in a prison, juvenile hall, or a mental hospital, he was on the streets victimizing the people of New Jersey. Eventually, Zarinsky was convicted of murder, but the parole system and sentencing guidelines meant that he could conceivably be released one day to prey on more innocent people. If Zarinsky could prove to a parole board that he was either reformed or no longer a threat to society, then he could be released.

Thanks to modern science, Zarinsky's DNA profile made sure that he would never hurt anyone again.

A Predator from the Beginning

Robert Zarinsky was born in 1940 to a middle class New Jersey family, although the family's income level was about the only thing that was "middle American" about the extremely dysfunctional family.

Robert showed signs of extreme violence and cruelty at a young age that are often the hallmarks of a future serial killer. He was known to torture animals and often beat his sister Judith, to which their mother, Veronica, told her son, "Don't hit her in the face."

Yes, the matriarch of the Zarinsky household doted on and enabled little Robert, which led the future serial killer to commit innumerable anti-social acts. He was never punished for anything he did and was even allowed to victimize his own father. According to those close to the Zarinsky family, Robert routinely dished out physical beatings to the father, Julius, and often

took his earnings from the family store that he owned.

Zarinsky clearly received no direction in his childhood, which no doubt contributed to his criminal behavior, but there seemed to be something deeper in the man that set him apart from the average misguided individual.

Robert Zarinsky enjoyed being cruel.

As Zarinsky became a teenager, he learned new ways to inflict pain and misery on others. He gathered together a number of like-minded losers and formed a gang he called the Panthers. The Panthers employed Nazi imagery, even though Zarinsky's father was Jewish, and enjoyed terrorizing the residents around Linden, New Jersey, with acts of arson and vandalism. Zarinsky's reign of terror culminated at the age of twenty-two when he and his friends burned down five lumber yards and desecrated hundreds of tombstones in a Jewish cemetery. Robert claimed insanity and spent some time in a mental hospital.

Zarinsky was not cured; in fact, after Robert was released from the mental hospital he traveled around New Jersey, leaving a trail of bodies in his wake.

A Life of Murder and a Life in Prison

While most of the people in the United States were adjusting to the great social changes of the 1960s, Robert Zarinsky was apparently killing women throughout the state of New Jersey. The change in culture from the somewhat rigid rule structure of the 1950s to the permissive attitudes of the 1960s seemed to be the perfect backdrop for Zarinsky's murderous obsession with girls and young women. Unfortunately, the science needed to catch Zarinsky and other serial killers like him was still a few decades away. DNA profiling would not become commonplace in police investigations until the 1990s, and extensive use of close circuit television cameras was also a couple of decades in the future.

But the Robert Zarinsky case proves that with some patience, modern science has the ability to help identify and capture serial killers.

Although Zarinsky had been convicted of a number of serious felonies before the late 1960s, murder was not yet a crime on his resume of destruction.

In the summer of 1969, seventeen-year-old Rosemary Calandriello was a girl who was trying to find herself in the ever-changing world of the '60s. Calandriello was known to be a good girl, but like most kids her age, she wanted to fit in. Many of Calandriello's friends liked to drink some beer and smoke marijuana, although finding party favors could sometimes be a problem for the broke, underage high school kids.

Enter Robert Zarinsky.

Like a true predator, Zarinsky was known to show up at the parties of people ten years or more younger than him. As a criminal, Zarinsky usually had money, drugs, and a car. He was like the criminal pied piper of New Jersey, which turned out to be fatal for Rosemary Calandriello and a number of other girls and young women.

August 25, 1969, was the last night anyone saw Rosemary Calandriello, as she seemingly disappeared into thin air, but she was last seen with Robert Zarinsky.

"We had four eyewitnesses who put the girl in his car," said district attorney John Mullaney. "Then we found the car, and the handles on the doors and the windows were missing."

Despite the eyewitnesses' testimonies and the suspicious circumstances of Zarinsky's lost and found car, prosecutors were slow to charge Zarinsky due to a lack of physical evidence and, most importantly, the absence of Calandriello's body.

Despite the lack of a body and very little physical evidence, Mullaney went ahead with the prosecution, and in 1975 Zarinsky earned the dubious distinction of being the first person convicted of murder in the state of New Jersey without a body. Zarinsky appealed the conviction and lost, but by the late 1980s, perhaps believing that he could obtain parole if he "came clean," Zarinsky admitted to murdering Calandriello. In typical sociopathic fashion, he mitigated his responsibility by stating that the murder was accidental. He also vacillated when asked where he disposed of her body: in one interview he said he buried her body in the hills of northwest New Jersey, while in another he claimed to have dumped Calandriello's corpse in the Atlantic Ocean.

Although the possibility of parole was conceivable for Zarinsky, the time he spent in prison for Rosemary Calandriello's murder gave science and investigators time to catch up with the serial killer's other crimes.

Science Identifies a Serial Killer

The extent of the damage that Robert Zarinsky did to society was not known until fairly recently when scientific advances finally caught up the killer, but the first inkling that he may be a serial killer was revealed because of all things, a family dispute.

While Zarinsky was leading his Panthers gang destroying cemeteries and burning down lumber yards, he also took part in his first homicide. In 1958, when Zarinsky was eighteen, he and his cousin Theodore Schiffer were burglarizing a Pontiac car dealer in Rahway, New Jersey, when they were caught by a police officer.

The cop was a veteran named Charles Bernoskie who happened to see two young men lurking around the parking lot of the Pontiac dealer while he was on patrol. It was a totally random meeting.

Unfortunately for Bernoskie, the random encounter left him dead on the side of the road.

According to witness testimony taken years after the crime, Bernoskie surprised the two miscreants who then attempted to run. In an era long before "police brutality" was a common phrase, Bernoskie then apparently shot at and hit both fleeing suspects, who then returned fire, killing the officer.

"He pissed me off," said Zarinsky according to his sister, Judith Sapsa. "That's why I shot him."

Already seasoned criminals and therefore well aware of what could happen to them if they went to an emergency room, Zarinsky and Schiffer stumbled, bleeding, to Zarinsky's sister Judith Sapsa, who lived nearby. Luckily for the two men, no vital organs were hit, and after Judith and Veronica Zarinsky stitched the two up, they were ready to continue preying on the citizens of New Jersey.

But the murder of Charles Bernoskie was the first time that science caught up

with one of Robert Zarinsky's crimes.

In 1999, a fingerprint taken from the crime scene was matched to Schiffer in the Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS). The AFIS database works in much the same way as the CODIS database and essentially served as a template for it; all persons who are fingerprinted for a crime have their prints entered into the AFIS database, which is then used to solve cold cases among other things. It turns out that Schiffer was able to avoid arrest for all of those years, and Zarinsky, perhaps being the more sophisticated criminal, left no fingerprints at the scene. In a strange twist to the crime and an example of the bizarre dynamics of the dysfunctional Zarinsky family, Judith Sapsa implicated her brother as the shooter.

It seems that loyalty in the Zarinsky family only went as far as money would take it.

While Robert was serving his sentence for the murder of Rosemary Calandriello, he was able to amass a small fortune through some good investments. Apparently Judith had access to the mutual fund, and as her brother sat in prison, she embezzled a good chunk of it. Once Zarinsky learned of his sister's deception, he turned her in and she was promptly arrested for embezzling. She then saw her chance to get even when Schiffer was arrested for Bernoskie's murder.

The trial of both men turned out to be a lot of finger pointing with very little physical evidence. Schiffer ended up serving only three years for burglary and in 2001 Zarinsky was acquitted of murder. The jury cited the unreliable testimony of Sapsa and Schiffer as one of their primary reasons along with a lack of physical evidence.

But as DNA testing became more sophisticated and the CODIS database became more complete in the 2000s, the totality of Robert Zarinsky's murder spree was bound to surface with the light of day.

Although Zarinsky entered the prison system long before DNA profiling or the CODIS database existed, he, like all long-serving inmates in American prisons, was obliged to give a DNA sample in the 2000s. In the months just before he died in 2008 and in the years since, Zarinsky has been definitively identified through DNA matching as the killer of two girls and considered the

likely suspect of at least four others.

After the murder of Charles Bernoskie, Zarinsky appears to have gone into a “cool down” period. Although it appears that Zarinsky did not plan to murder Bernoskie, the act seems to have kindled a dark, murderous desire that was dormant in him.

In 1965, Zarinsky acted on that dark impulse when he savagely raped and beat to death eighteen-year-old Mary Agnes Klinsky near Holmdel, New Jersey. After he was done with the young woman, he tossed her on the side of the road like trash, probably because he believed there was no way he could ever be linked to her.

In 2016, nearly eight years after his death, DNA conclusively linked Zarinsky to Klinsky’s murder.

Zarinsky’s next known murder took place when he abducted, raped, and murdered thirteen-year-old Jane Durrua on November 4, 1968. Apparently, Jane decided to take a short cut home through a field when she was swooped upon by Zarinsky. Her naked body was found the next day in the field.

Semen stains were taken from Durrua’s clothing, but a mix-up in DNA samples originally led to the arrest of another man. After the problem was discovered and rectified, the sample was then matched to Zarinsky, which led to an indictment on March 11, 2008.

Zarinsky died while awaiting trial.

Even though Zarinsky is now dead, his DNA profile may still link him to a host of other murders. Seventeen-year-old Linda Balabanow was found raped and murdered in 1969, after she disappeared on her way to work in Union County, New Jersey. Then there was the case of fourteen-year-old Doreen Carlucci and her friend, fifteen-year-old Joanne Delardo, who were discovered together dead, naked in a field in 1974. The two girls had been raped, beaten, and strangled with an electrical cord. There was also nineteen-year-old Ann Logan, who was also found raped and beaten to death.

The magnitude of Zarinsky’s crimes may never be fully known. Although it may be little comfort to the families of Zarinsky’s victims, he spent the last

years of his life in fear and pain. In 1999, once his initial case became public and it was announced that he was suspected in the murders of other girls and women in New Jersey, he was transferred from general population at the South Woods state prison to the protected custody block.

It seems that the man who could kill girls and women so easily was no match for the hardened convicts in the New Jersey prison system.

Finally, on November 28, 2008, after suffering from the painful effects of pulmonary fibrosis for some time, Robert Zarinsky died uneventfully in prison.

Although the psychopath took many unanswered questions with him to the grave, DNA profiling and the CODIS database helped prove that he was in fact a serial killer. The finding also helped give closure to some his victims' families.

"We knew he was a serial killer, but there was precious little to prove it," said John Mullaney.

Eventually, the science caught up and was able to uncover Zarinsky's evil deeds.

Chapter 12: The Murder of Patricia Beard

In the United States, the most vulnerable of its citizens are not only protected by the government, but also given assistance. Mentally and physically disabled individuals are often housed in “group homes” where mental health professionals can look after them, and at the same time the residents are encouraged to take jobs in the community in order to realize their full potential. These group homes are safe havens for people with disabilities, as they offer places where the disabled can learn real-world skills as well as live in safety from the often cruel outside world.

Unfortunately for thirty-two-year-old Patricia Beard, a Denver group home could not protect her from the cruel clutches of a killer in 1981.

Patricia Beard was mentally disabled, but also what health care professionals would term a “high-functioning” individual who could work and interact in the larger community. The Denver group home where she lived was one that was there to help its residents with their medications, jobs, and other daily functions, but it was also a home that stressed independence and therefore gave the residents a certain amount of freedom.

Since Patricia Beard was a high functioning resident, staff members of the group home thought nothing when they did not see her for a couple of days. It was a group home, not a jail or halfway house, and its residents could come and go as they pleased. After a couple of more days, Patricia’s friends and family started to worry when she did not answer her phone, so one of them went to her apartment and made a grisly discovery.

Patricia Beard was found dead in her room on March 27, 1981.

An investigation of the room by Denver homicide investigators revealed that Beard was strangled to death, and the fact that she was half-naked led them to believe that she was also raped. Vaginal swabs were later taken that confirmed that Patricia was raped before she was killed.

The investigation then turned to creating a list of suspects, but the police were soon discouraged as they met several dead-ends.

Staff at the group home reported seeing no strangers come to the home, and all residents and workers at the home were quickly cleared.

After searching the exterior of the group home, officers determined that the killer crawled into Beard's first floor apartment through a window. Homicide detectives then believed that the killer was a stranger, but probably someone with a record for burglary, sexual assault, or both. Police began their investigation by searching through all their records of burglars and sex offenders whose methods of operations matched the Beard murder. They were quickly let down when no credible matches were made.

Unfortunately, no fingerprints of the killer were lifted from the crime scene, but samples of semen were taken from Beard's vagina and mouth. The biological evidence was stored in an evidence locker where it sat for twenty years.

The Denver Cold Case Unit

The term "cold case" has become such a ubiquitous term in the modern lexicon that few today do not know what it means. Both fictional and documentary television shows that focus on police departments using forensics to capture killers in cases that took place years prior and are therefore considered "cold" are popular fare. Many of these shows depict the work as glamorous, but the reality is that is often tedious, time consuming, and just plain difficult. As depicted on some of these shows, over the last fifteen years, as the science of DNA profiling has progressed with the CODIS system, many police departments have created cold case units to solve murders like Patricia Beard's.

The Denver Cold Case Unit has proved to be one of the best in the world.

The Denver Police Department's cold case unit investigates both unsolved rapes and murders. The result is that the unit has solved more cold cases than any other similar unit in the world!

With such an elite unit working on Patricia Beard's murder, it was only a matter of time until her killer was captured. But first the unit had to get the case, which almost did not happen.

After Patricia Beard's apartment was processed, all of the items relevant to

the case, such as the rape kit, were cataloged and then stored in the evidence locker at the Denver Police Department. There the evidence sat for thirteen years until most of it, with the exception of vaginal swabs, was destroyed to make room for evidence from other cases.

1994 would prove to be an important year in the Patricia Beard case, not just because potential DNA evidence was saved, but also because that was the year that the CODIS database went online.

In 2005, the Denver police department's crime lab and the Denver District Attorney's Office were selected to take part in a national study that investigated the impact of DNA profiling and the CODIS database on cold cases.

With that, the Denver Cold Case Unit was born.

As the unit moved through the remainder of the 2000s and into the 2010s solving cold cases, a detective re-discovered the rape kit from the Patricia Beard murder. Officers entered the evidence into the CODIS system, and in 2013 a match came back for a man named Hector Bencoma-Hinojos.

Bencoma-Hinojos was doing time in a federal prison in Pennsylvania, which therefore required him to give a sample of his DNA profile to the CODIS database. Although the DNA match meant that Bencoma-Hinojos had been sexually intimate with Beard, it did not necessarily mean that he killed or even raped her.

The Denver Cold Case Unit would have to conduct a more thorough investigation of their suspect.

A background check of Bencoma-Hinojos revealed that he was a known criminal and thief who had up until that point avoided doing any major prison time. He was also known to be extremely violent. His wife said that he would routinely threaten and beat her for the slightest indiscretions, and he often carried a knife.

Denver police then traveled to Pennsylvania to interview their captive suspect and, as it turns out, Bencoma-Hinojos' own words proved to be the last nails in his legal coffin.

Bencoma-Hinojos admitted to the authorities that he lived in Denver for several years beginning around 1977 and that he was probably living in the city in 1981, although he was evasive with his answers. The Cold Case Unit detectives then asked Bencoma-Hinojos if he knew Beard, which he answered in the negative. The police then gave their subject one last chance at a way out by showing him a picture of Beard, who was black, and asking him if it were possible that he had sex with the woman. Bencoma-Hinojos vehemently denied ever having sex with Beard and added that he had never had sex with a black woman.

The police caught Bencoma-Hinojos in a lie that the man's own DNA sample could verify!

In 2015, at the age of fifty-five, Hector Bencoma-Hinojos was sentenced to forty eight years in Colorado's Department of Corrections, which will more than likely amount to a life sentence for the middle aged murderer.

Bencoma-Hinojos' conviction proved to be a milestone as it was the 100th case solved by the Denver Police Department's Cold Case Unit.

True Crime Stories

12 Shocking True Crime Murder Cases

True Crime Anthology Vol.4

By

Jack Rosewood

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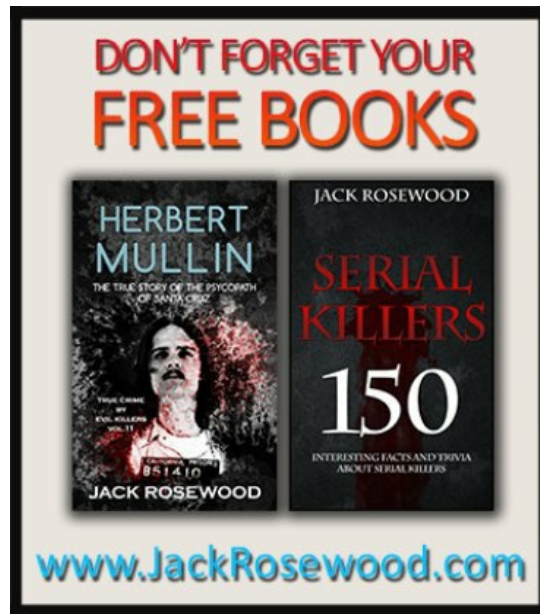
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Introduction

Unfortunately, crime is a part of life in the modern world. That is not to say that crime is a purely modern phenomenon, but with the advent of modern technology, criminals have become more mobile. Criminals are able to easily traverse through countries and from one country to another to commit their nefarious deeds.

Because of that, it has become increasingly difficult to run away from crime.

Modern technology has also allowed international audiences to learn about high-profile crimes and in some cases for fan followings of criminals to develop.

In the pages of this book, you will learn about twelve high-profile crime cases from around the world. Some of these cases, such as the Hinterkaifeck murders and the murder of Kelly Anne Bates, attained notoriety due to their brutal and bizarre nature, while others were solved by DNA profiling after several twists and turns.

Many of the cases in this book received considerable media attention while they were ongoing, sometimes earning the often overused moniker “the trial of the century.” The first true “trial of the century,” the Helen Jewett murder case, is profiled here and compared with another notorious case from the 1990s.

Some of these cases looked like they would never be solved, but through a combination of scientific advances and good police work, the killers were eventually caught and justice was served. Unfortunately, some cases, such as the murder of Chandra Levy and the assassination of William Stewart, remain open and unsolved.

So indulge your curiosity and open the pages of this book to learn about twelve of the most baffling and bizarre cases in the annals of criminal history.

Chapter 1: The Mysterious Death of Rakhat Aliyev

Before the 2006 film *Borat* became a worldwide hit, few people outside of central Asia or Russia knew that that country of Kazakhstan existed. Needless to say, many citizens of the central Asian former Soviet Republic found the movie's representation of them as backwards, violent, anti-Semitic people to be unfair and for the most part unfounded.

A closer look reveals that Kazakhstan is actually a complex place where modern ideas and sensibilities are woven together with centuries old traditions. The people of the land-locked nation are proud of their heritage, which can be traced back to the horseback riding Huns of the fifth century. During the Middle Ages, the majority of the people converted to Islam, which is the majority religion today. As part of the Soviet Union, Kazakhstan suffered at times, particularly during the famine of 1932-33 when over 60% of its population died. Kazakhstan was also home to many of the notorious Soviet gulags where political prisoners were sent, often to die.

Although Kazakhstan has had a difficult history, today it is far from the backwards country portrayed in *Borat*. Economically speaking, it is the dominant central Asian nation thanks to its rich oil reserves and deposits of other valuable minerals. Kazakhstan repaid all of the debt it owed to the International Monetary Fund seven years ahead of schedule and today its people enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the region.

Kazakhstan's post-Soviet economy may be relatively strong, but its political system is another story.

Technically, Kazakhstan's government is a constitutional republic, but it has been plagued with accusations of human rights abuses and political violence. Nursultan Nazarbayev has been the country's only president since independence in 1991, which critics point to as evidence for Kazakhstan being a republic in name only.

Democracy activists and critics of Nazarbayev argue that Kazakhstan's secret police service, known as the KNB, which is essentially the local successor to the Soviet KGB, has manipulated every election since independence through a combination of coercion, threats, and at times outright violence against

opposition groups. *The Economist* lists Kazakhstan as an authoritarian regime and points to the courts as being the primary reason. There is no equivalent of “Miranda rights” in Kazakhstan and there is no independent judiciary— all Supreme Court judges are appointed by the president.

Truly, contemporary Kazakhstan is a sometimes bizarre mix of the old and new worlds where it is not uncommon to see former KGB agents rub elbows with multi-millionaire businessmen at upscale restaurants in the country’s capital of Astana or the largest city of Almaty.

It was within this sometimes volatile social and political milieu that a series of the most mysterious deaths in Kazakhstan’s modern history took place.

Rakhat Aliyev

Rakhat Aliyev was born in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Kazakhstan in 1962. His early years were spent like most children around the world at the time: playing soccer with his friends and spending time with his family. But by the time Aliyev was a young adult, the winds of change were in the air.

The concepts of *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* that Mikhail Gorbachev and the Communist Party introduced to modernize and save the crumbling Soviet Union ironically led it to a quicker demise. With the total collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the old constituent republics such as Kazakhstan scrambled to find their place in the new world order. The 1990s became a period of great transition in the former Soviet republics, where large amounts of money could be earned and an even greater number of enemies could be made in doing so.

Rakhat Aliyev found his place in the new system.

Aliyev obtained a law degree in 1997 and a PhD in economics in 2005, which prepared him for a lucrative career in post-Soviet Kazakhstan’s often shady worlds of business and government. He made several lucrative investments and inserted himself into the functions of many government industries. Aliyev also was a member of the KNB and worked his way through the ranks of the organization, thanks in part to his relationship with the president.

Aliyev was married to President Nazarbayev’s daughter, Dariga, for many years. The couple had three children over their decades-long marriage and by

all accounts looked happy. They were one of Kazakhstan's top power couples and it was rumored that Aliyev would be his father-in-law's successor.

But in 2007, Rakhat Aliyev found out that even the bonds of matrimony were not enough to protect him from the wrath of the president.

Falling Out of Favor

2007 was a bad year for Rakhat Aliyev. Up until that time, he had led a charmed life: he was a millionaire and was at the pinnacle of power in the Kazakhstan government. His wife was the favored daughter of the country's leader and every business deal he made seemed to end favorably. Before 2007, Aliyev must have felt that the sky was the limit.

But as easily as the gods can give one power, they can take it away!

Aliyev began to fall out of favor with the president when he was accused of laundering money embezzled from government corporations in Kazakhstan to off shore accounts in the Mediterranean. The charges were bad enough alone, but President Nazarbayev soon learned that his son-in-law was questioning his rule and possibly collaborating with the opposition.

Rakhat Aliyev was living on borrowed time.

Aliyev was next served divorce papers from his wife via fax. He later claimed that his wife told him that she was pressured to do so by her father, but Dariga has been reticent to talk about the divorce in the years since.

Rakhat was then given the post of ambassador to Austria where he would ostensibly be out of the president's hair and the government could move forward making a case of treason against him. With few friends left in Kazakhstan, Aliyev married his former assistant and moved to Austria where he took his post.

While Aliyev was out of the country, Kazakhstan authorities worked to make sure that he could never return a free man—or alive.

The Nurbank Murders

The crimes that brought Rakhat Aliyev to the front of the international news cycle were not embezzlement or treason, though, but a double murder that

took place in Kazakhstan. The details of the crimes remain sketchy and will probably never be totally known, but based on a combination of eye-witness accounts and circumstantial evidence, some of the important details and a reasonable chronology can be reconstructed.

As mentioned above, Rakhat Aliyev used a combination of his skills, education, and Soviet era connections to enrich himself both monetarily and in terms of power in the post-Soviet Kazakhstan government. One of the ways he did this was by using his influence in the government to land lucrative business deals, one of which was with the Kazakhstan based bank, Nurbank.

By January 2007, Aliyev owned 75% of Nurbank, but to him it was more than just another revenue stream or job—it was a family operation. His father owned a small percentage and his son was on the board.

Essentially, Nurbank was Aliyev's fiefdom and if things did not go as he liked, trouble was bound to happen!

According to the testimony of the victims, on January 18, 2007, Aliyev had Vice President of Nurbank, Aholdas Timraliyev and Chairman Abilmazhen Gilimov, kidnapped and threatened. The two men were nabbed in broad daylight as they left work for the day and then driven around Almaty where they were threatened with death if they did not go along with Aliyev's investment ideas.

The two men were able to escape their captors and both promptly quit work at Nurbank the next day.

But apparently Aliyev had other recalcitrant Nurbank executives to target.

Less than two weeks later, on January 31, Timraliyev was kidnapped once more along with Aibar Khasenov, who was chairman of the bank's board. The two men were beaten and tortured over the course of several days, but during the course of the ordeal Timraliyev was able to call his wife to alert her of the situation. Although Timraliyev's wife phoned authorities to find her husband, it was too late—he and Khasenov were killed, placed in metal drums, and dropped off in a dump.

Once the bodies of the two men were found, Aliyev became the prime suspect.

But the slick bureaucrat was still in the good graces of the president, who gave Aliyev diplomatic immunity and a chance to start over in Austria.

Life on the Run

Aliyev's flight from Kazakhstan proved to be only a temporary remedy to his legal problems. Not long after he left the country, the divorce from his wife became final and the government began to investigate him for a slew of charges ranging from embezzlement to treason and murder.

But the fallen businessman did not help himself much.

From the perceived safety of such locations as Austria and Malta, Aliyev began to give interviews to the international press in early 2007. He said that he thought Nazarbayev should not be president for life and that the government of Kazakhstan was inherently corrupt. Aliyev would later put all of his thoughts about his former father-in-law into a tell all - 2013 book titled, *Godfather-in-law*.

Aliyev's ungrateful attitude proved to be too much for President Nazarbayev, who in May 2007 allowed the government of Kazakhstan to charge his former son-in-law with murder and kidnapping in relation to the Nurbank case. Aliyev was promptly stripped of his diplomatic immunity and an international arrest warrant was issued for him.

By late 2007 Rakhat Aliyev was a man without a country.

For a time, Aliyev found safety in Austria. The Austrian government refused to extradite Aliyev because it argued that he could not receive a fair trial there and that if convicted he would be punished in a way that would violate his human rights. Despite this, the government of Kazakhstan pushed ahead with the prosecution and convicted Aliyev *in absentia* of murder, treason, and kidnapping in early 2008 and sentenced him to twenty years in prison.

The Austrian government continued to refuse to recognize Kazakhstan's extradition requests, which gave Aliyev the chance to travel around Europe relatively unencumbered.

But the heat was on and Aliyev was quickly running out of options.

The Austrian government revoked Aliyev's special passport in 2013, which left the embattled Kazakhstani with few countries that would accept him. After a failed attempt to find sanctuary in Cyprus, Aliyev ended up in the Mediterranean island nation of Malta in 2014. While in Malta with his new wife, Aliyev turned himself in to Austrian authorities.

Time was running out for Rakhat Aliyev.

Instead of fighting the case in Malta, where he probably would have been turned over to the Kazakhstanis at some point, Aliyev surrendered to the Austrians on a host of international charges he was facing. He reasoned that an impartial Austrian jury would see through the charges as politically motivated. All he needed was a good lawyer.

As his defense, Aliyev would put the Kazakhstan government on trial!

Suicide or Jailhouse Murder?

Due to the severity of the charges leveled against him and the fact that he was a flight risk, Aliyev was placed in a maximum security prison to await trial. He was involved in altercations with other inmates, so he was placed in a cell by himself. The details of the altercation he had with the other inmates remain sketchy, but it is said that the two men did not like Aliyev's arrogant attitude. They later claimed that the altercation had nothing to do with his ties to the Kazakhstan government. Whatever the reason, Aliyev was beaten up pretty good by the inmates, which is what got him thrown into solitary confinement. The guards found Aliyev's lifeless body hanging from the bars of his cell on February 24, 2015.

Due to his background and the circumstances of his incarceration, conspiracy theories immediately began to surface about Aliyev's death.

Although inmates around the world routinely kill themselves by hanging, there were certainly a number of reasons to believe that Aliyev was helped along in his death by others.

Aliyev was also set to testify at a future date against the two inmates who had beaten him. Some believe that one or both of the inmates may have found a

way to get to Aliyev and made his death look like a suicide.

It is not uncommon for inmates to pay off guards to look the other way while they conduct nefarious activities. But then again, it seems like a lot of trouble to go through to get out of a relatively minor assault charge, which leaves the most obvious culprits—President Nazarbayev and the Kazakhstan government.

Aliyev's lawyer, Klaus Ainedter, claims that he spoke with Rakhat the night before his death and that he showed no signs of suicidal behavior.

"I have significant doubts about this, without wanting to blame anyone. I visited him yesterday. There could be no talk whatsoever of danger or suicide," said Ainedter.

But not everyone involved with the case believes that Aliyev's death was suspicious. "For us, it was clearly suicide," said Peter Prechtel the prison's warden.

The truth behind the death of Rakhat Aliyev will probably never be known, although new details of his life paint the picture of a troubled and dangerous man. Aliyev was accused in the mid-1990s of kidnapping a Russian television executive and he was investigated by the FBI for a 2006 murder.

Whether Rakhat Aliyev's death was the result of a complex conspiracy, angry prison inmates, or at his own hands, he is a testament to the often used aphorism, "violence begets violence."

Chapter 2: The Murder of Meredith Kercher

Many people look back on their college years as the best of their lives. It is a time when we transition from children into adults and are given the freedoms that we dreamed of for most of our adolescence.

College is also a time when many sow their wild oats, while others prepare for their futures by volunteering.

Some young adults combine the two by studying abroad for a semester or more of their college experience. Most who study abroad see the experience as extremely positive because it allows them to finish their education while broadening their intellectual and cultural horizons.

But then there are the tragic cases.

A small percentage of Westerners who study abroad die. Many of the deaths of Western foreign students take place in Third World countries and most are the result of accidents and other unfortunate circumstances such as food poisoning or viral infections.

A very small number of Western students are murdered while studying abroad.

But it is the most tragic cases, when the student is murdered, which attract the most media attention. The brutal 2007 murder of British college student Meredith Kercher and the subsequent legal proceedings that were associated with it were replayed over and over by media outlets around the world. The case attracted so much attention due to a number of reasons.

First, the murder did not take place in a Third World country, but in the industrialized, Western nation of Italy. The setting of Italy also proved to provide ample fodder for the media when the lurid details of the lifestyles of those involved with the case were juxtaposed with the usually conservative nature of Italian society.

The nature of the Italian justice system was also a point of interest as the trials of those accused of Kercher's murder never seemed to end.

Finally, the case tugged at the heartstrings of people around the world when they learned how brutally the attractive young student was murdered. The feelings of sympathy for the victim were contrasted with hatred and vitriol for the suspects, especially American Amanda Knox, who was often portrayed as a cold-blooded Jezebel by the international press.

Meredith Susan Cara Kercher (1985-2007)

In many ways Meredith Kercher was like most twenty-two year olds throughout the Western world. She grew up in a middle class family in the London area, England, with two older brothers and a sister. As the youngest child, Meredith's parents spoiled her a bit, but her older siblings were always around to keep her out of trouble.

After high school, Kercher went on to college at Leeds University where she showed an interest in and aptitude for Italian culture and language. As she majored in Italian, Meredith, like most college students around the world, worked part-time at restaurants in order to cover her tuition and have a little spending money.

But Kercher believed that she had reached a wall with her studies at Leeds, so she transferred to the University of Perugia in Italy in the fall of 2007.

Meredith Kercher believed that the move would not only be an enjoyable experience, but would also prepare her for future employment.

When she arrived in Perugia, Kercher moved into an upstairs apartment of a home that she shared with two young Italian women and twenty-one-year-old American, Amanda Knox. Two young Italian men who were known to enjoy booze and drugs lived in the downstairs apartment.

Although Knox spent most of her free time with her boyfriend and Kercher had an extensive network of friends in Perugia, the two young women were friendly with each other and went out together from time to time. The other roommates of the women also later told investigators and reporters that there was no visible animosity between Kercher and Knox. Overall, the young women got along fine until the fateful night of November 1, 2007.

The Murder

The details of the events surrounding the last night of Meredith Kercher's life

remain murky because of conflicting court testimonies and inconclusive forensic evidence, but Italian police have been able to reconstruct a general timeline.

Early in the evening of November 1, Meredith went to the home of an English woman and had dinner with her and two other women. The group ate dinner and had a couple of drinks, but Meredith left the home on foot around 8:45 pm.

After this point, the chronology gets confusing because it is based on the testimonies of Kercher's suspected killers.

According to the testimony of Amanda Knox, she returned to the apartment on the morning of November 2, 2007, after having spent the previous night at the home of her boyfriend, twenty-three-year-old University of Perugia student Raffaele Sollecito. Knox said that she noticed some drops of blood in the bathroom she shared with Kercher and that the door to Meredith's bedroom was locked. She then left the apartment but returned later with Sollecito when they noticed from the outside that one of the windows in Kercher's room was broken.

The pair then called the police.

In the meantime, Knox and Kercher's roommate Filomena Romanelli returned home with a male friend who forced open the door to Kercher's room.

They were shocked with what they found.

The lifeless body of Kercher was in a pool of blood covered by a blanket. An autopsy revealed that her death was no accident, nor a suicide. Kercher had been severely beaten, stabbed several times, and had her throat slit. She had also been raped.

The gruesome crime quickly made headlines in Italy and back in Kercher's homeland of Britain.

The authorities in Perugia needed to catch Kercher's killer, fast!

An Arrest is Made

In many ways Rudy Guede was the perfect suspect for Meredith Kercher's murder. At the time of the murder, Guede was an unemployed twenty-year-old immigrant from the Ivory Coast who was well known to the local authorities for his involvement in drugs and criminal activity.

Guede was particularly known for burglaries.

His particular method of operation involved casing a spot out first and then returning later to burglarize it, usually with a knife or other type of weapon in hand. In fact, Guede was arrested just days prior to Kercher's murder for the burglary of a business with a knife in his hand!

Since Guede was known to the local authorities and his MO seemed to match the murder, he was the first suspect to be brought in for questioning. The story that Guede gave to the police was full of many holes and just did not seem to gibe with reality.

He claimed that on the night of the murder he and a friend were at a nightclub for most of the night. The alibi could only be partially verified. The police determined that Guede could have gone to the nightclub and had enough time to leave, kill Kercher, and then return to the club. Guede dug himself further into a legal hole when he admitted to knowing Kercher and spending time with her on the night previous to the murder at a nightclub. Witnesses who reported seeing Guede at the nightclub on October 31 only remember him spending time with a blonde—not a raven-haired woman like Kercher.

Guede also did not help his case when he left Italy for Germany the day after Kercher's murder. He later claimed that he only did that out of desperation and that he was afraid that the murder would be pinned on him because he was black.

But forensic evidence never discriminates.

After interviewing Kercher's neighbors, the authorities learned that Guede was acquainted with the men who shared the downstairs apartment, which meant that he surely had the opportunity to kill the young British woman.

Forensic experts discovered many different sets of fingerprints in Kercher's apartment, some of which were proved to be Guede's.

A shoe print next to some broken glass outside of Kercher's apartment, as well as a bloody palm print next to her body, were also determined to belong to Guede. The final nail in Rudy Guede's legal coffin came when the seminal fluid found inside Kercher was matched to him.

The case against Rudy Guede was air-tight and open and shut.

Guede was convicted of murder on October 29, 2008 and initially sentenced to thirty years in prison, which he later had reduced on appeal to sixteen years.

The conviction of Guede, though, was just the beginning of the legal saga.

Foxy Knoxy

In 2007, Amanda Knox was like many people in their early twenties. She experimented with drugs and alcohol and enjoyed social media.

Knox was known to brag about her exploits on social media, which she later claimed was greatly exaggerated, thereby earning herself a reputation and the nickname "Foxy Knoxy." Whether Knox's social media statements of her wild lifestyle were true or not may never be known, but in a number of posts she boasted of having multiple sexual partners, consuming large amounts of alcohol and marijuana until puking and passing out. She also seemed to like the nickname Foxy Knoxy because she used it for a handle before Kercher's murder.

Foxy Knoxy's father later told reporters that he was hesitant to give Amanda his blessing to travel overseas because he thought she was not mature enough, but ultimately it was her choice, as she was an adult who had lived on her own for some time.

After Kercher's body was discovered and the death was ruled a homicide, the police followed standard procedure and interviewed Knox and Sollecito.

According to the police, red flags went up almost immediately when the two used each other for alibis and their stories seemed contrived and just too good.

Under pressure from the police and after hours of interrogation, Knox cracked and admitted to taking part in Kercher's murder along with Sollecito

and her boss, local bar owner Patrick Lumumba.

Knox's confession was vague at best. She told the police that she had a "vision" that her boyfriend and Lumumba killed Kercher while she was in another room. In most jurisdictions in industrialized countries, such a confession would be considered suspicious by prosecutors and would more than likely not be used. But this was no ordinary case; the prosecutors were under immense pressure to pursue a case against what was perceived to be a privileged American and her Italian boyfriend. The police and prosecutors argued that the confession was valid and added a number of details to present to the jury.

The prosecution contended that Kercher was murdered in a bizarre, sadistic sex game where Sollecito and Knox held the British woman down to be raped by Guede. The prosecutors then claimed that Knox stabbed and slit Kercher's throat during the rape because she resented the Brit's squeaky clean reputation. According to the prosecutors, Knox taunted Kercher and told her: "You acted the goody-goody so much, now we are going to show you. Now you're going to be forced to have sex!"

The statement was never corroborated by any of the others accused and later proved to be another piece in the house of cards that was the prosecution's case.

The first card to come from the house was when the charges against Patrick Lumumba were dropped. If investigators would have done their work instead of just going on Knox's confession, then they would have realized that Lumumba was at work the entire night of Kercher's murder and had witnesses to corroborate his alibi.

Lumumba was released from police custody and he promptly filed a defamation lawsuit against Knox.

Knox later claimed that the confession was coerced and that she was not allowed to consult with an attorney. One of the most sensational claims that Knox made was that she was beaten by the police with rolled up reams of paper. For his part, Lumumba also claims he was beaten by the police, so there may be something to both of their claims.

Despite the lack of a definite murder weapon—one was produced by the prosecution, but it was never proven if it was in fact the one the killer used—and any solid forensic evidence linking Knox or Sollecito to the murder, both were charged with Kercher's murder on November 6, 2009.

The resulting court proceedings took many twists and turns that at times drew more media attention than the horrendous crime itself.

The Trials

As Knox and Sollecito sat in jail preparing their defenses, the international media had a field day with the case. Foxy Knoxy was often portrayed as a Jezebel who used her feminine wiles to deceive Guede and Sollecito into committing rape and murder.

Other than the lack of physical evidence to tie either Knox or Sollecito to the murder, the prosecution was faced with the problem of motive. It was proved that Guede's murder and rape of Kercher was incidental to the burglary of her apartment, but Knox and Sollecito seemingly had no true motive to kill the young British woman. The prosecution's case was that the murder was part of some bizarre sex session, but the reality is there was no evidence for any of that. There was also no evidence that Knox and Sollecito even knew Guede. Despite the lack of evidence, the prosecution decided to move forward with their case. They believed that they had enough evidence to convict Knox and Sollecito.

It also did not hurt that Knox was an American.

By the time of her trial in early 2009, the international media had turned Knox into the perfect villain—a sex crazed “ugly American” who took advantage of her innocent, unsuspecting roommate for her own twisted satisfaction.

Public opinion was firmly against Knox. She probably would have been convicted of the Lindbergh kidnapping if she were alive at the time.

Knox and Sollecito were tried together and convicted of murder on December 5, 2009, which many experts contend was largely the result of the negative publicity Knox received by the international media. Knox received a twenty-six year sentence and Sollecito twenty-five years. The duo was promptly sent

to separate prisons to complete their sentences.

But sometimes the wheels of justice work in a circuitous manner, especially in Italy.

Knox and Sollecito filed appeals for their convictions that ultimately led to a new trial, which began in late 2010.

The world was watching once more as Foxy Knoxy and her convicted killer paramour fought for their freedom. The appeals court ruled that what little physical evidence connected Sollecito to the crime scene—no physical evidence could be linked to Knox—was probably the result of contamination.

On October 3, 2011, both Knox and Sollecito were acquitted of Kercher's murder and released from custody, although Knox had been convicted previously of slander on Lumumba.

Knox's family and many people throughout the United States were joyful with the verdict, but they soon learned that the Italian justice system works quite differently than in the United States.

In the United States, if a defendant has been proven "not guilty" by either a judge or jury, he/she can never again be tried for that crime.

Things are a little different in Italy.

The Italian courts, responding to pressure by some in the public as well as the Kercher family, decided to set aside Knox's and Sollecito's acquittals in 2013. Both remained free on appeal and Knox had returned to the United States in 2011 and vowed never to return to Italy.

After another round of media attention, the case once more went before the courts, which resulted in complete exoneration of Knox and Sollecito on March 27, 2015. The presiding judge, Gennaro Marasca, told the court that no "biological traces that could be attributed to them in the room of the murder on the body of the victim, where in contrast numerous traces were found attributable to Guede."

It seems as though the saga of the murder of Meredith Kercher was finally over. Or was it?

The Aftermath

Today, Knox and Sollecito are no longer a couple. Both have tried to move on with their lives, but it has not been easy. Knox, who now has a slander conviction on her record, has tried to pick up the pieces in her hometown of Seattle. She works part-time as a freelance writer and has a fiancé.

The trials were not easy on her family either.

Her parents paid for her criminal defense, which has left them insolvent and struggling financially at a point in their lives when they should be looking forward to retirement.

In the end, it looks as though Rudy Guede acted alone. Kercher apparently caught him in the act of burglarizing her home, so the convicted killer decided to rape and murder her and then made a sloppy get-away.

Although most Americans who followed the case believe this synopsis of the crime, there are still many who think Knox was somehow involved.

“The case might be closed officially, but the debate about Knox’s guilt will rage on for years,” said journalist Barbie Latza Nadeau whose book *Angel Face* recounted the first trial. “There are just too many unanswered questions, even for those of us who covered the case from the start.”

The Kercher family in particular believes that Knox and Sollecito got away with murder.

“The family is in shock after the verdict,” said Kercher family attorney after Knox and Sollecito were exonerated in 2015. “I’ve had to explain to them there are now no avenues open to them. There is a great sense of bitterness.”

As if to add salt to the Kercher family’s psychological wounds, Rudy Guede was given a furlough in June 2016. The only person known definitively to be involved in Meredith Kercher’s murder will be released very soon.

Chapter 3: Francis “Frankie” Stewart Silver, a Nineteenth Century Black Widow

In today’s often chaotic world, many desire the justice of earlier periods. Some of the primary complaints from people today concerning the justice system are that the convicted are given too many amenities while in prison and in the United States many think that death sentences take too long to carry out.

In nineteenth century United States, justice was quick and hard. Death sentences were routinely given and the appeals process was limited in most cases—if it was available at all.

The 1831 murder of Charles “Johnny” Silver in rural North Carolina is one such case. Charles’ killer was determined to be his wife, who was quickly arrested, tried, and executed all within a matter of months. In that respect, the murder of Charles Silver was like many others of the period. What makes this case particularly interesting and important is the number of unanswered questions surrounding it, which have ultimately made the case enduring in the minds of people for generations, making it a genuine American folk legend.

The Murder

Since the murder of Charles Silver took place in the early nineteenth century, the records of the events are a bit sketchy. Silver’s murder took place long before every courtroom had a court reporter and newspaper reporting had yet to become an art. With that said, the authorities conducted a relatively thorough examination and had a plethora of forensic evidence to compile a case against Charles’ wife, Francis “Frankie” Silver.

The authorities believed that Frankie hacked her husband to death on December 22, 1831, in the small cabin the couple shared with their one-year-old daughter Nancy.

The location of the murder is important because it played a role in Frankie’s arrest and subsequent execution.

Charles and Frankie Silver lived in the western North Carolina town of Morgantown, which is located in Burke County. The area is unique because it is in both the American South and Appalachia, where people tend to be clannish and live off the land. Even today, a strong vein of self-sufficiency and independence runs through the population of the region.

In 1831, the people of Burke County did not take kindly to one of their own committing a cold-blooded murder, especially a woman.

Shortly after the authorities believed that Frankie killed Charles, the black widow then went to the home of her in-laws, feigning distress that something had happened to her husband.

Charles' parents reassured Frankie that their son was probably on an extended hunting trip and that he would show up at any time. To further mitigate any misgivings that Frankie had, Charles' father returned to the Silver's home with Frankie to assess the situation.

The Burke County authorities believe that Frankie's visible concerns were just a ruse to elicit sympathy from the victim's family and to create an alibi.

Charles' father found nothing outwardly suspicious at the Silver cabin, although several of Charles' personal effects that he probably would have taken with on a trip were in the home. By all accounts, Charles' father was convinced that nothing was amiss at his son's household. Charles must have gone hunting with a friend.

The Silver family never suspected their daughter-in-law, but the Burke County authorities had her at the top of their suspect list.

Burke County authorities made their move after Christmas and arrested Frankie Silver along with her brother Blackston Stuart and mother Barb. The Stuart family, and the Silver family for that matter, were extremely close and looked out for one another, no matter the situation. This attitude was common in Appalachia during the nineteenth century and was often the reason behind violent family feuds, such as the very famous "Hatfield and McCoy" feud. Because of this, the Burke County prosecutors believed that the murder was a conspiracy; Frankie may have acted alone, but her family helped her conceal the crime after the fact.

But even in early nineteenth century America, evidence was needed to win a conviction.

Because there was a lack of evidence against them, the charges against Barb and Blackston Stuart were dropped on January 17, 1832.

Frankie, though, would have to cool her heels in the jail a while longer before she had her day in court.

The Forensic Evidence

To use the term “forensic evidence” for a murder case from the nineteenth century may seem a bit anachronistic, but there was actually a fair amount in the Frankie Silver murder case and the prosecutors showed an incredible ability to locate and use that evidence in trial.

True, 1832 was long before DNA had been discovered and still decades away from the discovery of fingerprints, but investigators found ample amounts of physical evidence throughout the Silver cabin.

Oily ashes, which were consistent with fat, were found in the fireplace and a large pool of blood was discovered underneath the cabin. In a spring near the cabin, small bits of bone and flesh were found along with an iron boot heel that matched the type of heel Silver wore. The authorities posited that Frankie killed her husband in the cabin, possibly while he was asleep, in front of their child, and then dismembered and burned the body in a pit near the spring.

To many people in Burke County, the evidence was convincing and it was just a matter of when, not if, Frankie Silver would be convicted for her husband’s murder.

But Frankie Silver had other ideas.

Perhaps frightened by the stack of evidence against her, or possibly afraid that she could not get a fair trial in Burke County, Frankie Silver escaped from the jail with the help of her father and uncle. Since Frankie was petite, her family members disguised her as a boy and then attempted to whisk her out of the county.

But fate was not so kind to Frankie Silver.

The trio did not get very far, as the sheriff rounded up a posse to block all the roads in order to catch the elusive femme fatale. While on the run, when they reached a roadblock outside of town, Frankie's uncle referred to her as "her", which raised red flags to all those who heard and knew about Frankie's escape. Frankie was quickly captured and sent back to the jail to stand trial.

Although Frankie Silver went through an entire jury trial, the guilty verdict was probably a foregone conclusion, partly due to the evidence and no doubt also because no "good woman" in nineteenth century America would be charged with such a crime.

Silver was convicted of her husband's murder on March 29, 1832, and then hanged on July 12.

Justice was surely swift and hard for Frankie Silver.

But did Frankie receive proper justice?

The Legend of Frankie Silver

Frankie Silver's case was not forgotten and actually became well known throughout Appalachia in the decades after her death for a number of reasons.

It is believed that Frankie Silver had the dubious honor of being the first white woman hanged in Burke County, but probably more importantly than that are the lingering questions about the details of the crime.

No one doubts that Charles Silver was killed in the manner that the prosecutors laid out to the jury in 1832 and few think that someone other than Frankie was the culprit, but the question remains: why did Frankie kill her husband at that time and place?

One theory holds that Frankie was abused by Charles and that the combination of the abuse and the holiday season led her to snap and kill her husband in a burst of fury.

Another possible motive is that Frankie was a jealous wife who caught her husband cheating and rather than go through a divorce or share Charles with a mistress, she decided to kill him.

Whatever the motive for the murder, the event led the black widow to be

immortalized in the song known as the “Ballad of Frankie Silver.” Also, her gravestone, which has become a tourist destination over the years, contains the epitaph “only woman hanged in Burke County,” which certainly adds to the mystique of the legend of Frankie Silver.

Frankie’s family grew tired of the publicity and changed the spelling of their family name to “Stewart,” but it still did not keep the legend of Frankie Silver from growing.

Today the legend of Frankie Silver is well known to the residents of North Carolina, almost as much as the legend of Tom Dooley.

But to the rest of the country, the Frankie Silver murder case stands as an example of early forensic investigation and the swift and sometimes harsh justice of nineteenth century America.

Chapter 4: The Hinterkaifeck Murders

In the early 1920s, the people of Germany faced numerous hardships. The government was forced to pay reparations for World War I to France and Great Britain and it lost 13% of its territory as part of the Treaty of Versailles. The reparations, combined with war time debts, placed the new government based in Weimar at a serious disadvantage.

The Weimar government's answer to the problems was to print more money, which led to the process of hyperinflation that coursed through Germany from 1921 through 1923.

Hyperinflation is not simply an increase in prices, but is an increase in the prices of commodities by at least 1,000%! Obviously, one does not need to be an economist to understand that hyperinflation can destroy an economy and the social and political stability of a nation along with it.

The situation caused Germans to burn their money to heat their homes because the money became virtually worthless, and worse yet, it created havoc on the streets and throughout the countryside.

Political crime increased dramatically, as once obscure political factions from the far right and left of the political spectrum fought each other for supremacy on the streets.

Street crimes, such as muggings and burglaries, also saw a significant increase in early 1920s Germany. The Weimar government seemed unable to stop the violence and desperation that had gripped Germany. Things were bad and only seemed destined to get worse.

This era of violence and hopelessness was the backdrop for one of the most brutal and mysterious multiple homicides in modern German history known as the Hinterkaifeck murders.

Hinterkaifeck

The strange sounding name for this case, at least strange sounding to non-German speakers, is derived from the name of the village of Kaifeck, which was the nearest town to the site of the murders. The murders took place on a

farm that the owners had named “Hinterkaifeck,” meaning “behind Kaifeck.” If you were to travel to Kaifeck today, you would not think that it could be the location of one of Germany’s most notorious crimes.

In 1922, the farmstead of Hinterkaifeck was located in the idyllic hill country of Bavaria, about forty miles from Munich. At the time, most of the people in the area worked in agriculture and it was a place where neighbors knew one another. The farmers around Kaifeck often gladly helped their neighbors at harvest time and were charitable during the lean winter months. The warm, communal spirit of the rural area around Kaifeck was known throughout Germany.

But in early 1922, the peaceful, idyllic surroundings of rural Bavaria were shattered when the bodies of five members of the Gruber family and their maid were discovered at the Hinterkaifeck farm.

The Discovery

On April 4, 1922, neighbors began to worry when they had not seen any of the members of the Gruber family for several days. The people living at Hinterkaifeck were the patriarch, sixty-three-year-old Andreas and his seventy-two-year-old wife Cazilia. Along with the elder Grubers, their thirty-five-year-old widowed daughter, Viktoria Gabriel, and her two children, seven-year-old Cazilia and two-year-old Josef, also made the farmstead their home. To round out the residents of Hinterkaifeck was the maid, forty-four-year-old Maria Baumgartner.

Since a number of people lived at the farm, including two children, it was normal for the neighbors to see the Grubers coming and going, or for someone to be seen doing chores. When no activity was seen around Hinterkaifeck for several days, the neighbors became suspicious and noticed that the mail had not been picked up.

The local authorities were called to investigate.

The police first checked the house where they were horrified to find little Josef and Maria Baumgartner both dead in their beds. The shock of the initial discovery was quickly compounded when investigators found the bodies of Andreas, Cazilia, Viktoria, and little Cazilia in the barn.

An autopsy revealed that they were beaten and hacked to death with a mattock.

Investigators assigned to the case immediately established a chronology by working backwards from the discovery of the bodies, along with eyewitness testimony of the last reported sightings of the family, to determine that the murders took place on March 31, 1922.

The investigators knew how and when the Gruber family was murdered, but they quickly found out that finding the perpetrator, or perpetrators, would be elusive.

The Investigation

In many ways, the investigation of the Hinterkaifeck murders was ahead of its time procedurally speaking. The police pursued numerous leads and kept an open mind to different theories and techniques. Over 100 men from the area were investigated and questioned, but no arrests were made.

The initial investigation did turn up some mysterious and bizarre details about some incidents that took place at Hinterkaifeck just prior to the murders.

According to the Grubers' neighbors, in the days just before the murders, Andreas said he noticed some footprints leading to the house, but not away from it. This alone would not normally be enough to raise an alarm, but it turned out that the Hinterkaifeck farm experienced several other strange incidents in the weeks leading up to the murders.

Other members of the Gruber family also told neighbors that they heard some sounds in the attic that sounded too big to be a small animal. Andreas crawled into the attic to check the source of the sounds, but found nothing.

The Grubers also said that they noticed some items missing, namely a set of house keys, and that they found some things that were out of place, like a newspaper that no one in the family claimed.

Then there were the maids.

The maid who worked at Hinterkaifeck farm prior to Baumgartner left after only six months because she thought the farm was haunted.

Baumgartner was murdered on her first day on the job!

Was Hinterkaifeck haunted and cursed by malevolent spirits? As strange as that may sound, many people at the time believed so and a quick search on the internet reveals that some people still hold this belief.

After investigators collected the statements of the neighbors and interviewed men from the area, it seemed as though there were no suspects in the macabre case. At their wits' end, the local police decided to remove the skulls from the victims in order to have a clairvoyant in Munich offer any suggestions or leads.

None were found.

The lack of arrests in the Hinterkaifeck murders troubled the citizens of rural Bavaria, but the police did have some theories—although one of them reached into the realm of the bizarre.

One of the early suspects was actually a dead man, Karl Gabriel. Gabriel was the husband of Viktoria and father to little Cazilia, but he supposedly died on the Western Front during World War I. Since his body was never recovered from the battlefield, some people speculated that he actually survived and then deserted to keep from being sent back to the front.

There are some obvious problems with this theory.

Although Gabriel's body was never recovered, his comrades all claimed to have seen him die. It was not an uncommon occurrence for bodies of soldiers killed on the battlefield, especially the Western Front, to never be recovered during World War I. Thousands of men routinely died at a time fighting for land the size of a football field and in the confusion identity tags and papers were often lost, destroyed, and misplaced. The use of chemical weapons also made entire regions uninhabitable and so bodies were often left to rot.

Then there is the question of motive.

The initial investigation of Gabriel did not turn up a clear motive he would have to murder six people in cold blood. It seems unlikely that Karl Gabriel would stage his own battlefield death, desert the army, and then wander around Germany for a few years before killing his family.

With that said, some circumstantial evidence points toward Karl's wife being the primary intended target of the murderous rampage.

Viktoria's body received more damage than any of the others—she and her mother were the only two strangled *and* beaten, but Viktoria was beaten worse.

Then there was the question of little Josef's paternity.

Since Karl was allegedly killed during the war, he could not have been Josef's father. Neighbors suspected the father to be a local man named Lorenz Schlittenbauer. Schlittenbauer was in fact Viktoria's suitor at the time, but the police were never able to link him to the crimes, primarily because he had no motive, even if he was Josef's father.

The more investigators searched the backgrounds of the Gruber family the more they learned that they were not such a normal family.

Many believed that Andreas was actually the father of Josef and pointed out that the Gruber patriarch was actually prosecuted for incest with his daughter, although he was acquitted.

Again, even if it were true that Andreas and Viktoria had an incestuous relationship that produced Josef, it does not seem like a motive to murder the entire family.

And how would Andreas have beaten and hacked himself to death with a mattock?

The dead ends concerning familial suspects led investigators to believe that the motive was robbery and the perpetrator, or perpetrators, were actually motivated by financial reasons. But the police quickly dropped this theory when they discovered that a sizable sum of money, which would have been easily found by burglars, was still in the house. In another strange twist to an already bizarre case, it was also learned that the killer, or killers, had fed the cattle, used the fireplace, and ate the family's food.

All of this led the investigators to conclude that the killer, or killers, who were familiar with a mattock, were probably farmers.

Due to a lack of leads, the Hinterkaifeck murders quickly turned cold and unfortunately, due to the German economy's collapse because of hyperinflation, the case eventually fell out of the headlines and receded to the back of the minds of most Germans.

But not everyone has forgotten about the victims of Hinterkaifeck.

The Aftermath and New Revelations

In order to prevent the farm from becoming a ghastly pilgrimage site, Hinterkaifeck was demolished in 1923, which actually turned up the mattock that was used to murder the Grubers and their maid. The victims, without their heads, were given a proper burial and most of the surrounding community moved on from the horrid events of March 31, 1922.

In the years after 1923, the Hinterkaifeck murders had to take a back seat to major geo-political events that involved Germany. First World War II, then the partition of Germany into West and East Germany, followed by the Cold War, all meant that the nation's resources were spent on things other than trying to solve the Hinterkaifeck cold case murders.

But recently, thanks in part to advances in forensic technology and techniques, as well as Germany's reunification and stabilization, efforts have been made to solve the Hinterkaifeck murders. In particular, a group of police academy students did a case study of the murders and came to some conclusions.

The academy students argued that the Hinterkaifeck murders went cold largely due to crude forensic techniques at the time. Their report stated that all the potential suspects are now dead and that they established a prime suspect, but could not name the person publicly due to German law.

The Hinterkaifeck murders have also seen a resurgence of popularity among the general public worldwide.

Dozens of websites, often conspiratorial in tone, litter the Internet and two German language films titled *Hinterkaifeck* have been produced. Several books and articles, both academic and popular, have also been published that deal with the Hinterkaifeck murders and the question of who, or what, killed the Grubers and their maid.

Since the name of the suspect will not be made public anytime soon, it only stands to reason that the number of theories concerning what happened at the Hinterkaifeck farm will continue to multiply.

Chapter 5: The Murder of Kelly Anne Bates

Manchester, England, is an industrial city in the northwest of the country that is known for its tough, gritty inhabitants. The city is connected to the ocean by a thirty-six mile canal, which has created an interesting blend of blue-collar and cosmopolitan culture. Dock workers and professionals come together in Manchester to make one of England's largest and most important cities prosperous.

Manchester has rightfully earned its reputation as a hard-working, blue-collar city, but it has also acquired the dubious distinction of being one of the country's most violent locales.

Gang warfare has plagued the city for decades, which culminated in a sharp spike in gun-related crimes during the late 1990s and early 2000s. The gun violence grabbed headlines in a country where gun ownership is severely restricted and gun crime is extremely rare. Although most of the victims of Manchester's gun violence in the late 1990s were criminals and gang members, the number of occurrences and the sometimes brazen shootings alarmed Brits from Scotland to Southampton.

While the Manchester gang wars were heating up in 1996, another truly terrible crime was taking place on the other end of the city where people felt safe. A young girl was murdered after being put through an excruciating month of torture.

Once the details of sixteen-year-old Kelly Bate's murder were revealed, the United Kingdom was horrified and few in Manchester, no matter what neighborhood they lived in, would ever feel safe again.

James Patterson

In 1996, James Patterson was a middle aged man, who by all accounts was stable and had his life together. He was always gainfully employed and refrained from using drugs or alcohol. Patterson was also known to be impeccably groomed at all times and anyone who visited his home noticed how clean and neat it was.

But it was all just a façade that covered Patterson's true nature.

Underneath Patterson's well-crafted persona lurked a true predator who preyed upon the vulnerabilities and insecurities of girls and young women.

James Patterson's first known victim was his wife of ten years. According to reports and interviews compiled after Patterson was arrested for murder, he continually abused his wife, both psychologically and physically, until she could not stand it any longer and divorced him in 1980.

But the divorce was not a setback for Patterson; it allowed him to pursue his twisted carnal desires.

Patterson immediately began pursuing teenage girls and young women. The details of this period of his life are a bit murky, but it is known that he began a long-term relationship with a twenty-year-old woman in the early 1980s, which was beset with constant abuse. Patterson routinely dished out beatings to his younger girlfriend when he did not get things his way and once attempted to drown the woman in a bathtub.

The attempted drowning would be a pattern that the demented Patterson would repeat again and again, fatally with Kelly Bates.

Perhaps Patterson thought that a twenty-year-old woman was too old and difficult for him to control, so the next two known long-term relationships he had were with teenage girls who were young enough to be his daughters.

During the late 1980s, Patterson was involved with a fifteen-year-old girl and like his previous relationships, it ended in violence and abuse. In particular, Patterson beat the girl and also tried to drown her in a kitchen sink. The girl survived and Patterson was never prosecuted for the assault, which left him able to search for his next victim.

While Patterson was victimizing girls and young women during the 1980s, he was somehow able to avoid prosecution, which is perhaps the most tragic aspect of this case. James Patterson committed numerous felonies, including statutory rape and aggravated assault, before he ultimately murdered Kelly Bates, but unfortunately none of his victims were willing to come forward before 1996.

James Patterson was a true predator—he knew how to select his victims.

With his predatory craft perfected, Patterson trolled the streets of Manchester until he found his next victim, fourteen-year-old Kelly Bates.

Kelly Bates

To those who knew her, Kelly Bates was a typical teenage British girl. The cute brunette was described by her parents, Margarete and Thomas, as warm, affectionate, and intelligent. She normally enjoyed spending time with her family and friends from school, but in 1993 things began to change around the Bates home.

According to her parents, Kelly always had a bit of a rebellious streak, but she began to openly defy them and it was also apparent to them that she was hiding something.

Kelly had met a new boyfriend and unfortunately for the Bates family it was one of Manchester's worse predators, James Patterson. Although Patterson treated Kelly well in the initial stages of their relationship and did not abuse her, the fourteen-year-old knew that the extreme age difference—Patterson was forty-six when they met—would be difficult if not impossible for her parents to accept.

So Kelly Bates and James Patterson began a secret affair.

At first, the two met in different places around Manchester until the relationship became sexual and then they mainly met at Patterson's home. Once Patterson felt that he had the girl in his clutches, he invited her to move into his home.

The Bates family was in a precarious situation. If they put their feet down or went to the police, they risked alienating their daughter and perhaps losing her to the mean streets of Manchester. Because of this, they decided to let Kelly make her own decision.

Kelly's decision proved to be fatal.

Kelly attempted to keep up the appearance that she was in a normal relationship with Patterson, but like Patterson's persona, it was all just a façade. Kelly's parents noticed bruises on their daughter occasionally, which they asked her about, but received no answer. Kelly's parents continued to

worry about her, but were relieved when she moved back in with them.

Perhaps it was just a phase that Kelly needed to go through. They gave her space and everything worked out, they thought.

But by 1996, Patterson had perfected his predatory skills and he was able to convince Kelly to move back in with him in the beginning of that year. Kelly could not have known that the decision would lead to her death.

Attempts by the Bates family to contact Kelly by phone went unanswered. The turn of events upset Kelly's parents and their worry was heightened when they received an unsigned wedding anniversary card in March 1996. The card itself was not strange. Kelly was thoughtful and usually remembered important dates on the family calendar, but the fact that it was unsigned, coupled with the answered calls, raised red flags in the minds of Margaret and Thomas Bates.

Little did they know that when they received the anniversary card, their daughter was enduring unspeakable acts of cruelty.

The Torment Begins

Although Patterson was fairly forthcoming after he was arrested for Kelly's murder, he never told authorities some key details about the crime, such as if he planned the crime and if he did plan her murder, when he actually decided to go through with it. The attempted drowning incidents of his prior girlfriends certainly point toward a violent and a potentially homicidal personality, but the elaborate torture sessions that he put Kelly Bates through seemed to be a new wrinkle on the predator's method of operation.

When the Manchester police discovered Kelly Bates' body in Patterson's home in April 1996, they were horrified at the extent of the teenager's injuries.

The people of Manchester, who were accustomed to reading about crime and gang violence in their city, were especially disturbed when they learned about the details of Kelly's murder, namely the length of time she was tortured before she died.

For a while, Manchester's gang violence would take a back seat in the press

to the torture and murder of Kelly Bates.

And the details of Kelly's murder were truly revolting. Based on a combination of Patterson's confession and the autopsy of Kelly's body, it was revealed that she was tortured for about a month before she succumbed to her injuries. While Kelly was being tortured, Patterson carried on his daily life, working and shopping, and apparently torturing the poor teen in his free time.

Patterson tied his helpless quarry by her hair or with ligatures to radiators and bedposts throughout the house. Then he proceeded to inflict some of the most inhuman acts upon Kelly.

The autopsy revealed the Kelly suffered over 150 different injuries during her month of hell. She was stabbed several times with multiple utensils. She suffered a broken arm and there were several burn marks on her, which were later determined to be from a hot iron. Kelly was also scalded with boiling water on her buttocks and left leg.

As bad as those injuries were and as difficult it is for a normal person to imagine a human inflicting them on another human, or even an animal for that matter, the worst of her wounds were the result of several different mutilations.

The demented Patterson mutilated Kelly's ears, eyebrows, nose, lips, and genitals. For some reason, he particularly focused on the girl's eyes, removing them from the sockets while she was still alive!

Kelly was also deprived of water for most of her captivity; but she did not die of dehydration or shock from her injuries. Kelly Bates showed an incredible will to live, enduring through a lack of water and torture sessions that lasted for hours at a time. Ultimately, though, it appears Patterson never intended to let his girlfriend live—he drowned her in the bathtub and then turned himself in to the police.

The pathologist who examined Kelly's body was shocked at the level of abuse she suffered.

“In my career, I have examined almost 600 victims of homicide,” said Home

Office pathologist William Lawler. “But I have never come across injuries so extensive.”

After he killed Kelly, Patterson calmly walked into the nearest police station and confessed to the crime, at least in his own psychopathic way.

The Arrest and Trial of James Patterson

When James Patterson turned himself in to the Manchester police he told one officer: “I know I’m going ways. I know there is no point. I’m going to get found out anyway.”

Patterson was correct that his arrest was more than likely inevitable, but like a true psychopath he tried to deflect and mitigate his responsibility.

He first told officers that Kelly drowned in the bathtub, which apparently sounded like a good alibi to Patterson since that is where he left her body and she did in fact die from drowning. Once the authorities arrived at his home, they only needed to make a cursory inspection to learn that there was much more to the case than a simple bathtub drowning.

A preliminary search revealed visible blood in every room and a subsequent inspection with Luminol showed even more blood was spilled in cracks and crevices throughout the home. Clearly something horrendous had happened at James Patterson’s home.

When confronted with the forensic evidence, Patterson changed his story and claimed that she provoked him and he only acted in self-defense.

Obviously, no jury in the world would buy any defense that Patterson could conjure up when confronted with the mountain of forensic evidence that clearly showed him to be a sadistic maniac. He was convicted of murder and sentenced to a minimum of twenty years in prison.

The judge who sentenced Patterson to prison perhaps best summed up the case and the type of person he is.

“This has been a terrible case; a catalogue of depravity by one human being upon another,” said the judge. “You are a highly dangerous person. You are an abuser of women and I intend, so far as it is in my power, that you will abuse no more.”

With that sentence, the streets of Manchester got a little safer.

Chapter 6: The Assassination of William Stewart

When one thinks of the world's most dangerous occupations, journalist is usually not at the top of any list. But the reality is that journalism can be a very dangerous profession, especially for foreign correspondents sent to cover riots and war zones in Third World countries.

Journalists were regularly targeted for death by the drug cartels in Colombia during the 1980s and more recently many journalists have been singled out by Islamic extremist groups.

The 2002 beheading murder of American-Israeli journalist Daniel Pearl in Pakistan by an al-Qaeda cell, which was filmed and broadcast to the world, was a stark reminder that reporters often take their lives into their own hands in search of a byline.

The top journalists in the world know that their job can be dangerous, but most are willing to take the risks out of love for their profession and the potential to gain fame with a big story.

American William Stewart was one such journalist. Stewart traveled the world during the 1960s and '70s to get the scoop on some of the most violent situations in the most lawless places. His desire to practice journalism in the face of danger ultimately led to his death on the streets of Managua, Nicaragua, in 1979.

Turbulent Central America

Today, Central America is a place of poverty and gang violence, but during the 1970s and '80s the violence was driven by politics.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the tiny Central American nations, which were largely ignored by the rest of the world before that time, became a new battleground in the ongoing proxy war between the United States and the Soviet Union.

The U.S. sponsored anti-communist regimes that were often corrupt and repressive in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Nicaragua, while the Soviets funded leftist groups throughout the region that were usually just as violent.

The situation in Nicaragua was especially volatile.

When Stewart was killed in 1979, the government of Nicaragua had been under the control of the Somoza family for over sixty years. The Somoza family came to power in 1912 and although only three of Nicaragua's presidents were actually from the family—Anatasio Somoza Debayle was the last Somoza to be president when the regime was overthrown in 1979—the family was always the power behind the office.

The Somoza regime was known for being particularly corrupt and repressive, even among other Latin American dictatorships, which were known for their lack of human rights. The Somozas reveled in nepotism and excessive amounts of graft and if anyone dared to speak against them, they were quickly jailed or simply “disappeared.” The Somozas gave favors to American companies and the U.S. government, which turned a blind eye to the regime's corruption because it stood as a bulwark against communism in the Western Hemisphere.

Despite the Somoza government's repressive tactics, or some would argue because of them, opposition grew in the 1960s until it was full scale rebellion in the 1970s.

At the vanguard of the anti-Somoza rebellion was an organization known as the Sandinista Liberation Front (FSLN), often abbreviated as the “Sandinistas.” The Sandinistas formed in the 1960s as a left-wing political response to the Somoza regime, but as the Somozas became more repressive, the Sandinistas evolved into a guerrilla army by the late 1970s. The Sandinistas were not just a run-of-the-mill guerrilla outfit; they were funded and trained by the Soviet Union and Cuba, so they were a formidable foe.

Numerous atrocities were committed by both sides.

This was the situation that William Stewart was sent into when he was assassinated in 1979.

William Stewart

William Stewart, known as Bill professionally and in his bylines, was born in West Virginia in 1941 to a middle class family that nurtured his interests from an early age, which included journalism and world events. Although

William dreamed of being a reporter from an early age, he never imagined that his work would lead to his death and that his death would be a catalyst in the collapse of a despotic regime.

Stewart did well in high school and then moved on to Ohio State University in 1963, where he earned a degree in journalism. In the 1970s, Stewart's first big job was with CBS television affiliate WCCO in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He was then hired by ABC news as a foreign correspondent, where he quickly earned a reputation as a solid reporter who was willing to travel to hot spots around the world in order to get scoops.

Stewart's growing reputation earned him coveted yet dangerous assignments around the world, such as covering the 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran. The results of the Islamic Revolution were enough to frighten many journalists away from covering volatile spots around the world, but the experience only seemed to invigorate Stewart, who looked for his next assignment.

He found it in the war zone of 1979 Nicaragua.

Covering the Nicaraguan Revolution

When Bill Stewart was sent to cover the revolution in Nicaragua, he focused most of his reports on the growing leftist insurgency that was led by the Sandinistas. Stewart was not naïve; he knew that the situation in Nicaragua was becoming increasingly turbulent and the Somoza regime was growing more desperate to hold onto power.

Because of this, Stewart made sure to take precautions.

He always traveled with a Spanish translator, twenty-six-year-old Juan Espinosa, and he made sure to always let belligerents from both sides of the war know that he was a member of the foreign press corps.

Despite his precautions, Stewart could not avoid his death on the streets of Managua.

June 20, 1979, was a hot day in the slums of Managua. Stewart and Espinoza were traveling through the slums of the city in a van clearly marked "PRESS", which had in the past kept them safe from violence from either side. Stewart was chasing down some leads about leftist insurgency leaders

when they arrived at a road block that was erected by members of the Nicaraguan National Guard.

The Nicaraguan National Guard was essentially the paramilitary wing of the Somoza regime. The members of the National Guard were loyal to the Somozas and vehemently anti-communist. Although the National Guard was an official government organization, its members often formed secret death squads and carried out clandestine extra-judicial killings of their enemies. The National Guard battled the Sandinistas primarily in urban settings with the erection of road blocks throughout Managua being one of their common tactics to capture, arrest, and kill Sandinistas or those sympathetic to the communist group.

The Nicaraguan National Guard also interacted frequently with the foreign press corps with few incidents. The Somoza regime had an understanding with the press and tried to manipulate it according to its goals. The Somoza's may have been responsible for many atrocities, but they rarely sent their death squads to kill members of the media.

When Stewart and Espinoza were stopped by the National Guard members, they thought that it was just another routine stop and they would soon be on their way. In fact, other members of the international press corps were also at the barricade filming the event. To their surprise, they were ordered out of the van and separated. Espinoza was shot and killed away from the camera while Stewart protested and showed his press credentials.

Stewart was then ordered to kneel and was shot behind the ear, killing him instantly. To add insult to injury, the shooter then kicked Stewart's body.

The driver of Stewart's van, Pablo Tiffer Lopez, would later testify that the shooter said, "I'm sure he's no journalist. He's a dog."

But instead of being just another death squad murder, the assassination of Bill Stewart became headline news around the world and helped to topple the already teetering Somoza regime.

A Reporter Brings Down a Dictatorship

In an era before the internet, the film footage of Bill Stewart's assassination was broadcast into the homes of millions of people around the world on

broadcast news. In the United States, the major networks showed the entire, uncensored killing to horrified Americans from coast to coast.

The video of Stewart's killing went viral long before YouTube was even a thought in anyone's mind.

The immediate impacts of the assassination were dreadful for the Somoza regime, which never prosecuted anyone involved with the killings. The government only lasted about another month and President Anastasio Somoza Debayle fled the country in July and was assassinated just over one year later by a Sandinista hit team in Paraguay.

Many historians attribute the fall of the Somoza regime to Stewart's assassination. After the shocking film of his murder was broadcast on television, American support for the Somoza regime plummeted and President Jimmy Carter refused to give Somoza political asylum in the United States.

Bill Stewart's assassination was clearly a case where one man changed the course of history. Unfortunately for Bill Stewart, the young reporter had to die in the process.

Chapter 7: The Cold Case Murder of Ralph Smith

Cab drivers are some of the most underappreciated workers in the world. Cab drivers bring us to destinations, usually without questions and in return they are often harassed, are the butt of jokes, and are sometimes the victims of crime. Many cabbies pay for their own cars and gas and the ones who drive company cars often have to pay the company a certain amount before they can collect any money from the fares.

True, some cabbies make fairly good money, but they have to deal with rude, ungrateful customers and they often risk traffic tickets in their quest to get their customers to their destinations on time.

Too many tickets can cost a cabbie his/her license and with it, his/her livelihood.

Then there is the danger of being a cab driver.

Cab drivers are often the victims of robberies in many American cities and

even in cabs that have protective Plexiglas that separates the driver from the passengers, assaults, robberies, and even murders can occur.

Most Americans have heard or read news reports of a cabbie being robbed or even murdered, but few have stopped to consider truly how dangerous and underappreciated the occupation is.

Ralph Smith was one such cabbie who met an unfortunate end on the streets of Raleigh, North Carolina.

The Murder of Ralph Smith

The evening of October 22, 1971, began like any other in the home of fifty-one-year-old Ralph Smith. He kissed his wife and three children goodbye and drove off in his cab to work for the night.

According to his family, Ralph Smith always took precautions and was not known to take chances while working. He carried a pistol with him at all times when he was working and was considered a pretty good judge of character. He avoided picking up fares that looked too drunk or drugged out and he was always cautious in high crime neighborhoods.

But no matter how careful a person can be, one can never avoid every pitfall.

When Ralph did not return home from work early the next morning, his wife was not immediately worried. She thought that he probably had a good night and picked up some extra fares.

Then she received the call from the Raleigh Police Department. Ralph had been shot and killed.

Ralph's body was found lying on the front seat of the cab with his unused pistol at his side and twenty-nine dollars in his wallet. The police speculated that it was a robbery gone wrong and that Ralph had pulled his gun after the robber had pulled his. Unfortunately, Ralph was slower on the draw.

The Smith family was devastated by the news.

"I was a torn wreck," said Ralph's daughter, Dorothy Smith. "I couldn't sleep. Most nights, all I could see was my daddy."

Smith's murder immediately garnered a significant amount of media attention for a number of reasons. The killing took place just south of Raleigh's downtown, within a few blocks of the state capitol and the downtown entertainment district.

Smith's family and fellow cabbies took advantage of the early media attention by appealing to the public for anyone with information to come forward and a reward was offered.

Although Raleigh, like most big American cities, had its share of crime in the early 1970s, the murder of a cab driver made the case a particularly high profile crime and one that the police dedicated special attention toward solving. A number of police officers who were on patrol heard the fatal shots so they made it their personal mission to catch Smith's killer.

But despite the extra media and police attention that was given to Smith's murder, few leads came in and the case quickly went cold.

The Case Goes Cold

When a murder case becomes cold, it is usually not because the police give up. In the case of the Ralph's Smith's murder, it was simply that there were few leads. No one witnessed the actual murder and there was little forensic evidence available. The investigation remained open, but the detectives who originally worked on the case progressed through the ranks of the police department and most of them eventually retired.

For the family of a cold case murder victim, it is not so easy to move on.

Ralph Smith's family, though, knew that he would want them to live their lives. The Smith family moved on, but never forgot. Smith's children grew up and started their own families. Ironically, his son even worked as a cabbie for a while.

But the memory of the Smith family patriarch was never far from the minds of the family, even those who never knew him.

"When we've had family reunions, the other sisters and brothers always remembered him. His picture's up on the shelf," said Ralph Smith's granddaughter, Monica Taylor. "It's been 40 years. It's been a long time."

Yes, indeed, it was a long time for the Smith family to get justice for Ralph's murder, but eventually their patience would pay off.

Sinatra Dunn

While Ralph Smith was being a responsible, hardworking citizen, a young man on the other side of Raleigh was spending his time committing crimes and doing drugs. In 1971, Sinatra Dunn was a conman and petty criminal with many problems.

Although he was not known on the streets to be a particularly violent individual, Dunn ran with a rough crowd and committed an array of crimes in order to fuel his drug addiction. When he was not high on cocaine or heroin, Dunn spent his time casing out places to rob and people to rip off. He eventually served a year in prison for larceny during the mid-1970s.

Dunn also had a difficult time maintaining relationships with women and had a history of domestic violence.

Clearly Sinatra Dunn was a man with many demons.

But sometimes people with deep personal problems just need someone who will listen, or sometimes they just need to be "burned out" from their lifestyle. By the mid-1980s, Sinatra Dunn was burned out from a life of crime and drug use *and* he met someone who would listen.

Seeing that his life was a wreck, Dunn began attending church and substance abuse recovery groups in order to stop the vicious cycle that he was in and find some value to what was left of his life. During this time, he met a kind woman named Sherdenia Thompson who saw something in the troubled Dunn that no one else had ever seen.

She saw the potential for a good person.

Thompson and Dunn met while she was doing ministry work to recovering drug addicts and criminals and almost immediately the two developed a deep bond. Dunn quit using drugs and was no longer involved in criminal activity. Since he had a criminal record, finding a decent paying job was difficult for Dunn, but with the support of Thompson he was able to persevere.

One of his many jobs was as a cab driver.

Dunn and Thompson married in 1986 and everything seemed to be going well for the couple. After Thompson's elderly mother could no longer care for herself, the couple moved her into their home to give her round-the-clock care. Dunn would later use that caretaking experience to care for Sheredina when she had a stroke in 2008.

Dunn had clearly turned his life around with the help of Thompson. He had become an honest, productive citizen who shared everything with the woman he loved.

But he still had one dark secret.

The Arrest and Trial of Sinatra Dunn

As it turns out, Sinatra Dunn was a suspect in the murder of Ralph Smith almost from the beginning. In 1971, Dunn was at the height of his criminal activity and drug use and was fairly well-known to the Raleigh Police Department.

He was also an accomplished domestic abuser.

Not long after the Ralph Smith murder, Dunn gave his wife at the time a brutal beating that resulted in her giving a statement to the Raleigh Police.

Dunn's wife's statement, though, was not about domestic abuse—it concerned murder!

The woman told police that shortly after the Ralph Smith murder, Dunn had confessed the crime to her. Since angry spouses often file false reports on their partners, the Raleigh Police conducted a full background check on Dunn before they took the investigation any further. The police knew Dunn as a street criminal and drug user and although most of his known acts of violence were directed toward women, he was known to pull stickups among other crimes.

The Raleigh Police tracked Dunn down and questioned him concerning the Ralph Smith murder. Dunn unequivocally denied any involvement and said that his wife just made up the story because she was mad at him.

Although Dunn's wife's statement may have been admissible in court, alone it was not enough to make an arrest, never mind get a conviction. The

Raleigh Police were never able to collect any physical evidence that tied Dunn to the murder, so they needed him to confess, which he was not willing to do in the 1970s. Also, the Raleigh Police eventually lost track of Dunn's wife, who they believed would have been an unreliable witness if the case ever went to trial.

Despite the lack of evidence, the Raleigh Police Department never gave up trying to catch Ralph Smith's killer.

In the early 2000s, the Raleigh Police Department, like many police departments across the United States, opened a cold case squad in order to clear the backlog of cold case murders they had. Advances in forensic science, such as the AFIS and CODIS databases, have helped solve many cold cases, but those advances did little to help detectives solve the Ralph Smith murder.

Instead, Raleigh detectives would appeal to their primary suspect's conscience.

Detectives tracked down their primary suspect, Sinatra Dunn, in July 2014. The detectives expected Dunn to repeat much of what he told other investigators in the early 1970s, but instead he gave them a full confession.

Dunn said that on the night of the murder, Smith picked him up as a passenger, but that he never planned to pay the father of three. When he tried to leave Smith's cab without paying, the angry cabbie grabbed ahold of him and a struggle ensued. Dunn pulled his pistol out, shot Smith, and then fled from the scene.

Sinatra Dunn was charged with Ralph Smith's murder, to which he pled guilty in late 2014 and received a twelve year sentence. Unlike many criminal defendants who face similar charges, Dunn appeared relaxed and peaceful in the courtroom.

A big weight had been lifted from his shoulders.

The joy that the Smith family felt after they learned that Ralph's killer had been caught was quickly tempered when they learned the details of Sinatra Dunn's road to redemption. They could not help but feel a certain level of

sympathy for Dunn, even though he took the life of their loved one.

Ralph Smith's wife, Effie, lived to see her husband's killer arrested and sent to prison before she passed away on May 18, 2016, at the age of ninety-seven. Effie showed poise, empathy, and a certain amount of wisdom when asked about her husband's killer.

"I feel sorry for this family, and I don't hate him, either," said Effie. "You're not supposed to hate for what he did. But what he did, he's got to pay for it, too, not me."

Perhaps when Dunn is released from prison he will be able to pass along some of Effie's empathy.

Chapter 8: The Disappearance and Murder of Chandra Levy

If you were to turn on a television or read a newspaper in the United States between May and early September of 2001, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to avoid hearing about the disappearance of Chandra Levy.

The young intern disappeared from her Washington, D.C., apartment without a trace. The case bothered people because she was seemingly innocent and was therefore possibly the victim of a random, violent crime.

As the case dragged on, it became lurid. There was evidence that the young intern may have been sexually involved with a congressman and many wondered if perhaps the sleazy congressman may have been involved in her disappearance.

Then the world changed.

The September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks not only changed the course of history, but dominated the American news cycle for several weeks, which meant that the Chandra Levy case was covered much less and therefore began to recede from the minds of much of the public.

Eventually, Chandra's body was discovered, changing the case from a missing person investigation into a homicide investigation.

And that was when the case truly became convoluted, with more twists and turns than a Rocky Mountain highway!

Chandra Levy

Chandra Levy was born in 1977 to a Jewish family in Cleveland, Ohio, and raised in the Central Valley city of Modesto, California. Although the Levy family was not particularly religious, they were members of a Conservative synagogue in Modesto because they wanted to instill Chandra with a solid set of values.

Education was also important in the Levy household.

Chandra did well in school and then went on to study journalism at San Francisco State University where she earned a Bachelors of the Arts degree. Although she did not use the degree to find employment in the field of journalism, she was able to use it to land a spot in the Master's program for public administration at the University of Southern California.

The program was considered rigorous, but well worth the two years of study because graduates were almost assured a position in the field. As part of the program, students were required to complete an internship somewhere in the field. Chandra applied for a number of internships and was accepted to work at the United States Bureau of Prisons headquarters in Washington, D.C., beginning in the fall of 2000. The young Californian was ecstatic about the position and the opportunity to live in the Washington area. Although her parents Robert and Susan were sad to see their daughter move to the East Coast, they were also happy to see her become independent and they knew that the position would be vital for her career.

The plan was for Chandra to do the approximately nine month internship and then graduate from USC with her Master's degree by the end of May 2001.

Unfortunately, someone intervened on May 1 and prevented Chandra from realizing her dreams.

The Disappearance

May 1, 2001, was the last day anyone saw Chandra Levy alive. She had contact with several people that day, primarily by phone, including her parents. Since the Levy parents usually talked to Chandra every day by phone, they began to worry when days went by without a phone call from their daughter and all of their calls to her went unanswered.

Extremely worried about the situation, the Levy parents contacted the Metro D.C. Police Department on May 6 to report Chandra missing. At first, the police assured the Levys that their daughter had probably just taken an impromptu trip for a few days, or perhaps she went away with a boyfriend. The Levy family was adamant that Chandra would have called them before going on such a trip, which would have been out of her character in the first place. The police agreed to do a search of Chandra's apartment.

A quick search of Chandra's apartment found no visible signs of foul play:

nothing appeared broken or missing and the doors were locked. The search was for the most part cursory, though, because the police did not yet have a warrant to search her computer.

The more the police investigated the case, the more it appeared that Chandra did not just go away for a few days on a rendezvous with a lover. The authorities dug into Chandra's background for answers and one name kept coming up that seemed out of place—Gary Condit.

The Congressman and the Intern

When Gary Condit's name initially came up during the investigation into the disappearance of Chandra Levy, it raised red flags for a couple of reasons. First, Condit was nearly twenty years older than the twenty-four-year-old Levy. Sure, winter-spring relationships are not all that uncommon, but when one is potentially part of a missing person case it sets off the radars of investigators. Any number of scenarios may contribute to one of the persons in such a relationship killing the other, particularly when the younger of the two is the person missing and possibly dead.

The age difference between Condit and Levy was enough in itself to garner significant attention from the police, but more importantly, it turned out that Condit was a member of United States Congress!

In 2001, Gary Condit had served as the Democratic congressman for California's 18th Congressional District since 1993, which happened to be the district where the Levy family lived. By all accounts, the citizens of Condit's district were happy with his work because they reelected him numerous times by wide margins. Condit was also seen by most as a family man with good values; he had been married to the same woman for several years and had two children at the time of Levy's disappearance. The congressman campaigned and voted in the congress as a conservative "blue dog" Democrat and was especially vocal in his opposition to President Clinton during the latter's impeachment trial in 1999.

But oftentimes with politicians, looks are deceiving.

As investigators began to focus more on Condit and the nature of his relationship with Chandra Levy, they learned that the congressman was having an affair with a flight attendant.

They also learned that he and Chandra were having an affair!

In the days after the Levys reported Chandra missing and the investigation into her disappearance began, Chandra's father and aunt told investigators that Chandra was involved in a sexual relationship with congressman Condit. The revelation was enough for the Metro D.C. Police to obtain a search warrant to conduct a more thorough search of Chandra's apartment. A May 10, 2001, search of Chandra's apartment uncovered several messages on her answering machine from Condit and a number of emails from the congressman on her computer.

Gary Condit quickly found himself in the middle of an epic scandal.

At first, Condit denied the affair to the police, but when presented with the evidence he eventually relented and admitted to the relationship.

Once the press got hold of the details, it quickly became headline news for months in the United States. The Levy family continually railed against Condit, who they accused of withholding information in the case. For his part, once the relationship was acknowledged, Condit was cooperative with the police. He allowed them to search his apartment and met them for interviews.

Did the sleazy congressman have something to do with Chandra Levy's disappearance?

The investigators did not think so and he was never very high on their suspect list. The rest of America, particularly the voters in California's 18th Congressional District, had doubts about Condit's innocence. Condit lost his reelection bid in 2002.

As quickly as the Chandra Levy disappearance came to dominate the headlines in the news cycle, it dropped from the headlines even more precipitously when the 9/11 terrorist attacks took place. Americans became more concerned with the deaths of thousands of their countrymen and the potential for many more to die in further terrorist attacks.

Unfortunately for the Levy family, Americans quickly began to forget about their missing daughter.

The Discovery of Chandra's Remains

Although the media attention about Chandra's disappearance was greatly diminished after the 9/11 attacks, investigators on the case continued to diligently search for the missing intern. The immediate focus was centered on Chandra's laptop computer, which was found intact in her apartment.

In 2001, computer forensics was still a fairly new sub-discipline in law enforcement. Most American police departments, even in major cities like Washington, still did not have units or even officers specifically assigned or trained to search and evaluate computer related evidence, which often created problems. In the Chandra Levy case, eager investigators corrupted the hard drive of her laptop, destroying vital evidence related to the case. Despite this major problem early in the investigation, experts were brought in who were able to retrieve some very important information that helped investigators locate Chandra's remains.

Computer forensic technicians were able to retrieve emails between Chandra and Condit and more importantly, they also recovered a number of search engine queries that pointed them in the right direction.

On the day of her disappearance, Chandra made a number of queries about Rock Creek Park in Washington. The park was a popular attraction for joggers, hikers, and anyone who wanted to escape the concrete jungle.

In the early 2000s it was also popular with rapists.

Police began to suspect that Chandra was either lured to Rock Creek Park by her killer, or she was preyed upon there by a stranger. Either way, the search for Chandra was focused on the park and authorities quickly came to the realization that they were not going to find Chandra alive.

On May 22, 2002, just over a year after she disappeared, the skeletal remains of Chandra Levy were discovered in Rock Creek Park. Since only bones remained of Chandra, valuable clues were missing that could have told the authorities about the manner of her death, or even point the finger toward a specific person if DNA was left behind. Unfortunately, the police were unable to extract any useable DNA from the scene, but an autopsy did reveal one clue. Damage to the hyoid bone in the neck region suggested that Chandra had been strangled, but other than that they learned very little.

The Levy family was devastated to learn that their daughter was dead, but grateful that they had her remains and could give her a proper funeral.

The revelation of the discovery of Chandra Levy's remains brought the case back into the forefront of the news cycle once more. Political pundits and experts theorized what the location of the remains meant and others suggested that the police were close to making an arrest.

They were all wrong!

In the weeks and months after the discovery of Chandra's remains, homicide investigators expanded their suspect pool from those close to Chandra, such as Gary Condit, to any known criminal who used a similar method of operation. This new tactic allowed them to focus on a suspect—Ingmar Guandique.

In many ways Guandique was the perfect suspect for this crime. He was an illegal alien from El Salvador and a member of the notorious street gang Mara Salvatrucha, often known as MS-13. Although the gang originated in Los Angeles during the 1980s, it has since spread throughout North and Central America with the Washington, D.C., area being one of their centers of power.

Clearly, Ingmar Guandique was not a nice guy, but being a gang member and illegal alien does not make one a killer.

But those were not the reasons why Guandique fell under police radar during the Chandra Levy investigation. When Chandra's remains were discovered, Guandique was in jail for raping two women at Rock Creek Park! He was later sentenced to ten years in federal prison for those assaults, which he claimed to investigators were the only women he assaulted in Rock Creek Park.

The investigators were skeptical.

Part of their skepticism stemmed from the circumstances of Guandique's life: he was a violent gang member in prison for raping two women around the same time and in the very same park where Chandra Levy's remains were found.

Then there was the testimony of his cellmate.

Guandique's cellmate, who was also an MS-13 member, told police and later testified in court that the Rock Creek rapist was also Chandra Levy's killer. The confession seemed quite detailed and accurate, so the police were willing to use it to build their case against Guandique.

For his part, Guandique agreed to take a polygraph test administered by the FBI, which he failed. He then took a second polygraph exam that came back with "inconclusive" results.

Things did not look good for Guandique, but since he was already confined for the rape convictions, there was no rush to charge him with Chandra's murder.

In the meantime, the media learned of the suspect. The *Washington Post*, which was essentially the local paper, covered the case from the beginning. When its reporters learned that Guandique was a suspect in Chandra's murder, a series of stories were published in 2008 that chronicled the case and focused on Guandique as the prime suspect.

The *Washington Post* series on the Levy case put immense pressure on the Metro Police, who then charged Ingmar Guandique with the murder of Chandra Levy on April 22, 2009.

Perhaps the Levy family would finally get justice for Chandra.

The Trial of Ingmar Guandique

When Guandique's murder trial finally began in 2010, it had been nearly ten years since Chandra Levy was killed. Outside of the local press, the media attention given to the trial was minimal. Apparently to many in the media, it would have been more interesting and sold more copies if a congressman had been Chandra's killer rather than a convicted rapist gang member.

But in the courtroom nearly every day were Chandra's parents. The stress of the case had put several years on both of them, but they were determined to see their daughter's killer receive justice and they believed whole-heartedly that Guandique was guilty.

Despite the lack of physical evidence linking Guandique to the murder, most

people agreed with the Levy family.

And who could blame them?

The prosecution's star witness was the jailhouse snitch, a man named Armando Morales, who as a member of MS-13 had committed numerous crimes throughout the Washington metro area. Morales testified in court that on May 1, 2001, he and Guandique cruised around Washington looking for people to rob. The two gang members eventually ended up at Rock Creek Park where they spotted Chandra Levy alone—a perfect mark. Morales then testified that he helped Guandique rob Levy, but did not participate in her rape and murder.

Guandique's defense attorney pointed out that Morales was testifying with the hope that he would receive a reduced sentence and that he therefore should not be believed. The attorney further pointed out that there was no other evidence linking his client to the murder and that he should therefore be acquitted.

The jury disagreed and on November 22, 2010, Ingmar Guandique was convicted of Chandra Levy's murder.

The Levy family was relieved that they could now move forward with their lives and the police and prosecutors were convinced that the right man would be spending the rest of his life in prison for Chandra's murder.

But not everyone was convinced that the right man was convicted.

Gladys Witherspoon, who defended Guandique in the 2001 Rock Creek rape cases, thought that the jury convicted her former client solely on emotion.

"I just think they were going to convict anyway," said Witherspoon shortly after Guandique was convicted of murder. "They felt bad for that woman. She's sitting in there every day."

Who would not feel bad for the Levy family?

An Incredible Twist

Once Guandique was convicted of Chandra Levy's murder and sentenced to spend the rest of his life in prison, he did what most people do who have that

much time on their hands and filed an appeal. Guandique's appeal lawyers quickly learned that not only were there plenty of reasons for their client to receive a new trial, a number of previously unknown facts actually pointed toward Guandique's innocence.

Since Armando Morales' testimony is what essentially convicted Guandique, the Rock Creek rapist's lawyers decided to focus their attention on Morales. They learned that Morales later admitted in a recording to perjury and that he never saw Guandique kill Chandra Levy.

When Morales' perjury was made public, the government dropped opposition to a new trial for Guandique.

It appeared that Ingmar Guandique would get another chance to prove his innocence in court.

Guandique's lawyers also learned that there was a witness who potentially heard Chandra being attacked. The "new" witness testified that she heard the scream of a female from the direction of Chandra's apartment around four thirty am on the last day she was seen alive. This new revelation possibly moved the timetable up on Chandra's murder and possibly placed the scene of the crime, or at least abduction, at her apartment.

This new revelation, along with the discovery that prosecutors failed to turn over important evidence to the defense during Guandique's murder trial, resulted in the government dropping the murder charges against Guandique on July 28, 2016. Since he had already served his time for the Rock Creek Park rapes, Guandique was technically a free man, but since he was an illegal alien and a convicted felon, he was turned over to Immigration Customs and Enforcement where he currently faces deportation back to El Salvador.

The Levy family was shocked with the turn of events.

"We all want our truth. I want to make sure we find out the truth. My husband and I hope that justice is found for our family," Susan Levy said. "But even if I get justice, (it) doesn't bring calm back to a family that's been fractured by a horrendous crime like this."

Unfortunately for the Levy family, the police currently have no suspects for

their daughter's murder.

Chapter 9: The Abduction of Colette Aram

The term “random crime” is used a lot to describe a crime where the victim is unknown to the perpetrator. These types of crimes are most common in larger urban areas and often involve muggings and burglaries.

But is the term truly accurate?

Even in most stranger-on-stranger crimes, the victim is carefully vetted. Muggers rarely attack groups and tend to focus on people who they believe have money. The same can be said for burglaries and even sexual assaults. Criminals rarely randomly just decide to commit a crime—they usually do their nefarious research before striking.

We can do as much as possible to protect ourselves from random crimes. We can keep our homes properly lit, make sure to stay away from certain neighborhoods, and try to stay in groups at night, but the unfortunate reality is that if a criminal wants to take advantage of someone, then he or she will probably will.

On October 30, 1983, sixteen-year-old English girl Colette Aram became the victim of one such “random” criminal. Even though the horrific crime took place in broad daylight, there was little she could have done to prevent it. Her abductor meticulously planned to abduct and murder a girl—any girl. Unfortunately for Colette, that girl just happened to be her.

The Abduction

Colette Aram grew up in the small town of Keyworth, England. In many ways, 1983 Keyworth was emblematic of a bygone era in British history. The residents all knew their neighbors and although the village suffered from the tough economy of the early 1980s, crime was not much of a problem. Keyworth is located in the north central region of England, far from the crime and problems of London, Manchester, Liverpool, and the other major cities of Britain.

Colette Aram’s parents believed it was the perfect place to raise their daughter.

Colette lived at home with her parents, but was training to be a hairdresser and hoped to use that to find a job in order to save some money so that she could get a place of her own, or possibly to move in with her boyfriend. Her boyfriend lived approximately one and a half miles from the Aram residence. It was a walk Colette made countless times.

Often, Colette's boyfriend would pick her up at her family's home and then the two would go out on the town or spend a quiet evening at his place. On the evening of October 30, 1983, Colette's boyfriend's car was having problems, so she decided to make the short walk to his place.

About half-way to her boyfriend's, at around 8:10 pm, Colette stopped to talk with a group of her neighbors who were hanging out in front of a house. The Aram's neighborhood was usually active with children and adults socializing, so the scene was nothing out of the ordinary. Also, although Halloween is not as big a holiday in England as it is in the United States, the English do celebrate it and so the evening was a bit more festive and active than usual.

Once Colette finished talking with her neighbors, she rounded the corner and was never seen alive again.

But she was heard!

Witnesses reported hearing a scream and seeing an unknown car drive off around the same time. Was Colette abducted?

Colette's family immediately contacted the local police, but wasted no time and began searching for her themselves. The cover of darkness hampered their search, though, and ostensibly also gave Colette's abductor cover.

The search for Colette resumed early on the morning of October 31. It did not take long for searchers to find the naked body of Colette Aram, which was located in a wooded area less than a mile from her family's home. An autopsy revealed that the friendly teenager had been raped and strangled to death.

The citizens of Keyworth were upset and frightened when they learned of Colette's murder.

A monster was walking the streets of quiet Keyworth.

A Kidnaping Case Becomes a Homicide Investigation

The forensic examiners dutifully cataloged all of the physical evidence relating to the case, including the semen from inside Colette, although the technology of the time limited what they could do with it. For the time being, the police were forced to rely on old fashioned techniques to find Colette's killer.

Since Colette was on her way to see her boyfriend, he immediately went to the top of the list of the police's persons of interest. After interviewing Colette's boyfriend, the police quickly ruled him out as a suspect for a number of reasons, including a solid alibi. Once Colette's boyfriend was struck from their list of potential suspects, the local investigators learned that he was the only man on their list.

When the police did a background check of all the men in the Aram's neighborhood and compiled a list of all of Colette's known male acquaintances, it was determined that none were viable suspects. Most had air-tight alibis and those who did not either had a blood type that did not match the semen taken from Colette or they were too young to have committed the crime.

It seemed that the police were at an impasse.

The days after Colette's murder turned to weeks and the weeks turned to months. Then the police and the Aram family were approached by the British Broadcasting Company about a new television show they were producing about unsolved crimes in Britain. The producers of the show, titled *Crimewatch*, wanted to profile Colette's case on their inaugural episode in June 1984. The local investigators and the Aram family were more than happy to give interviews for the show with the slim hope that someone watching would know something and come forward.

After the show aired, the BBC studios received hundreds of tips. Unfortunately, though, none of those tips panned out. Since *Crimewatch* represented a new medium (it served as inspiration for the later *America's Most Wanted*), many of the calls were actually pranks and a few were from scorned lovers who tried to use the show to get back at former partners.

After sifting through the largely bogus tips generated from the spot on

Crimewatch, local authorities received a bizarre letter.

The Nottinghamshire Police—Keyworth is within the shire of Nottingham, which is close to the equivalent of an American county—thought that the letter was the break they needed to solve the case. Perhaps the killer would reveal information about himself that would ultimately lead to his arrest.

In the letter, the killer bragged that the timing of the abduction and murder, the night before Halloween, helped him blend in with the crowd.

“No-one knows what I look like. That is why you have not got me,” the killer wrote. “I know I strangled her. I drove around and ended up at Keyworth. I left the key there to fool you and walked back across the fields. You will never get me.”

Hoping that someone would recognize the killer’s writing, the police published part of the letter, but they received no responses.

The murder of Colette Aram went cold for nearly thirty years.

Advances in DNA Technology

When Colette Aram was raped and murdered in 1983, Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA) was known to scientists, but they had yet to learn how to develop DNA profiles that are specific to each person. Around the time Colette was murdered, scientists in the United Kingdom, not far from her home, were developing a process whereby each person’s unique genetic profile could be mapped and profiled. Once developed, DNA profiling would revolutionize law enforcement as much as the discovery that each person has unique fingerprints did in the late nineteenth century.

About two years after Colette was murdered, a British scientist named Alex Jefferys worked day and night in his Leicester lab to discover that each person has a unique DNA code that can be “fingerprinted” or profiled. The discovery was revolutionary and almost immediately applied to law enforcement. Jefferys first used DNA profiling to help capture British murderer and rapist Colin Pitchfork in 1987, which set the stage for DNA profiling to be used in crime labs across the world.

Despite the great leap forward made in the science, it still took a long time to

compile an accurate DNA profile well into the 1990s and large samples were often needed. By the 2000s, though, the science had advanced enough that a DNA profile could be gleaned from a sample within hours and scientists learned how to extract a profile from mitochondrial DNA. Samples no longer needed to be large, which was bad news for the bad guys.

Police procedures had also advanced in the nearly thirty years after Colette Aram's murder.

Although the police who originally investigated Colette's murder were hampered by limited DNA science, they were far sighted and skilled enough to properly preserve the physical evidence from the case, namely the killer's semen that was extracted from Colette. For the first few years after Colette's murder, the semen sample sat in an evidence locker, but by the 2000s the case was reevaluated when the United Kingdom created a national database of DNA taken from criminals, both those convicted and charged, as well as DNA taken from cold cases.

It was only a matter of time before Colette's murderer was caught.

The break that police were looking for came in 2008 when a man named Jean-Paul Hutchinson was arrested on a traffic violation. As required under British law, the man was forced to submit a sample of his DNA for the national database and after doing so it turned out that his DNA was a near match to Colette's killer. It seemed as though, after nearly thirty years, Colette's killer would finally face justice.

But there was just one problem—Jean-Paul Hutchinson was only twenty-four-years-old in 2008, which meant that he was not yet born when Colette was killed.

Could the killer's DNA sample have been stored improperly?

Investigators reviewed all the possible scenarios until they were left with the most plausible one—since Jean-Paul Hutchinson's profile was not an *exact* match, then the DNA profile belonged to someone to which he was closely related.

His siblings were ruled out because they were too young to have committed

the crime, so the attention quickly turned to the Hutchinson family patriarch, fifty-one-year-old Paul Stewart Hutchinson.

At first glance, Hutchison seemed like an unlikely suspect. The former rail worker and father of four had no criminal record.

But DNA does not lie.

A sample of Paul Hutchinson's DNA was taken and it was quickly determined that he was in fact the person who left his DNA in Colette Aram.

Hutchinson was charged with Aram's murder in 2009 and seeing that he had no defense against the positive DNA match, pleaded guilty in January 2010 to her murder. In court, the once large and imposing rail worker looked like a shell of his former self. He was suffering from diabetes, walked with a cane, and would now have to spend the rest of his life in prison.

Although the process took nearly thirty years to complete, Colette's family was glad that the case was finally over and they could at last have their closure.

"We got Hutchinson in the end," said Colette's mother, Jacqui Kirby to the press after the guilty plea. "But it took 26 years and I paid the price. Colette's death tore my family apart."

But life in prison was not a prospect Paul Hutchinson wanted to face. Just a few months after he pled guilty to Colette's murder, Hutchinson was found dead in his cell of an apparent drug overdose.

He may have cheated justice in this world, but the next world will probably not be so forgiving.

Chapter 10: The Murder of Manhattan Prostitute Helen Jewett

For some of you true crime aficionados reading this, you may remember the 1994 trial of the so-called “Hollywood Madam”, Heidi Fleiss. In that case, Fleiss was sent to prison for pandering, but made headlines because of her high-profile clientele. Although Fleiss never went public with the names of any of her clients, a number of prominent actors, athletes, and even politicians were rumored to have used her services.

The Fleiss trial took place in an era where traditional values were being challenged throughout the United States. Prostitution had already been legal for decades in some parts of Nevada and tolerated in many other areas throughout the country. Fleiss’ trial garnered media attention not so much for the type of crime committed, but more so for the defendant’s glamorous looks and the possibility that a “bombshell” could be dropped in the form of Fleiss’ black book of clients.

Most Americans were indifferent to the moral nuances of the case.

In 1836, long before the Heidi Fleiss trial and the glare of twenty-four-hour news networks, an equally salacious trial took place in the United States that also involved prostitution and high-profile clients.

But the 1836 trial centered on the murder of a prostitute named Helen Jewett.

Like the Heidi Fleiss trial, the Helen Jewett murder trial became a media sensation for a number of reasons. The victim was a once innocent, attractive young woman who lost her moral compass and walked down the road of perdition before being brutally murdered!

The suspect was a young man with no viable motive to kill Jewett and the verdict that was returned can be described as questionable at best.

The Helen Jewett murder trial had all the hallmarks to make it one of the most sensational trials in nineteenth century American history. Because of those factors, it continues to intrigue legions of true crime fans and amateur sleuths.

Dorcas Doyen

Helen Jewett was born Dorcas Doyen in Augusta, Maine, in 1813. The Doyens were a working class family who tried to instill traditional values and ethics into young Dorcas, but her mother died when she was a young girl.

The death of her mother was just the first in a series of early events that helped to set the trajectory of Dorcas' life. Without her mother to show her how to be a proper nineteenth century lady, Dorcas learned that knowledge on her own.

Not long after her mother died, Dorcas' father sent her to work for a local judge named Nathan Weston. Dorcas worked as a servant in the Weston home, but by all accounts was treated as a member of the family. Weston provided for a formal education for Dorcas and in her free time, she was allowed to use the extensive personal library in the Weston home. It was while she lived with the Westons that Dorcas acquired the sophistication and education that allowed her to become one of the most sought after prostitutes in New York years later.

Clearly, Judge Weston took a keen interest in Dorcas' future, but some think that it was more than a father-daughter relationship.

To this day, it remains unknown if Dorcas and the judge had an affair, but it is known that when Dorcas was sixteen or seventeen she became sexually involved with another much older man. The paramour in question was a banker who was married with children. The affair immediately became a scandal in conservative nineteenth century Augusta and put the judge in a precarious position.

Since the affair was made public and Dorcas was under the age of eighteen, the judge would be expected to level statutory rape charges against the girl's lover. If he did that the details of his relationship with Dorcas could be made public.

To wiggle out of this untenable situation, the Weston family stated that Dorcas was actually eighteen and since the sex between her and the banker was consensual, then no charges would be leveled. This allowed Dorcas to leave the employ of the Westons, although she decided to stay in Augusta.

Dorcas quickly found out that it was difficult for a woman to find work in nineteenth century Augusta, especially when she was known around the city for being involved in a sex scandal. Because her reputation was essentially ruined, and with few job prospects in the area, she turned to the world's oldest profession to pay the bills.

A few months after Dorcas left the Weston home, she met Augusta madam Maria Stanley who gave her a job in a local brothel. Dorcas worked in the Augusta brothel for a few weeks, but then changed her name to Helen Mar and moved to Boston.

Doyen/Mar worked as a prostitute for a few months in Boston, which is possibly where she met well-known Manhattan madam Rosina Townsend. By the late 1820s, or early 1830s, Dorcas changed her name once more, this time to Helen Jewett, and joined Townsend in Manhattan to work in one of her high-end brothels.

Helen Jewett became an immediate hit with the customers.

The brothel where Jewett worked was not far from Manhattan's city hall and the clientele included prominent politicians, Wall Street businessmen, bankers, lawyers, journalists, and actors. Truly, it was a client list that could easily compare with that of Heidi Fleiss 160 years later, which is what made Helen's murder such a scandal.

Did a member of New York's elite kill Helen Jewett?

A Brutal Murder

On April 10, 1836, after responding to smoke emanating from Jewett's room, Townsend found the burned body of Helen Jewett around four a.m. Since 1836 was long before electrical power, people used candles to keep rooms and hallways lit, which is what Townsend and the other prostitutes thought killed Jewett.

At first, the police concurred.

An autopsy revealed that Helen was already dead when the fire was set. The cause of death was determined to be three blows to the head by what was believed to be a hatchet. It was a most brutal way for Helen Jewett's troubled

life to end and if there was any consolation, it was that she was killed in her sleep.

Once the police determined that the young woman was murdered, they turned their attention to arresting a suspect.

A Suspect Emerges

Almost from the beginning of the investigation, Townsend and the other prostitutes from the brothel told the police to focus on one of Helen's regular customers, Richard P. Robinson.

In some ways Robinson was like Jewett. Born in 1818 to a middle class family in Connecticut, Robinson left home as a teenager to "make it big" in New York City. Instead, he found work as a clerk in a dry goods store and often found himself associating with members of the criminal underworld and often went by the alias "Frank Rivers."

According to one story, Jewett first met Robinson when she was accosted by a man on the streets of New York. As she tried to escape the clutches of the vagrant, Robinson stepped in and gave the guy a thrashing. The two then began a relationship that was more than just that of a client and prostitute.

When the two were not spending time with each other at the brothel, they exchanged letters that betrayed their often volatile relationship. They appeared to be in love, but Robinson hated Jewett's profession and wanted her to quit.

Just three days before she was murdered, Jewett sent a particularly emotional letter to Robinson.

"You have known how I have loved, do not, oh do not provoke the experiment of seeing how I can hate," she wrote.

Richard Robinson responded, "You are never so foolish as when you threaten me. Keep quiet until I come on Saturday night and then we will see if we cannot be better friends hereafter."

That Saturday, April 9, 1836, was the last night Jewett and Robinson spent together.

Townsend told the police that she saw Robinson in the brothel wearing a long black cloak on the evening of Saturday, April 9. To her knowledge, Robinson was Jewett's only client that evening.

Other prostitutes who worked at the brothel saw Robinson exit through a back door just before the fire. The police found a black cloak and a bloody hatchet near the door.

Finding Robinson was not difficult. He lived in a boarding house about half a mile away. Although Robinson denied involvement in Jewett's murder, the circumstantial evidence was enough for an arrest.

The Trial of the Century

Today, the term "trial of the century" has become a bit cliché due to its overuse. Whenever a celebrity or politician has to stand trial for a major crime, the trial is often referred to in this way. No doubt the media plays a major role. Twenty-four-hour news networks, internet websites, and a host of other media all do their part to keep high-profile trials in the public eye today. Many think that the modern media appeals to sensationalism and the lowest common denominator.

In that respect, things have not changed much.

The Helen Jewett murder case was immediately seized upon by the New York "penny press," so-called because the newspapers usually cost a penny. The penny papers were known for their sensationalism and were often short on facts but long on lurid details. The *New York Herald* in particular led the charge to bring the public all of the salacious "facts" of Richard Robinson's murder trial, even if it affected the outcome of the verdict.

The coverage of the trial by the New York press was eventually picked up by the press from other American cities, making it the first criminal trial in the history of the United States to be nationally covered. No doubt owing to the morals of early nineteenth century America, the majority of the stories were biased against Jewett, although Robinson was far from depicted as an innocent victim.

This was also probably the first trial to have "groupies."

Young men hung around the courtroom wearing black cloaks similar to the one Robinson was reported wearing, while a number of brave women gave their public support to the slain prostitute, arguing that a woman's bad life choices should not be the cause of her murder.

The trial itself is considered a farce by most modern legal scholars.

The evidence against Robinson was for the most part circumstantial, although the eyewitness accounts of him in the vicinity around the time of the murder would be enough to land a conviction in many courtrooms today.

That is, if the eyewitness testimony was allowed and considered credible.

Townsend and the other prostitutes testified that they saw Robinson that evening, but the judge later instructed the jury to disregard their testimony because prostitutes could not be trusted.

It only took the jury a half hour to arrive at a not guilty verdict in June 1836. Besides the clear legal and media bias that was exhibited against the victim, there were also reports that Robinson may have bribed one or more members of the jury.

Once he was acquitted of Jewett's murder, Robinson packed up his belongings and headed west to the newly formed nation of the Republic of Texas. He thought that it would be a good place to start over, where no one would know about him and his past.

Perhaps in an act of cosmic justice, Robinson died just two years later of a fever. It was reported that he uttered Helen Jewett's name on his deathbed.

Chapter 11: The Cold Case Murder of Linda Strait

For decades, Spokane, Washington has been consistently rated one of the best places to live in the United States. It has continually boasted a low crime rates, good schools, and is within a short drive to forests, mountains, and deserts. Because of these factors, Spokane has consistently attracted companies and professionals who want to leave the urban jungles and crime of California, Seattle, and other locations within the United States.

But crime is not absent from the streets of Spokane.

The Spokane metro area has a population of around 500,000, which means that it invariably has some aspects of big city crime. Methamphetamines, produced locally and imported from California, have been a problem since the 1970s and the city has seen a modest increase in gang activity since the 1980s.

With that said, Spokane has traditionally been a city where you can avoid crime.

Unfortunately, fifteen-year-old Linda Strait was unable to avoid becoming the victim of a violent crime, even though she did nothing to invite it.

A Quick Walk to Safeway

On the morning of September 26, 1982, Linda Strait was spending time around the family home. Early on that Sunday morning, while most people were either sleeping in or at church, she told her mother that she was making the short walk up to the Safeway supermarket to pick up some hair care products. This was a regular routine for Linda. The local Safeway served as a hangout for the local kids just as much as it was a supermarket for the adults. Linda's mother Donna and her stepfather George had no problem letting their daughter make the walk: it was the middle of the day, she had made the walk plenty of times before, and it was located in a safe neighborhood. Linda said goodbye to her parents and walked out the door.

It was the last time anyone saw her alive.

When Linda did not return after an hour, her parents began to worry, but they

reassured themselves that she probably just met up with some friends and would be home shortly. When the afternoon passed into evening, her parents grew worried and called the police. A search for Linda began that evening and carried on into the next day when, unfortunately, her body was found on the banks of the Spokane River.

Crime scene investigators immediately set to work collecting evidence from the scene, which they determined was not where Linda was killed. Among the evidence collected from the dump site was a pillow case that had what appeared to be a semen stain on it. DNA profiling was still several years in the future, but if the biological evidence was large enough and not contaminated then a blood type could be determined. Before DNA profiling was a reality, blood type matching was often used in criminal investigations, although primarily to eliminate suspects more than anything. Since all humans belong to one of the eight blood type groups, narrowing down a suspect based just on that information could be difficult. On the other hand, if investigators had other evidence available to them in an investigation—eyewitnesses, fingerprints, or circumstantial evidence—then a positive blood type match could be just another piece of evidence.

Unfortunately, there was little other physical evidence besides the pillow case that the investigators had at their disposal.

There were no witnesses, at least none that came forward, who saw what happened to Linda and other than the pillow case, the killer did a good job of covering his forensic tracks.

The Spokane County Sheriff's Department was baffled and Linda Strait's family was devastated.

“To lose a child in broad daylight on a Sunday morning just yards from her home with people all around by a kidnapper,” said Linda's stepfather George Ragland. “To be raped, robbed, murdered and thrown in the Spokane River at night like a sack of garbage was just too much to take.”

Homicide investigators developed a theory very early in the investigation. They interviewed all of Linda's friends, neighbors, and relatives and came to the conclusion that her killer was a stranger. Investigators surmised that either while she was in the store, or on her walk back home, Linda was approached

by a stranger who somehow got her into his car.

According to FBI statistics, 68% of all attempted child abductions involve the assailant trying to put his victim in his vehicle.

The Spokane Police believe that is what happened to Linda.

When investigators switched their focus to a stranger being the perpetrator of Linda's murder, they perused their files for all the known sex offenders in the area. And there were many! Despite the mountain of files of potential killers that the police had to sift through, one name in particular kept surfacing.

Spokane's Predator

The term "predator" is used quite a bit today—some would say it is overused. During elections, politicians often refer to locking up predators in "get tough on crime" speeches and the media also often uses the word when reporting about various crimes.

But in the case of Arbie Dean Williams, the term is totally appropriate.

In 1982, Arbie Williams was in his late thirties and going nowhere quickly in his life. He was a loner who had a difficult time holding down jobs and relationships.

He also lived in Linda Strait's neighborhood.

Williams did not immediately come to the police's interest, but a truly horrific crime he committed in 1983 made him their prime suspect.

On a warm day in 1983, Arbie Williams was cruising around the Spokane suburb of Spokane Valley when he decided to stop at Trent Elementary School. In true predatory fashion, Williams waited for the children to be let out for the day and looked for his prey.

On this day he found two victims.

Williams got out of his car and approached two eight-year-old girls and asked for help to find his keys. That was when the torment began for those two girls.

"As the girls looked under the car, the man opened the door and pushed both girls in on the front floorboard and told them to be quiet," court documents said. "The man drove around until dark and then told the girls to take off their clothes."

When he finally stopped the car to commit his despicable acts on the girls, one ran to safety, but the other was trapped with the predator. Williams raped the helpless girl and then strangled her until she was unconscious. Thinking that the girl was dead, Williams then threw the child into a wooded area as if she was garbage, similar to what happened to Linda Strait.

The girls were able to give investigators an accurate description of both Williams and his car, but unfortunately Williams at that point did not have a criminal record, so he was unknown to the police and the girls were unable to remember his license plate number.

But sometimes criminals do inexplicable things that will make you think they want to be caught.

As investigators were searching the area where the second girl was dumped, Williams slowly drove by the police. Detective Mike McCabe noticed the slow moving vehicle and realized that it fit the description of the rapist's car. Williams was promptly pulled over and arrested for the abduction and rape of the little girls. Several weeks later he pleaded guilty to the crimes and was sentenced to a minimum of twenty years in prison.

Williams' assault of the two eight-year-olds was a high profile case in the Spokane Area. The people of the metro area were shocked at the brutality of the crime, but relieved that the assailant would not be on the streets any time soon, if ever.

To the investigators working on the Linda Strait case, there were just too many coincidences to ignore. The method of operation in both cases was similar and then the police learned that Williams had been living in Strait's neighborhood. The police paid Williams a visit in jail, but he asserted his Fifth Amendment right and refused to give a statement.

Justice for Linda Strait would have to wait.

DNA: A Predator's Worse Nightmare

Often, in high-profile murder investigations, the police are in a race against the clock. There is immense pressure from the victim's family to solve the crime and the media is always there to report on any developments, or lack thereof, in the investigation. Witnesses forget important details about the crime and of course, they can also die if the case stays cold long enough. Investigators in the Linda Strait murder case did not have to deal with these pressures in quite the same way.

Although Linda's family was in regular contact with both the Spokane Police Department and the Spokane County Sheriff's Department in the decades after her murder, they knew the difficulty of the case and did not put any undue pressure on the investigators. The fact that there were no witnesses to Linda's abduction was also somewhat of a mixed blessing. A positive identification of Williams may have helped seal the case against him early, but not having a witness also meant that the police were not forced to base their case on someone who could turn out to be unreliable.

But investigators still had the pillow case.

The proper collection, cataloging, and preservation of the pillow case is what ended up solving Linda's murder.

Spokane County Sheriff Mike Sterk noted as much in 2003 when he told reporters. "If they hadn't have done their job then, we wouldn't have the evidence today to put forward to the scientists."

From the beginning of the case, investigators knew that the pillow case was the key. In 1989, when DNA profiling was in its infancy and still very expensive and time consuming, the police sent the pillow case to a lab for testing, but the sample was not big enough for the technology of the period.

They tried again in 1998, but had the same result.

As the 2000s came, homicide investigators suddenly were forced with a sense of urgency for the first time. Arbie Williams would be up for parole in 2003!

The big break came in 2003 when the DNA sample from the pillow case, which had been entered into the Washington state DNA database, was

entered into the federal government's CODIS database. A combination of more advanced DNA profiling technology and the fact that Arbie Williams was forced to give a sample of his DNA as a convicted felon in the state of Washington meant that a match was finally made.

Linda Strait's murderer was finally caught thanks to advances in DNA profiling.

Williams pled guilty to Linda's murder in 2006 and was sentenced to another minimum twenty year sentence. Now in his sixties, Williams will likely die in prison.

After his guilty plea, during his allocution, Williams was required to relate the horrible details of Linda's last few hours on earth. After the hearing, Linda's family gave victim impact statements. Her mother, Donna Ragland, now an elderly woman, succinctly stated the family's thoughts about the predator who took Linda's life.

"I think you are the scum of the earth and I hope you rot in hell."

Before Williams makes it to hell, he will have to navigate his way through the tough Washington state prison system with the reputation as a high-profile child predator.

Hell may come sooner rather than later for Arbie Williams.

Chapter 12: The Strange Case of the Joan Harrison Murder

Most high-profile murder cases involve a victim who is either truly innocent, such as a child, or an unlikely victim, such as a housewife. Sometimes cases attain a lot of media attention because the murderer is a serial killer or an unlikely killer, while the bizarre nature of some cases makes them a media sensation.

The next case falls into the last category.

On November 20, 1975, the body of twenty-six-year-old Joan Harrison was discovered in an abandoned garage in the city of Preston in the northwest of England. Harrison had been raped and beaten to death in what investigators described as a long and painful death.

At first glance, there was little to make this a high-profile case.

The victim was a known prostitute and drug user.

Although few people believe that those are reasons to kill someone, the murder of a prostitute will traditionally elicit far less sympathy from the general public than the murder of someone considered truly “innocent.”

But almost from the beginning, something seemed strange about Joan Harrison’s murder.

Crime scene investigators determined that Joan was raped and murdered in the garage—it was not a dump site. Joan was last seen the night before around 10:30 as she walked to a local bar for some drinks. Investigators believe that she was attacked on the street and then pulled into the garage where the attack continued. The more investigators searched the scene, they realized that this was not an ordinary murder.

The police immediately noticed that Joan had been bitten and they later learned that she was missing some jewelry from her previous two marriages. Once the investigators stood back, they noticed that the scene looked staged, almost as if the crime was committed in some type of ritualistic manner.

Besides the bite, the autopsy showed that her attacker was a rare "B" blood type secretor.

Despite Joan's background, the police were diligent in their investigation and interviewed scores of men who fit the profile of a possible suspect.

But no viable suspects were found and the case quickly went cold until it took its first strange twist.

The Yorkshire Ripper?

In 1978, the Joan Harrison murder investigation received new life when the police of West Yorkshire began receiving tips that she was one of the Yorkshire Ripper's victims. The Yorkshire Ripper, who was later proven to be a man named Peter Sutcliffe, killed thirteen women throughout northern England between 1975 and 1980. Most of the Ripper's victims were prostitutes or women walking the streets alone at night, like Joan Harrison. The Ripper often attacked his victims from behind, before raping and murdering them. Joan's murder fit the Yorkshire Ripper's method of operation in many ways.

In 1978, the Ripper was at the height of his killings.

The Ripper killings eventually forced the West Yorkshire Police to form a "Ripper Task Force," which conducted thousands of interviews and chased down as many leads. On March 8, 1978, the task force received a letter from someone claiming to be the Yorkshire Ripper.

The writer also claimed responsibility for Joan Harrison's murder.

"I am sorry I cannot give my name for obvious reasons. I am the Ripper. I've been dubbed a maniac by the Press but not by you, you call me clever and I am. You and your mates haven't a clue that photo in the paper gave me fits and that bit about killing myself, no chance. I've got things to do. My purpose to rid the streets of them sluts. My one regret is that young lassie McDonald, did not know cause changed routine that night. Up to number 8 now you say 7 but remember Preston '75. Get about you know. You were right I travel a bit. You probably look for me in Sunderland, don't bother, I am not daft, just posted letter there on one of my trips. Not a bad place compared with Chapeltown and Manningham and other places. Warn whores to keep off

streets cause I feel it coming on again.”

Forensic technicians took a sample of some saliva on the letter and learned that whoever wrote the letter, like Joan Harrison’s killer, was a rare B secretor.

Just over a year after the West Yorkshire Police received the first letter, the writer sent a cassette tape that taunted the investigators. Eventually, the police captured the true Yorkshire Ripper, Peter Sutcliffe, who they determined did not write the letters or send the tape to the West Yorkshire Police.

Did the letter writer, tagged “Wearside Jack” due to his distinct Wearside accent, kill Joan Harrison?

Authorities began to doubt that Wearside Jack killed anyone. Their thoughts were confirmed when the saliva sample was run through the United Kingdom’s criminal database in 2005 and came back as a match to a man named John Humble, who had been arrested for drunken and disorderly conduct in 2000.

Humble was sentenced to eight years in prison for the “perversion of justice” in the Yorkshire Ripper case. He was definitively proven not to be Joan Harrison’s killer.

But the police in Preston were not any closer to solving Joan Harrison’s murder.

Christopher Smith

In 1975, Christopher Smith was in his late twenties and like Joan Harrison had largely fallen through the cracks of society. He was a heavy drinker, drug user, and known street thug and criminal. By the 1980s, Smith had gained quite the reputation for himself on the streets of Preston. He had convictions for assault as well as property and sex crimes.

Christopher Smith was a one man crime wave.

But by the mid-1980s Smith settled down and had a daughter, who eventually gave him grandchildren. He seemed to have left his criminal life behind, but in 2008 his old life caught up with him in more ways than one.

Suffering from terminal illness that was partially brought on by his hard living early in life, Smith turned back to the bottle and was arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol in 2008. He was then required to give a DNA sample as per British law.

Six days later, his DNA profile came back as a perfect match with Joan Harrison's killer.

Since Smith cleaned up his act before the United Kingdom's criminal DNA database went into effect, he was not on file and therefore evaded justice for over thirty years.

As it turns out, Smith also evaded justice for Joan's murder, at least in this world. Before the police could arrest him for her murder, he died at home, but not before writing a full confession on his deathbed.

Smith's note, dated January 29, 2008, read: "I would like to put the record straight. I can't go on with the guilt. I have lived with it for over 20 years. I am truly sorry for all the pain I have caused to anyone. Please believe me when I say I am sorry. I love my grand kids and my daughter. I cannot go back to prison anymore. Please God help my family who I worship. I have been out of trouble for over twenty years so please God help me. I am so sorry. God forgive me. I love you all forever."

Conclusion

As humans, there is no doubt that we have a fascination with crime. The fascination is not morbid, but instead concerns the desire for us to understand what makes a people from our communities commit some truly disturbing crimes.

We are also fascinated with the police procedural process and the cat and mouse game between cops and criminals.

The twelve cases profiled in this book provide exciting and disturbing examples of these themes.

Some of these cases, such as the Hinterkaifeck murders and the murder of Chandra Levy, remain unsolved. The motive behind these murders remains as mysterious as the killers who committed them.

Other cases have been solved after several decades through a combination of excellent police work and advances in science. As science progresses, it becomes more and more difficult for criminals to get away with their nefarious activities.

Despite the scientific advances made in the realm of crime fighting, there is no doubt that crime will continue well into the future. As it does, there is also no doubt that there will be more cases that will baffle and intrigue the interested public.

True Crime Stories

12 Shocking True Crime Murder Cases

True Crime Anthology Vol.2

By

Jack Rosewood

&

Rebecca Lo

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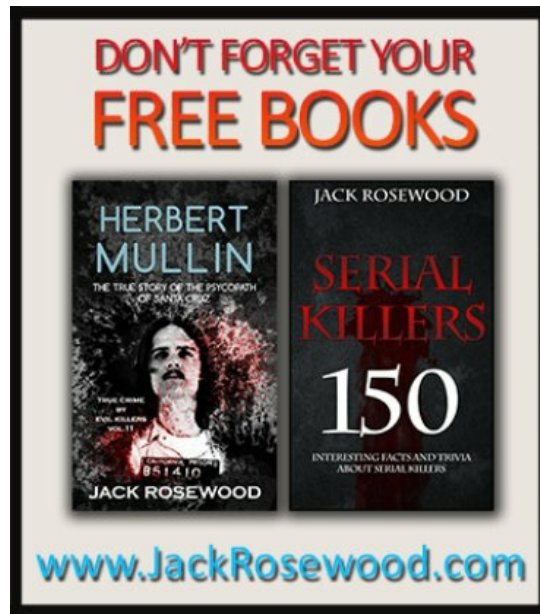
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DISCLAIMER:

This crime anthology biography includes quotes from those closely involved in the twelve cases examined, and it is not the author's intention to defame or intentionally hurt anyone involved. The interpretation of the events leading up to these crimes are the author's as a result of researching the true crime murders. Any comments made about the psychopathic or sociopathic behavior of criminals involved in any of these cases are the sole opinion and responsibility of the person quoted.

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150 interesting trivia about serial killers and the story of serial killer Herbert Mullin.

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A Message from Jack Rosewood

Thank you for getting your hands on this book. This is just one of many books in the True Crime Stories series. This book contains 12 short, but informative reads about different cases that shocked the world. After chapter twelve ends you can find excerpt from the next book in the series.

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Introduction

Murder happens anywhere, at any time, and the rates of murder are increasing as is the size of the population around the world. Even an economic crisis can trigger an outbreak of sorts of murders. But there are always certain cases that stay in the recesses of your mind, even after years have passed. Why you remember them may depend on the individual case and whether or not you feel some kind of affinity with the victim. Others may stay in your memory because they are so horrific that you just can't forget about them. One thing's for sure—while the victim is being remembered, they are being honored in some small way. Remembering those who have been lost, helps to keep them alive, even if it is just in our memories.

There are twelve cases contained in this book. They range from multiple murders to mistaken identity crimes, as being accused and charged of a murder you didn't commit can also affect you for the rest of your life. There is a chapter on Josef Fritzl, the father who kept his daughter captive for twenty-four years, and the suicide that was found to be a homicide, thanks in part to a popular television program. An alleged angel of death, family murders, police misconduct, and the taking of a child— they are all stories that need to be remembered.

Some of these cases go back a long way, with one being the oldest cold case ever solved. Can you guess what it might be? Fifty years is a long time to wait to see justice done. Or was it? Twists, turns, puzzles, and psychopathy are all the makings of most of these murder cases. From the youngest victim to the youngest perpetrator, each chapter will draw you further into the history of these horrific crimes.

Chapter 1: Murder in the French Alps – Iqbal Al-Hilli and her Family

The murders of three family members and what appeared to be a random cyclist, as well as the wounding of two children, created shockwaves around the world. The nationalities of the victims, the remoteness of the attack, and the fact that two little girls were left to hide amongst the dead, brought law agencies around the world into the investigation. There were so many questions that needed to be answered—why them? How did they know they would be there? Was the cyclist involved? Was it an international hit? And was there a lot more to the story than anyone had realized?

From Scenic Views to Crime Scene

The French Alps is perhaps one of the most beautiful locations in the world and is a popular destination for vacationers. It is no wonder that Iqbal Al-Hilli, her husband Saad, their two daughters, and her elderly mother Suhaila Al-Allaf too decided to choose the Alps for their family vacation. What would ensue, however, would dramatically alter the pristine landscape that was to become one of absolute horror on September 5, 2012.

On a remote scenic vista near historic Lake Annecy sat the BMW the family was using for their trip. Inside the car were the bodies of Iqbal, Saad, and Suhaila, all of whom had been shot. One of their daughters was found outside the car. The seven year old who had been shot in the shoulder and also had a wound to the head. At the time of the discovery, nobody was aware that there was another young daughter. She was hiding beneath her mother's legs in the back of the car and remained hidden for some eight hours, even while the local police were on the scene, until she was finally discovered unhurt.

Further along the road a short distance lay the body of a cyclist, Frenchman Sylvain Mollier. He had reportedly been shot seven times, though nobody had a clue why or how he was tied in with the murdered family. Each of the victims inside the car had been shot twice in the head, and evidence at the scene showed that twenty-five shots in total were fired. The engine of the car was still running when discovered, and the car had been shifted into reverse, with the back wheels spinning in the loose sandy gravel.

A Puzzle with Too Many Angles

Initially, the case was handled by the local police, called the Gendarme, and then the National Gendarme joined in. There were so many angles to the tragedy that it was never going to be an easy one to solve. From the nationalities of the victims to their families, their lines of work, and links to a Middle East dictator, there were so many possible motives that eventually France and Britain created a joint investigation team to investigate.

Saad Al-Hilli

One of the first leads investigated was the background of Saad Al-Hilli. Originally from Iraq, Saad had once worked as an engineer on what were considered to be sensitive topics in Iraq, and he subsequently was employed in the nuclear and satellite technology industry in England. Satellites, nuclear technology, and ties with Iraq alone were enough to consider the murders an act of assassination with Saad being the main target.

There were also suspicious circumstances surrounding the family of Saad, namely his father and his brother Zaid. There had been a claim that £840,000 had been placed in a Swiss bank account in Saad's father's name by the regime of Saddam Hussein. There were even reports leaked that showed Saad may have had access to Saddam Hussein's bank accounts. Could the murders have been a contract hit related to the dictator?

To further add fuel to the theory of a family-related hit, his brother Zaid came under investigation due to a feud regarding a family inheritance. Zaid was eventually arrested in June 2013, but was subsequently released due to a lack of evidence, despite the suggestion that he tried to commit fraud by altering his father's will. However, suspicion always remained that he may have had a part to play in the murders.

Sylvain Mollier

Was Sylvain the innocent cyclist who was in the wrong place at the wrong time? Or was he the intended target and the family were the ones caught in the crossfire? Similar to Saad, Sylvain had also worked in the nuclear industry, and this was considered a possible lead. However, it was later substantiated that he was simply a welder and had no access to any delicate nuclear information, so this was later deemed unlikely to be the reason behind the murders. It seemed he really was just in the wrong place at the

wrong time.

The Work of a Serial Killer?

This was perhaps one of the more far-fetched theories, with very little data to back it up. The detectives surmised that the murders were committed by a psychopath acting alone who perhaps had a dislike of tourists. This theory came about because of the similarities with a previous murder of a tourist in July 2012. There was never any real movement on this lead, and it was considered by most to be inconclusive.

Mystery Motorcyclist

A man riding a motorcycle was seen in the vicinity of the crime, but his identity was unknown. It wasn't until 2015 that the man in question was located by the police, and he was completely ruled out. He had simply been an innocent man out riding a motorcycle.

The Legionnaire

Patrice Menegaldo was an ex-soldier of the French Foreign Legion who found himself on the suspect list. He subsequently committed suicide, though the reason behind this is not clear. It is also not clear as to why he was ever considered a suspect, and despite the State Prosecutor at the time stating he was, the police denied he was ever considered a primary suspect.

Iqbal Al-Hilli

Initially the investigation focused on the background of her husband Saad and his potential links to both the nuclear industry and Saddam Hussein. Her background had seemed fairly straightforward, or so the investigators thought. However, it would later come out that she had a secret that very few people knew about, and this would lead to a further coincidental death and conspiracy.

A Secret Husband?

Before her marriage to Saad, Iqbal had once been married to an American gentleman named Jim Thompson. What had appeared to be simply a marriage of convenience to enable Iqbal to get her U.S. Green Card was perhaps more than anyone realized.

During her time in the U.S., Iqbal went by the name of Kelly, and upon

meeting ex-cop Jim in 1999, he agreed to help her out by marrying her so that she could live and work there. The marriage was said to be platonic yet very caring. However, Iqbal discovered that her dentistry qualifications weren't accepted by the U.S. and ended the marriage just months later. Jim reluctantly drove her to the airport and said goodbye.

Her next contact with Jim was in 2003, when she declared she had fallen in love with another man, Saad, and she needed a divorce. Jim happily granted her the divorce, and she went on to marry the man she would later die with. But the story between Iqbal and Jim didn't end there.

Jim's sister Judy Weatherly would later state that Jim and Iqbal had stayed in touch throughout the nine years she was married to Saad. Regular emails went back and forth, and Iqbal's family knew nothing about it at all. They didn't even know she had once been married to Jim. There has even been suggestion that the divorce was never legalized, which would mean Iqbal had entered her marriage to Saad as a bigamist. So what was the importance of this secret relationship in relation to the murders? Here's where it gets even more bizarre and interesting.

Death by Coincidence

On exactly the same day that Iqbal and her family were slaughtered in the French Alps, her former husband Jim died at the wheel of his car, presumably from a heart attack. This extraordinary coincidence would lead the French investigators to question whether or not the deaths were related in some way. Jim may have been sixty years and had a history of high blood pressure, but the timing of his death seemed too much of a freak occurrence, considering what had happened to his ex-wife at that same point in time.

To further add to the speculation, he had allegedly called his sister Judith two weeks before his death and instructed her that if anything happened to him she was to go through his room, as there was something there that would be surprising. Judith followed through with his wishes, but the only thing she found was a box full of photos and information about his marriage to Iqbal. It seemed he clearly wanted people to know they had been married, but for what reason? Was he trying to say he had been forewarned or knew he was at risk of being killed?

The death of Jim became increasingly important to the French authorities, who started to question whether he had also been murdered due to something between him and Iqbal. The most likely scenario, according to the authorities, was that he had been poisoned, which would mimic a heart attack. They set about requesting an exhumation to test for the presence of poisons, but Judith would not allow it. The FBI also supported the request for an exhumation, but the American authorities refused, believing there were not sufficient grounds to commit such an act. As recent as 2015, the FBI has considered making a further request for the exhumation to take place, and questions are still not answered.

Murder Unsolved

To date, there has been no further progress in identifying the motive or the perpetrator of the tragic murders of the Al-Hilli family and the cyclist, Sylvain Mollier. Though there have been a number of theories and leads, they veer off in so many directions that it has proven impossible so far to narrow them down to one plausible suspect. Did Saddam Hussein's regime put a contract on Saad's head because he had accessed bank accounts he shouldn't have? Or did he have too much information regarding satellites and nuclear technologies in the Middle East?

Did Saad's brother Zaid have his own relatives executed over an inheritance? Or had he been stealing money from the family account and felt the need to remove any potential possibility of being discovered? After all, family feuds can often lead to violence. But to kill your own brother, his wife, her mother, and leave the two little girls orphans is a pretty big stretch. Not to mention the poor cyclist who just happened to come along at the wrong time.

Another thing to consider is that the girls were not killed. If it was a contract hit, why would they have left living witnesses? Sure, the girls were only young, but who knows what they may have seen, heard or experienced? The killer or killers had time to shoot each victim in the head twice, yet only one of the girls had injuries—a bullet to the shoulder and a head injury from being pistol-whipped. It's true that the youngest of the girls was hiding underneath the legs of her dead mother, but an assassin that knows who the family is and where they are going to be at that present moment in time would surely know there were two children also traveling in the car. Why were they spared? A heartless, psychopathic killer isn't going to worry about

sparing the children—they simply wouldn't care.

Finally, strong consideration should be given to the possibility of Jim, Iqbal's first husband, having been murdered on the very same day. Sure, coincidences do occur, but this one is just so bizarre that it is too good to be true. What did he know? Had Iqbal been confiding even more secrets to Jim? Why did he mention the possibility of something happening to him just weeks before he died? Unfortunately, there have been many questions and few answers in this case, and at this point in time they are no closer to solving it. The authorities involved in this case still hope for that major breakthrough that will put an end to this terrible mystery.

Chapter 2: The Villisca Axe Murders

In 1912, Villisca was a small Midwestern town in Iowa with a population of just 2,500. Despite its size, it was a busy little town with trains coming and going every day, businesses up and down the streets, and it was home to the first publicly funded armory in the whole state. For many, the name ‘Villisca’ meant ‘pleasant view’ or ‘pretty place’. But regardless of the business successes and the beauty of the town, its history would be forever marred by one single event—the brutal and horrifying murder of eight people in one house, on one night, with an axe.

The Moore’s

The Moore family was well liked in the community, and their affluence was well known. The members of the family were Josiah, who was 43 at the time, his wife Sarah, aged 39, and their children, Herman Montgomery, aged 11, Mary Katherine, 10, Arthur Boyd, 7, and Paul Vernon, 5. They were regular church attendees, and on the evening of June 9, 1912, the children had been participating in the Presbyterian Church’s Children’s Day Program. This program lasted until 9:30 p.m., and the Moore family invited two young girls, Ina Mae Stillinger, aged 8, and her sister Lena Gertrude, who was 12 years old, to stay the night in their home. All walked back to the home of the Moores, arriving somewhere between 9:45 to 10 p.m. No one is sure what time the family and their guests retired to bed that evening, or what if anything was amiss in the house when they got home. What is known, however, is that what did occur during the night in that house would become legendary, for all the wrong reasons.

A Gruesome Scene

On the morning of June 10, the next door neighbor, Mary Peckham, found it strange that the family next door was not up and about at 7 a.m. as they usually were. She was used to hearing and seeing the family members as they started their morning chores, but they hadn’t appeared, and the curtains were all closed. Mary decided to check on the family and went and knocked on the door, but nobody responded. She tried to open the door, but it was still locked. Fearing something was very wrong, she called Josiah’s brother Ross to investigate. Oddly, she first let the Moore’s chickens out of their coop—goodness knows why.

Ross arrived at the house, and like Mary he knocked on the door, shouting out in the hopes that someone inside would hear him. On receiving no response, he proceeded to unlock the door with his copy of the key to the house. Mary waited anxiously on the porch as Ross entered the house and made his way into the guest bedroom. The scene that greeted him was horrific—the bodies of the Stillinger sisters dead in the bed. Moore instructed Mary to call the local officer, Hank Horton, who arrived within a short period of time. It was Horton who further investigated the rest of the house, finding body after body of the Moore family, all with horrific head wounds. In the guest room where the bodies of the Stillinger sisters lay was a bloodied axe, and that was immediately identified as the murder weapon.

Though the injuries to each of the victims were gruesome, it was Josiah who seemed to have been dealt the most vicious blows. Unlike the others who had been bludgeoned to death with the blunt end of the axe, it was the sharp end that had been used on Josiah. In fact, his wounds were so horrific that his eyes were missing in his cut-up face. Gouge marks in the ceilings of the bedrooms had been created by the swinging of the axe; in some cases, these gouges were in the center of the room, not near the beds, and it was surmised that the killer must have been in some sort of wild frenzy, swinging the axe triumphantly after each kill.

The pillows on the beds were soaked in blood and spattered with brain matter. By the time the first doctor entered the house, the blood had congealed into a jelly, and clots were noticeable, and this indicated they had been killed somewhere shortly after midnight. Each of the victims had their faces covered with their bedclothes, and all lay in their beds as though they had been killed while sleeping, except for Lena Stillinger. Her body showed defensive wounds, suggesting she had tried to fight off the attacker. Her nightgown had been pushed up and her underwear removed, and her body had been posed in a sexual manner. Naturally consideration was given to the possibility she had been sexually assaulted or raped, but this was never determined without a doubt.

There were other strange things about the crime scene that made no sense at all. Although it is normal to pull the curtains closed on the windows, those which did not have curtains were covered with clothing that had belonged to the victims. Every mirror in the house had also been covered, which was truly

bizarre. At the foot of Josiah and Sarah's bed sat a kerosene lamp with the chimney missing and the wick turned to black. The chimney was eventually found beneath a dresser. Another lamp was found at the end of the guest bed, where the bodies of the Stillinger girls lay. It too had the chimney missing. The axe itself, although covered in blood, showed signs that the killer had tried to wipe away the blood to no avail. The axe was found to belong to Josiah. In the bedroom downstairs, a small piece of keychain was found that didn't seem to belong to anyone in the house. On the table in the kitchen was a pan containing bloody water and a plate of food that hadn't been touched. Up in the attic, two cigarette butts were located, and it was assumed that the killer (perhaps killers) had waited up there for the family to return home. This was perhaps the most terrifying piece of evidence—to think that this innocent family returned home following a pleasant evening only to be ambushed by someone waiting inside.

Who Were the Suspects?

There were numerous suspects on the list, and one was even arrested and tried for the crime, though eventually he was acquitted. They ranged from transients to a reverend, and even a serial killer, but nobody was ever held accountable and brought to justice for this horrific massacre of the Moore family and the Stillinger girls.

Andrew Sawyer

Naturally, any transients or strangers were considered suspicious during the investigation into the murders. This is generally because people as a rule don't trust strangers, and nobody wants to consider that maybe it was someone they knew. In small towns in particular, people are more wary of those they don't know. One such man that fit this bill was Andrew Sawyer.

There was never any concrete evidence to suggest Sawyer had played a part in the killings. Instead, he was brought to light by a gentleman who worked for the railroad and had interacted with Sawyer on the morning of the murders in nearby Creston. Thomas Dyer alleged that Sawyer had appeared around 6 a.m. that morning looking for work. He was dressed in a brown suit, was shaven, his pants were wet almost up to his knees, and his shoes were covered in mud. Workers were highly sought after, so he was hired there and then. Later that evening, Sawyer apparently bought a newspaper with the

murders broadcast across the front page, and he went off alone to read it.

Apparently, Sawyer was very interested in the murders, and he talked about them often with his fellow workers. Even more strange, he had a habit of sleeping with his axe next to him. He would later tell Dyer that he had been in Villisca the night of the murders but had left for fear of being considered a suspect. When considering all of the strange behaviors he had exhibited, Dyer handed Sawyer over to the sheriff on June 18, 1912.

Despite the statements Sawyer had made to his work colleagues and the intense interest he seemed to show in the murders, even placing himself in town on the night in question, it would later be proven that he was innocent. On investigation, it turned out that Sawyer had been arrested on that very night in a town called Osceola, also in Iowa, for vagrancy. Therefore, he had an alibi.

The Reverend George Kelly

Kelly was a man with a disturbing background who happened to be at the very same Children's Day services the Moore family and the Stillinger sisters attended that day, June 9, 1912. Born in England, Kelly was a traveling minister who many regarded as being rather odd. It was claimed that he had suffered some type of mental breakdown when he was younger, and his adult behavior included lewd acts such as peeping and trying to get young girls to pose for him in the nude. Strangely, he left Villisca somewhere between 5 a.m. and 5:30 a.m., just hours after the murders had occurred and before the bodies were found.

Over the following weeks, he showed a strong fascination with the case. He began to write letters to the investigators, the police, and even the mourning family members. As expected, this behavior seemed suspicious to the investigators, and they in turn wrote back asking if Kelly happened to know anything about the killings. Kelly replied that he may have witnessed the crimes being committed and had heard sounds that evening. However, due to his history of mental illness, the police were unsure whether he was recalling facts because he was involved or whether he was just making it all up.

Kelly was arrested on a different matter in 1914, after having sent obscene material to a woman who had applied to work for him. As a result he was

sent to a mental health hospital in Washington, which left the police unsure if he was the killer or not. However, in 1917 they decided to interrogate Kelly again, and following several hours of questioning, Kelly confessed to the crimes. Later he would recant this confession, claiming to be innocent after all. Two trials followed, and the jury obviously agreed with him, as the first trial resulted in a hung jury and the second led to an acquittal.

State Senator Frank F. Jones

As a suspect, Senator Jones was perhaps the least likely to have been behind the murders. However, there was a rumor that he had hired William 'Blackie' Mansfield to commit the crimes following an issue that had arisen between the Senator and Josiah Moore. Josiah at one time had worked for the Senator at his implement shop for several years and then left his employment so he could open up his own store. This resulted in the Senator losing a lot of his customers to Josiah, including a very lucrative dealership with John Deere. There were also rumors around town that Josiah and the Senator's daughter-in-law had an affair, though this was never substantiated. Would a man such as the State Senator have ordered the assassination of an entire family over something such as lost business and possible adultery? The investigators clearly didn't think so, as this matter was not taken any further, at least where the Senator was concerned. Mansfield, on the other hand, was an entirely different matter.

William 'Blackie' Mansfield

Mansfield came to light as a potential suspect not only because of the rumor of his being hired by the Senator, but also because of murders he subsequently committed following the massacre in the Moore household. Two years after the murders in Villisca, Mansfield was suspected of murdering his wife, child, father-in-law and mother-in-law in very similar circumstances, which made the authorities take a much closer look at Mansfield. He was linked by circumstance to the axe murders in Colorado Springs just nine months before Villisca and another axe murder in Ellsworth, Kansas. He was also suspected of being the perpetrator of axe murders in Paola, Kansas, just four days before the tragedy at Villisca. Furthermore, he was a prime suspect in the axe murders in Illinois of Jennie Miller and Jennie Peterson. More axe murders occurring around the same

time period were also considered to be the work of one man. The similarities between all of these murders were spine-tingling.

Each of these murders was committed in the same manner, which would indicate they were done by the same person. All victims were attacked with an axe, and the mirrors in each home had been covered. A kerosene lamp was left burning with the chimney removed at the foot of each bed. A basin containing bloody water was found at each scene, where the murdered had obviously tried to clean himself. Gloves were worn at each crime scene, leaving no trace of fingerprints. The coincidences were just too good to be true, and although we have more access to media information these days, back then the chances of there being a copycat killer or killers roaming the streets were less likely.

In 1916, the Grand Jury agreed to embark on an investigation and Mansfield was arrested. He was transported from Kansas City to Montgomery County to face questioning. Despite all of the evidence that seemed to indicate he was the murderer, Mansfield was found to have a legitimate alibi for the night of the murders in Villisca and so was set free without being charged. He would then bring a lawsuit against the detective who had pursued him as a suspect, Detective James Wilkerson. Mansfield won his case and was awarded the staggering amount of \$2,225. This was a huge amount in those days. Some speculated that the Senator played a part in getting Mansfield released, but this was never proven.

Henry Lee Moore

Henry, who was no relation to Josiah Moore and his family, had been convicted of a double axe murder months after the murders in Villisca. Henry had killed his mother and his grandmother, and there was much suspicion that Henry was actually a serial killer. The crimes were very similar, especially as the same type of weapon was used, but there was never any evidence to link him to the Moore family murders. He was always considered a suspect, however, and he was never completely ruled out.

Fourteen Witnesses Called to Coroner's Inquest

Remarkably, the coroner called the jury together and began the inquest on June 11, 1912, just two days after the murders had taken place. Nowadays it

can take months or years for an inquest to take place, let alone in the same week! Anyway, the county coroner at the time was Dr. Linquist, and he and the members of the jury all visited the Moore house to view the scene and the bodies before they were removed. A temporary morgue was set up at the local fire station, and the bodies were finally moved there around 2 a.m. on the June 10.

A total of fourteen witnesses were called to testify at the inquest, and they were as follows:

- Mary Peckham—the neighbor who raised the alarm that something was wrong at the house
- Ed Selley—an employee of Josiah, Ed had arrived to take care of the animals
- Dr. J. Clark Cooper—the first doctor to enter the house following the discovery
- Jessie Moore—Ross Moore's wife, who took the call from Mary
- Dr. F.S. Williams—the doctor who examined the bodies
- Edward Landers—was staying just up the road at his mother's house and claimed he heard a noise around 11 p.m.
- Ross Moore—Josiah's brother, the first person to gain entry to the house
- Fenwick Moore—also Josiah's brother
- Marshall Hank Horton—the first officer to enter the house
- John Lee Van Gilder—Josiah's nephew
- Harry Moore—Josiah's brother
- Joseph Stillinger—the father of the murdered Stillinger girls
- Blanche Stillinger—sister of the murdered Stillinger girls
- Charles Moore—another of Josiah's brothers

Most of the witnesses were called to testify regarding what they had seen when entering the house that day. The descriptions given by some were gruesome to say the least, but their testimony was all consistent. Josiah's brothers were called largely to speak of any troubles Josiah may have had or been in, such as business problems. None could say that they were aware of any issues or of anyone who wished to cause the family such terrible harm. One brother, Charles, was asked to testify regarding whether the axe belonged to Josiah or not. Although he couldn't say it was for sure, he did

state that Josiah owned one similar. It must have been a terrible burden on both the Moore and Stillinger families to have to endure the inquest so quickly after the tragedy. They barely had time to digest what had happened before being thrust into a courtroom to discuss it, and the details must have been truly shocking. Particularly for the father of the two little Stillinger girls who had simply gone to a friend's house for the night.

Deathbed and Jailhouse Confessions

On March 19, 1917, a reverend by the name of J.J. Burris, who was the pastor of the Church of Christ in Oklahoma, traveled to Red Oak because of a deathbed confession he had received. Burris was subpoenaed by the grand jury of Montgomery County to give evidence regarding this confession of the murders of the Moore family. Burris had claimed that a man whose name he could not remember had summoned him to his hotel room so that he could confess his sins before dying. This took place in July 1913, just over a year after the murders had been committed.

Burris stated that when he arrived at the man's room, he could tell straight away that he was near death, and despite his physical state, the man began to talk the minute he entered the room. The man claimed that he had committed many sins, but the worst was the murders in Villisca. He had been living in the town at the time, working in the blacksmith industry, and his sister had been married to a physician in Villisca before moving to Radersburg. He was unable to speak for long due to his deteriorating condition, and as such was incapable of giving any details. Burris estimated the man to be around twenty-five years old, and it was believed he had part ownership in a blacksmith business in Radersburg.

Because the story was unclear, Detective Wilkerson decided that it would not stand up in court, as too little information was available. The man who had made the confession was dead and unable to stand trial anyway. The story was pushed aside as irrelevant.

George Meyers Confesses in Jail

In March 1931, a prisoner in a county jail in Detroit who was awaiting sentencing for burglary made a startling confession, stating he was the one who had committed the axe murders in Villisca. Meyers had been under

interrogation for around five hours by detectives at the time of his confession, following an anonymous tip that he was the man they were looking for. It was believed that Meyers' fingerprints had been found at the murder scene; however, this was unlikely as no fingerprints were found in the Moore house.

Meyers' confession stated that he had been hired to kill the family by a businessman, though he could not recall his name. The price on offer was \$5,000—a huge amount. He claimed his name had been given to these people through acquaintances in the Kansas City underworld. This acquaintance escorted him to Villisca to meet with the man who wished to hire him. He was shown the house where the family lived and told to kill them all. A deposit payment of \$2,000 was given, and Meyers was told he would receive the rest after the job was done. Meyers then entered the house shortly after midnight and slaughtered the two adults and four children with an axe. When meeting with the businessman afterwards he was told he would have to wait for the rest of the money. Meyers decided it was best to flee town before the sun came up for fear of being caught.

Now, if you read that carefully, you would see what the problem was with Meyers' confession. George Meyers only confessed to killing six people that night—two adults and four children. But there were eight killed in that house, not six. He flatly denied killing the Stillinger girls, only the Moore family. Although there had been a witness story that claimed three men had been overheard talking in the forest near the house the night of the murders about committing the crime, and this seems to fit with Meyers, his acquaintance, and the businessman, there is no way Meyers would have gotten the number of victims wrong. Therefore, it was decided that this confession was nonsense, and no further action was taken against him for the crime. To date, nobody has ever been charged with these murders, so the case remains unsolved.

Chapter 3: The Disappearance of Stacy Peterson and Christie Marie Cales

One day she was there, the next she had vanished without a trace. The story of Stacy Peterson and her disappearance was one that would baffle investigators. How could someone simply vanish off the face of the earth? However, Stacy had the misfortune of being married to a man who was not at all what he seemed—Drew Peterson, police officer, husband, and murderer. Was he behind her disappearance?

The Troubled Life of Stacy

Stacy had lived a terrible childhood, fraught with fighting parents, alcohol abuse, violence, and neglect. Her mother seemed incapable of doing anything except drinking a case of beer each day and lying on the couch while the children were left to fend for themselves. They had already lost one child in a house fire and then lost a baby to SIDs later on. These tragedies most likely contributed to the volatile household and Stacy's mother's regular stays in both jail and mental hospitals. Despite all of this, Stacy was able to stay on the right path, and she graduated from high school early at just sixteen years of age.

With a dream of becoming a nurse but unable to afford the education, Stacy took on a variety of odd jobs. When she was seventeen in 2001, she was working at a hotel as a desk clerk when she met the man she would later marry, police officer Drew Peterson. Drew was 47 years old and on his third marriage when they met, but that didn't stop either of them. Stacy saw in Drew the father figure she had never really had and a chance at a secure life. Drew divorced his wife in October 2003, and eight days later he married Stacy.

The first child they had together was a boy called Anthony, who was named after Stacy's father. She was right in her element in her role as wife and mother, and she was an excellent housewife. She believed she had a good marriage, probably because she was young and naïve. Drew would call her constantly when she went out, even if she was just going to the grocery store. He would not let her get a job, he did nothing to take care of the baby, and he more or less tried to control every aspect of her life.

In 2004, Drew's ex-wife Kathleen Savio was found dead, apparently having had an accident in the bathtub. Stacy was quick to defend her husband against any allegations that he had been behind the death, and she even provided an alibi for him. By then she had another child, Lacy, who was named after her sister who passed away, so young Stacy had two children to worry about and was desperate to keep the family together. She would do or say anything to protect her husband.

When Stacy was twenty-three, following the loss of her sister Tina to cancer, she started to make changes in her life. She started to take the children to Bible studies, had taken on a job as an Avon sales rep, and was generally taking better care of herself and her appearance. This all went against Drew's instructions, and he certainly wasn't pleased. But by now Stacy had started to question whether her husband had been involved in the death of his wife Kathleen. By October 2007, she had decided she wanted a divorce.

Just one week later, on October 28, Stacy had vanished.

Gone Without a Trace

On the day of October 28, 2007, Stacy was meant to go and help her sister with some painting, but she never arrived. She sent a text message that Sunday morning at 10:15 saying she wasn't ready to get up out of bed yet. There was no further contact. From then onward, nobody would ever hear from Stacy or see her again. She literally just vanished without a trace.

Drew claimed Stacy had called him that same night from an airport, saying she had met another man and was leaving. Despite this story, her family reported her missing, as they knew she wouldn't have gone without her kids. Family and friends also knew that Stacy had been making plans to leave Drew, so there was no chance she would just up and go without carrying those plans through.

While the authorities and numerous volunteers scoured the area for any trace of Stacy, Drew seemed to be treating it with very little concern. He made flippant remarks and treated the whole situation as if it was a bit of a joke. When questioned about Stacy wanting a divorce, he claimed she asked him all the time for one, depending on her menstrual cycle. Drew Peterson was showing a side of himself that people hadn't seen before, and it was very

unpleasant.

The night before her disappearance, Stacy had been hanging out with her sister, Cassandra Cales, and had said to her sister that if anything ever happened to her it was Drew that did it. Cassandra desperately pleaded with her sister to leave with her right then and there, but Stacy said she couldn't leave the children.

Morphey's Story

Thomas Morphey was the stepbrother of Drew, and he had quite the story to tell. The only difficulty was getting people to listen. Morphey stated he was involved in conversations with Drew over a period of two days, starting on October 27, wherein he was convinced Drew was planning to murder someone. It all started with Drew arriving at Morphey's residence and asking him to go for a ride to a nearby park. Allegedly, Drew asked him if he loved him enough to kill for him, to which Morphey replied no, he would be unable to live with himself. Drew then asked if he could live with himself knowing about it. To this question Morphey replied yes, further adding that they had already assumed Drew had killed Kathleen.

Drew then proceeded to tell Morphey that Stacy had been unfaithful and that he had seen her out with other men, and something had to be done about it. He then drove them to a storage facility and asked Morphey to rent a locker for him, and told him if he put it in his own name, he would be paid \$2,000. Assuming Drew was planning to store a body there, Morphey was concerned that it would smell. Drew replied that it would be in a sealed container, so it wouldn't be a problem. It was at that very point Morphey knew Drew was going to murder someone, but he didn't realize it would be Stacy. He thought it would be the man she was allegedly having an affair with.

Despite Drew's persuasion, Morphey couldn't rent the locker, as he didn't have any identification with him. He returned home, and after a few hours he called Drew and told him he didn't want to be involved in anything, and Drew stated he respected his wishes. However, the following day Drew arrived at Morphey's residence completely unannounced and again asked to go for a ride to the park. When they reached the park, Morphey was given a cell phone and told not to answer it. Drew then left, leaving Morphey to wonder what was going on.

The phone rang twice, forty-five minutes after Drew had left Morphey in the park. The caller ID showed the calls were coming from Stacy's cell phone, and he suddenly realized that Drew was setting it up to murder Stacy. He assumed Drew was driving around to various locations so the cell phone would ping off different towers when police investigated. An hour later, Drew came back, picked up Morphey, and took back the cell phone. Morphey again told Drew that he didn't want to be involved and that he wanted to go home. Drew said he just needed to pop over to the house for a minute. Despite his disagreement, Morphey went along with him.

Morphey waited outside the house, and out came Drew with a large blue barrel. Drew was unable to get it down the stairs on his own, so Morphey had to help him. They then loaded it into the back of the truck. Morphey was driven home and instructed that 'none of this ever happened'. Despite not actually assisting with the murder of Stacy, the fact that he had been involved with the suspicious phone calls and had helped to carry the barrel which most likely contained her body, created so much guilt that the following day Morphey attempted suicide. His wife rushed him to the hospital, and once he had recovered, he was taken to the police by his brother. Even though he had been somewhat involved, he was granted immunity from prosecution and placed under police protection for six months while he waited to be called by the grand jury.

The lawyer acting for Drew, Joel Brodsky described Morphey's story as a tale dreamt up by an alcohol and drug addict. He did not believe Morphey was a credible witness because of his problems with addiction and therefore would be unlikely to ever be called to testify.

Kathleen Savio

While married to Vicki Connolly, Drew embarked on an affair with Kathleen Savio. His marriage to Vicki was falling apart due to his infidelities and controlling behavior, and they divorced in 1992. Soon after the divorce was finalized, Kathleen and Drew were married. They would go on to have two sons, Kristopher and Thomas. The marriage was not a happy one for very long, and in 2002 Kathleen got a protection order against her husband due to physical abuse. By 2003, Drew was involved with Stacy, and he and Kathleen divorced. However, the financial issues of the marriage were never finalized, and they were still trying to come to an agreement in April 2004. A

hearing was set, but Kathleen would never attend, as by March 1, 2004, she was dead.

Kathleen's body was found in her bathtub at home. There was no water in the bathtub, and there were some injuries to her body, yet the physician who performed the initial autopsy claimed it was an accidental death. He surmised that she had slipped in the bathtub and hit her head, drowning, and that was the cause of death. Drew had seemed to get away with it, until his fourth wife Stacy disappeared and the police decided to take another look at the death. Stacy had admitted to at least three people in the days leading up to her disappearance that she believed Drew had murdered Kathleen, so this accusation was taken very seriously.

A second autopsy was conducted on Kathleen, with surprising results. The front of her body was covered in bruises, and Dr. Larry Blum believed these were fresh. There were scrape marks down her back, and he brushed away the initial autopsy report stating these were from rubbing against the back of the bathtub as ridiculous. The surface of the tub was incredibly smooth, and there was nothing there that could have made those marks. The back of Kathleen's head had a wound that had split the skin but not the skull beneath. Blum determined this was most likely from a direct blow. His final determination was that Kathleen had been subjected to a brutal attack shortly before her death and that her death was not an accident at all.

Another Wife Murdered? The Trial of Drew Peterson

Drew was indicted on two counts of first degree murder in 2009, in relation to Kathleen Savio's death. He was held in custody from May and stayed there until his trial. A lot of the evidence against Drew would normally be considered hearsay, but due to a special law passed in Illinois in 2008, exceptions could be made in some cases.

The trial began in July 2012, after much negotiation regarding the secondhand witness statements and as to what would be allowed and what would not. Of the fourteen statements handed to the judge, only eight were approved for use during the trial. The prosecution team had requested a mistrial, but Peterson himself withdrew this request, as he wanted the current jury to hear his case. The trial would last months, until the final verdict was given on September 6, 2012. Drew Peterson was found guilty and convicted

of the first degree murder of Kathleen and was sentenced to sixty years in prison. But that wasn't to be the end of courtrooms for Drew.

Drew was charged of trying to organize a hit on the Will County State's Attorney James Glasgow in February 2015. This had come about following a year of Drew's activities between September 2013 and December 2014, when he had been trying to arrange for the attorney's murder. He was charged with one count of solicitation of murder and one count of solicitation of murder for hire.

Now that Drew had been found guilty of the murder of his ex-wife Kathleen, the family and friends of Stacy Peterson began to push for further investigation into her disappearance. It seemed more than likely that if he could murder one wife to be rid of a perceived problem, then surely it would be easy for him to do the same to another wife. To this day, he still claims she ran away with another man.

Disappearance of Her Mother—Christie Marie Cales

Christie's life had been one of pain, suffering and addiction. Having tragically lost two children, Christie embarked on a downward spiral that would see her consumed by an addiction and having to go into mental institutions for treatment. She seemed completely incapable of dealing with daily life, and her children to husband Anthony Cales were left to take care of themselves. The marriage continued to deteriorate, and Christie had a habit of disappearing sometimes for weeks. In 1990, Christie was arrested for stealing cigarettes from a store and was then caught driving while under the influence in alcohol. The family was in serious trouble, and financial matters had reached the point where there were two foreclosures on the family home.

That same year, Anthony filed for divorce, unable to cope with Christie's behavior and the effects on the family any longer. Initially Christie contested the divorce, but she repeatedly missed the court hearings, and Anthony was granted full and sole custody of the children. Christie moved in with other family members, and eventually Anthony and the children moved to Florida. Despite the distance, Christie was still able to see the children from time to time.

Christie met another man and moved in with him. In 1998, Christie left the

house carrying her bible and purse and was never seen or heard from again. There were different witness statements, with some saying Christie had said she was going to church, which would make sense given the bible she was carrying, and others saying she was going shopping. Because Christie had a history of disappearing now and then, it wasn't taken too seriously at first. However, her daughters Stacy, Cassandra, and Tina, all believed she was murdered, and they suspected Christie's boyfriend of being the killer. They tried to make a case with the local police, but they failed to agree, and no investigation was undertaken.

It is so ironic and tragic that both mother and daughter would disappear, leaving friends and family to wonder what ever happened to them. One thing is for sure—both are most likely to have been murdered.

Chapter 4: Lucia de Berk – Angel of Death?

Unlike the previous chapters where the focus was on a murder victim, in this case the victim is still very much alive. Lucia de Berk was a pediatric nurse in her home country of the Netherlands, and due to an investigation into unexplained deaths of patients in her care, she was subsequently arrested, charged, and found guilty of murder and attempted murder. However, Lucia was not the angel of death so many suspected at all. Instead, she was a victim of a terrible miscarriage of justice which almost saw her put behind bars for the rest of her natural life.

Accused of Seven Cases of Murder and Three Cases of Attempted Murder

Lucia was working as a pediatric nurse at the Juliana Children's Hospital in The Hague, Netherlands, when an investigation into suspicious deaths during hospital admissions was undertaken. On September 4, 2001, a baby died suddenly while in the hospital, and this triggered an investigation into any unexpected deaths or resuscitation attempts. It was found that there had been nine incidents between September 2000 and September 2001, which originally were thought to be natural deaths but on further inspection of the records appeared to be highly suspicious.

One nurse had been on duty on the occasion of each of these deaths—Lucia. At the time, she was responsible for giving medication and managing the care of each patient. To the hospital, it seemed too much of a coincidence that she had been taking care of each of these nine patients before they suddenly died, and they proceeded to press charges against Lucia.

The Trial and Sentencing

The allegations against Lucia involved cases from three hospitals in the immediate area, all of which had suspicious deaths occur while she was on duty and present. She was brought to trial in March 2003, and was only charged with the deaths and attempted deaths that the medical experts concluded had no natural causes. It was suggested that Lucia had poisoned each patient, resulting in cardiac arrest and death. In some cases the patients had been saved by cardiopulmonary resuscitation, but Lucia was still charged with attempted murder in these cases.

During the trial, Lucia's character was naturally brought into question. It was alleged that she had once worked as a prostitute while living in Canada and also in the Netherlands, before she became a nurse. It was also alleged that she suffered from depression, and her own brother claimed she was an avid liar and he believed she was capable of committing murder.

But what really sealed the fate of Lucia was the judiciary relying on statistical reports that showed that the probability of a nurse being on duty during each incident was 1 in 342 million. With such staggering odds, the trial only lasted five days, and at the end Lucia was found guilty of the murders and attempted murders on March 24, 2003. The sentence she received was life imprisonment, and in the Netherlands, life meant life.

The first appeal was put forward on June 18, 2004. This was rejected, and the conviction was upheld. Lucia was also sentenced to detention with psychiatric treatment, even though the criminal psychologist assigned by the state could find no evidence that she was suffering from a mental illness. The case was then presented to the Netherlands Supreme Court in March 2006, at which time it was deemed incorrect to impose a psychiatric detention at the same time as life imprisonment. Despite this, the Supreme Court returned the case back to the court in Amsterdam to reevaluate any facts that had arisen to support an appeal. Just days after the Supreme Court had made its ruling, Lucia suffered a stroke and was admitted to the prison hospital. On July 13, 2006, the Court of Appeal upheld the initial verdict and conviction, and the life sentence was given once again. This time however, the psychiatric detention was dismissed.

Doubts Emerge

Many people had begun to support Lucia, and a committee was created that continuously expressed doubts about her conviction and sentence. One of these doubts pertained to the usage of chain-link proof, wherein a person found guilty without reasonable doubt in one case is therefore guilty in subsequent cases. For Lucia, that meant that because she was found guilty of two of the murders, the court system therefore concluded she must be guilty of the others. This also means that evidence does not need to be terribly strong in all of the cases.

The two murders that were supposedly proven were based on the fact that the

medical experts were unable to find the deaths were caused by natural causes. Digoxin was the drug suspected of poisoning in both of the patients, and it was supposedly detected in samples from one child by two separate laboratories. However, the methods used were not refined enough to exclude that it could have actually been a similar substance the body naturally produces. The samples were sent to another laboratory, the Strasbourg Laboratory, which used a newer method that tests for sensitivity and high specificity, meaning the analysis was more delicate. They found that there was no evidence to support the presence of digoxin, and so the allegation of death by poisoning with this drug was not conclusive.

For the other child, it was surmised that the overdose could have been due to a faulty prescription. In both cases, there were no clear signs as to how Lucia was even able to administer the digoxin. There was even evidence thrown out by the prosecution that proved Lucia wasn't in the room with one of the patients when they died. If this had been put forward during the trial, the whole synopsis of Lucia being the only one present on each occasion would have been brought into speculation and doubt.

Initially Lucia had been charged with thirteen counts of murder and medical emergencies, but the defense was able to prove that Lucia had not been present in many of these cases. At one point, she had even been away on leave, and it was simply an administrative error that put her there at the wrong time. Up until the last death that triggered the investigation, every other death later considered to be murder had been classified as being due to natural causes. Even the last case was initially put down as a natural death until it was suggested that one nurse, Lucia, had been with each patient that had died.

During the trial, the court favored the use of statistical calculations to determine the likelihood that one particular nurse may be present during so many deaths. The calculation that the chances were as low as 1 in 342 million more or less sealed Lucia's fate, as that was the statistic the court used to determine her guilt. It was later determined that the figure was closer to 1 in 25 that a nurse would be present during a spate of hospital deaths. When you consider a nurse's shifts, how often they are at the hospital, the type of wards they work in, and the size of the hospital itself, it is more than possible for one nurse to be with a number of patients as they die.

Reopening of the Case

Cases are generally not reopened in the Dutch legal system unless a new fact is presented. They don't consider different interpretations of old facts by experts. However, Tom Derksen and Metta de Noo submitted their research to the Posthumous II Commission, which looks at certain closed cases and checks for errors by the police and any misunderstanding of scientific and medical evidence. Derksen declared the medical experts had not been given all of the relevant information when questioned about the possibility of natural causes leading to the deaths. He also showed that the Strasbourg Laboratory had found there was no indication of digoxin poisoning, and that initial results were due to poor methods and techniques. The Commission agreed to look at the case and assigned three men from their group to investigate whether there had been other unexplained deaths when Lucia wasn't present, if all relevant information was given to the expert witnesses, and if scientific knowledge now altered the question regarding digoxin.

The Commission released their report in October 2007, recommending that the case be reopened due to the apparent tunnel vision of the investigators in the beginning. Also, with the last alleged victim, natural causes could no longer be ruled out, and in April 2008 Lucia was released from prison for three months. She would remain free from prison throughout the investigation and appeal process.

After months of investigation and hearings, the appeal hearing finally came to an end on March 17, 2010. It had been determined that none of the deaths were caused by deliberate action and that they were either due to natural causes, wrong treatments, poor diagnosing, or inadequate hospital management. The public prosecution made a formal request to the court to change the verdict to not guilty. The court agreed and delivered the verdict on April 14, 2010.

Justice Miscarried

Though there have been many cases of innocent people found guilty and imprisoned or even put to death in some countries, the case of Lucia de Berk was perhaps one of the worst, because there was never any evidence that a crime had even been committed. It was all based on supposition, coincidence, and failure to understand science. Lucia spent more than six years in jail, suffered a stroke, and had everything about her personal and professional life

brought into question, not only in court but also in the media.

It is true that Lucia received financial compensation for the wrongful conviction and imprisonment, but the figure has never been made public. However, for someone who effectively lost six years of their life, money is probably little reward. The whole judicial process took a tremendous toll physically and mentally on a woman who was doing the job she loved, taking care of others. To be accused and convicted of such a terrible thing, and to be labelled an 'angel of death' must have been absolutely soul destroying. Yet, she continued to fight for her innocence, along with a barrage of supporters. Aside from the effect on Lucia, the families of the alleged victims must also have felt this miscarriage of justice, for they were led to believe their loved ones had been murdered for nine years. They too, like Lucia, were victims of the judicial system.

Chapter 5: The Richardson Murders in Canada

The story behind the tragic murders of a family in Medicine Hat, Alberta, Canada, contains all the makings of a blockbuster movie—young love, a troubled teen, disapproving parents, alcohol and drugs, vampires and werewolves. Yes, vampires and werewolves. It will make you look twice at a person who is Goth, for all the wrong reasons. And it was a crime that would make history in Canada, as the instigator and perpetrator was none other than a 12-year-old girl and her much older boyfriend.

The Discovery of the Crime Scene

The discovery of the triple homicide of the Richardson family was made initially by a young six-year-old boy who had come over to play with the youngest member of the family, Jacob, aged 8. The little boy peered through a window to see if anyone was home, but what he saw would undoubtedly leave him with nightmares for many years to come. Lying on the floor of the basement, in clear view, were the bloodied bodies of two adults who weren't moving. The alarm was raised, and authorities rushed to the scene.

On entering the house, they found Marc Richardson, 42, and his wife Debra, 48, dead on the floor. It was obvious they had suffered numerous stab wounds, and authorities continued their search through the house to see if there were any further victims. Upstairs, the small body of Jacob was found with his throat cut. Those who knew the family immediately became concerned about the whereabouts and safety of the fourth member of the Richardson family, their daughter Jasmine.

The body of Marc contained more than twenty-four stab wounds, including nine in his back. His wife Debra had been stabbed at least twelve times, and their young son had a gaping wound in his throat. Bloody handprints and smears were found throughout the basement on the walls, and there was still no sign of Jasmine. The search was now on for Jasmine, for fear she had been abducted or murdered elsewhere.

A Shocking Suspect

The day after the discovery of the murdered Richardson family members, Jasmine was finally located in Leader, Saskatchewan, around 81 miles away

from Medicine Hat. With her was her boyfriend, Jeremy Allan Steinke, 23, and his friend Kacy Lancaster, 19. Immediately, all three were arrested by the police and returned to Medicine Hat. During the search for evidence at the crime scene, the police had discovered several online accounts with which Jasmine and Jeremy had been talking to each other about murdering her parents, so they knew immediately who the suspects were. Kacy Lancaster was arrested and charged with being an accessory because she had driven them in her truck away from the location and had helped with disposing of evidence.

Both Jasmine and Jeremy were charged with three counts of murder, and at the tender age of twelve, Jasmine became the youngest person to ever be charged with multiple murders in Canada. Because of her age, the Youth Criminal Justice Act prevented her name from being published once she was deemed a suspect. Also under Canadian law, any suspect who is under fourteen years of age cannot be tried as an adult, and the maximum sentence that can be given is ten years. The same luck didn't apply to Jeremy, as at the age of twenty-three he was most certainly an adult and would be tried as such.

Jasmine's trial began in June 2007, and by then she had turned fourteen. The charges were three counts of first degree murder, to which she plead not guilty to all. Her trial lasted about a month, and in July she was found guilty of all counts by the jury, who had needed just three hours of deliberation. Sentencing for Jasmine took place in November of the same year, and, as expected, she was sentenced to ten years in prison. Part of her sentence required her to spend four years in a psychiatric hospital, and after the term of her full sentence, she would be placed under conditional supervision within the community for a further four and a half years. Her sentence was due to be completed in 2015, by which time she would have turned twenty-three years old.

Steinke Goes on Trial

By all accounts, Jeremy Steinke was a disturbed young man. Some men will do anything for love, and Jeremy really took this to the extreme by helping his very young girlfriend murder her family. Of course, it's not the first time this has happened, and no doubt it will happen again. At the age of twenty-three, Jeremy had not matured very much at all and had made claims that he

was a vampire, a werewolf, and a Gothic. With piercings, tattoos, a love of blood, kink fetishes, and razorblades, it's no wonder alarm bells were ringing with Jasmine's parents. Unfortunately, those same alarm bells were not being heard by the authorities.

The night of the murders, Jeremy stated he had been drinking red wine and beer and had consumed a considerable amount of cocaine. He then climbed through an open window into the basement of the Richardson home and waited. Debra heard a noise downstairs and went down to check it out, and she must have been shocked to see Jeremy standing there armed with a knife. He grabbed her and started stabbing her over and over again.

Marc Richardson was the next to die. He too heard a noise and went down to the basement. While being attacked by Jeremy, Marc fought back as hard as he could, armed with nothing more than a screwdriver, but it was no use. Allegedly, as he was dying Marc asked Jeremy why he was doing this, and Jeremy explained it was what Jasmine wanted. Imagine that being the last thing a father hears. There was no doubt that Jeremy had killed the parents, but the murder of their eight-year-old son Jacob was not as clear.

While in custody, Jeremy had mistakenly had a conversation with someone he thought was another inmate but in fact was an undercover cop. Jeremy was open about the crime, claiming responsibility to the undercover cop, and it was this conversation that turned the opinion around regarding the death of young Jacob. According to Jeremy, it was Jasmine that had slit her little brother's throat and watched him die. To make it even more chilling, she allegedly showed no emotion, guilt, or remorse while doing so.

Jeremy had a pretty big mouth and made numerous statements to a variety of people about his role in the crime. He had told friends that he had "gutted her parents like fish." Right after the murders, they even went to a friend's house and had sex. And it was another friend that helped them get away from the town that night. Whether these people were afraid of Jeremy for some reason, or maybe just didn't care about what he and Jasmine had done, is disturbing.

On November 17, 2008, Jeremy's trial began in Calgary. The trial was originally going to take place in Medicine Hat, but Jeremy's legal team asked for the move so that the jury wouldn't be swayed by public knowledge at the

time. It really wouldn't have made much difference, as the story of the murders had become a national news event, and the outcome would most likely have been the same regardless of where the trial took place.

Testimony included numerous statements from friends and associates, some of whom had been asked to help with the murders and declined. There were also internet and computer conversations where the two of them had openly discussed their plan to kill Jasmine's parents, including different methods of killing. Kacy Lancaster, who drove them to Saskatchewan the night of the murders, claimed she knew nothing about what they had just done. She stated she only found out after reading the newspaper, and she noted that both Jeremy and Jasmine showed no emotion about it at all. She had also noticed there was blood in Jeremy's truck, along with weapons including baseball bats and knives.

Not surprisingly, Jeremy was found guilty of first degree murder for each of the victims. On December 15, 2008, he was handed down three life sentences. They are concurrent sentences, and Jeremy will be eligible for parole after twenty-five years, in 2031.

A Lethal Romance

There were so many things wrong with this romance, it's hard to know where to begin. Jasmine and Jeremy had apparently met in the early part of 2006, with some saying the meeting happened at a punk rock concert, while others say it started as an online romance. In any case, Jeremy was twenty-three years old at the time, and Jasmine was just twelve. You have to wonder what a man of that age would see in such a young girl, but they quickly became a couple.

Naturally, Jasmine's parents were totally against the relationship and had every right to be. Not only was the age difference a huge problem, but it was Jeremy's background and character that worried them the most. At one point Jeremy claimed to be a 300-year-old werewolf. An adult would see through this as nonsense, but a 12-year-old child may not have the maturity to see through it. If you put yourself in Jasmine's shoes, she had a much older man interested in her, a man that seemed (to her) to be worldly and be interested in the same dark interests as herself. He told her he loved her, and he most probably did, and for a young girl, that's all she would need to hear. Don't be

mistaken in thinking she was the victim, however—this girl, despite her age, knew how to manipulate her boyfriend extremely well.

Girls often go for the ‘bad boy’, and in the case of Jasmine and Jeremy, they thought of themselves as soulmates, lovers that would be together for ever. The only thing standing in their way (despite the obvious statutory rape law) was her parents. They were completely opposed to the relationship, and had instructed Jasmine not to see Jeremy anymore. A young teenage girl, Jasmine was adamant that she wanted to spend the rest of her life with Jeremy, and so it was her that came up with the idea of killing her parents. In her mind, that was the only way they could be together. Jeremy, being the love-sick dutiful boyfriend, agreed, and so the stage was set for what would be one of the most disturbing multiple murders ever committed in Medicine Hat.

Once both had been arrested and held in custody, they continued to communicate with each other for a long time. Their letters contained dreams and plans that one day they would run away together and get married. However, the relationship broke down and crumbled when Jeremy stated during his trial that he did not kill young Jacob and that it had been Jasmine who dealt the fatal wound. Jasmine had categorically stated that she had no part in the actual killings. She would have seen Jeremy’s statement as a betrayal, and so she stopped communicating with him.

The Aftermath

Jeremy would attempt to launch an appeal, but not in 2012. He claimed it took him so long because he didn’t know the system and the processes, and his defense attorney no longer wished to represent him. Normally following a murder conviction, if an appeal is to be lodged it is done so almost immediately. However, Jeremy subsequently withdrew his appeal and continues to sit in prison.

Things were very different for Jasmine. Her sentence as a minor was nothing at all like the hard time Jeremy is doing, and yet she seemed to be the main instigator of the crime. With only a ten-year sentence applicable due to her age, she completed her mandatory four years in a psychiatric facility and a further four and a half years in the community under supervision. Now twenty-two years of age, Jasmine is attending college and living with only minimum conditions as imposed by the courts. It is almost as though she got

away with everything, even though it was her idea. If she had been a little bit older when the crimes were committed, things would have been very different for her.

Chapter 6: The Good Hart Murders

The upper-middle-class Robison family from Detroit was vacationing at their cabin in Lake Michigan, north of Good Hart, when they met a horrific fate. It was 1968, and the family had decided to spend their whole summer at the cabin, a secluded spot surrounded by dense woods and tall trees. It was almost impossible to see the cabin from the road, which would lead investigators to believe the crime was committed by someone who knew the family and knew they would be there.

Family on Vacation

The Robison family consisted of Richard, 42, his wife Shirley, and their four children, Richie, 19, Gary, 17, Randy, 12, and Susan, aged 7. Richard owned and operated a small advertising agency called R.C. Robison & Associates and also published a magazine called *Impresario*. His wife of twenty years, Shirley, took good care of the home and the family, and they all attended church regularly. The children were all thought of as good students and well-mannered young people, with the eldest son Richie attending university at the time of the murders.

The family decided to go on vacation from their home in Lathrup Village, Michigan, to their cabin they had named *Summerset*, which was nestled on the banks of Lake Michigan near Good Hart. The family was considered to be well off, with Richard owning his company, as well as owning and piloting his own plane, and the adults attending theater regularly. They were good, honest folk who didn't gamble, drink, smoke, or get involved in any other activities deemed risky or of poor social status.

On July 22, 1968, a nearby neighbor had called the caretaker of the area, Monnie Bliss, claiming she was trying to hold a bridge game in her home, and there was an awful smell coming from the Robison's cabin. Many people were aware that the Robison's were meant to be going away at some time, so the caretaker wondered if an animal had crawled into the home and died, so he went to investigate. He knocked on the door but received no answer. Bliss opened the door, and the sight that greeted him made him alert the authorities immediately.

A Horrific Crime Scene

The local deputies converged on the scene and braced themselves for what they had been told was inside the cabin. On entering, they encountered masses of dead flies on the floor and pools of blood that had congealed. The bodies were noticed immediately, and all seemed to be dressed as though they were going out somewhere on their last day alive. There was even a suitcase partially packed sitting on one of the beds. It was estimated that the family had been dead for about four weeks, given the extent of the decomposition, and the local hospital refused to take them due to their state. Ludicrously, a chicken coop at a nearby fairground was used as a temporary morgue where the autopsies could be completed.

There was a difference with how Shirley Robison was left after she had been murdered. Her skirt had been pushed up and her underwear was down around her ankles. It was not certain if she had been raped, as the medical examiner failed to find any evidence as such, but the way her body was posed does indicate some sort of sexual assault had occurred. At the time of the murder, Shirley had been wearing a sanitary napkin, and it had seven perforations in it, almost like stab wounds. This could also indicate a sexual attack had occurred.

All of the victims had been shot, and both Richard and young Susan had also been bludgeoned with a hammer. Why that was necessary is not known. Shooting a child is one thing, but to strike her with a hammer is macabre. The date of death was eventually put down as Tuesday afternoon or evening on June 25, 1968. During the crime scene investigation, gas masks had to be worn to deal with the horrific odor from the decaying bodies. The Emmet County prosecutor at the time, Wayne Richard Smith, commented that the suit he wore that day was never worn again. He ended up burning it.

Evidence and Theories

From what the crime scene showed, the killer had approached the house around twilight and initially fired shots into the living room using a .22 caliber rifle. Richard had been sitting in an easy chair and was struck in the chest. The other family members would have been stunned, so it was easy for the killer to shoot them as he burst in through the front door. Randy, Shirley, and Susan were shot as he entered, and as Richie and Gary raced from the room to the back bedroom to retrieve a gun from the closet, they too were

shot and killed. For some unknown reason, the killer then went back to Susan and struck her in the head with a hammer. To ensure they were all finished off, each member of the Robison family was then shot one more time in the head.

With the amount of gunfire that took place inside the cabin, it's a wonder nobody raised the alarm. But those that lived the closest were out at the time, and those who did hear gunshots and shouting assumed that because it was still quite light outside perhaps the Robison's were out by the beach shooting gulls.

As the murderer was leaving the house, he dragged Richard, Randy, and Susan into the hallway and put a blanket over Shirley. The killer then closed all of the curtains and turned up the heat before locking the door on his way out. The last thing he did at the scene was to cover a broken window with cardboard and tape a note to it that said 'will be back—Robison'. Presumably, this was to make anyone think the family was simply away for a day or two, giving the killer enough time to make his escape without being noticed in the vicinity.

There were many theories tossed about during the investigation into these murders. Some of the local residents were concerned there was a random madman on the loose, and they feared for their own safety. At the time there was a serial killer by the name of John Norman Collins, aka the 'co-ed killer,' operating in the area, but his modus operandi was far different, so it was not likely to be him. Nevertheless, he came under suspicion simply because he was a murderer acting locally.

The Suspects

Richard Robison

The first direction the police looked was towards Richard and his business and personal life. Often when a family is assassinated in such a way, it is the act of someone close to one of the victims. On looking into Richard's life, investigators found that he wasn't really the man everyone thought he was. They uncovered the secret that he had several affairs during his marriage to Shirley. Could this then be the work of a jealous lover or an irate husband? He also liked to bring his secretary into his office and ask her to lift her skirt

so he could look at her legs. Although there was no intercourse with the secretaries, he would touch and fondle them for up to an hour at a time.

The wonderful businessman, deemed a pillar of society, had also done some very suspicious business dealings, resulting in some clients being swindled by up to \$50,000. Over a three year period, he would bill the client for advertisements he either didn't pay for or didn't even run. Richard would also create and publish full-page ads for airlines without asking for their permission so that his magazine would look as though it was more successful than it actually was.

Richard had come up with a scheme to create giant computerized warehouses at airports internationally. He was looking to raise \$100 million from a group of investors referred to as the 'Superior Table'. He claimed this group was a global organization dedicated to bringing peace and unity among all countries. The chairman of the group was allegedly a man named Roebert. Robison even wore a St. Christopher medal with an inscription from Roebert which read: 'Richard—to my chosen son and heir —God bless you—Roebert.' Before the Robison family left for their ill-fated vacation, Richard had been dropping hints around that he was expecting a visit from a 'Mr. Roberts' while they would be at the cabin to talk about a multi-million dollar deal. However, nobody by that name ever flew in through the nearest airport, and detectives wondered if Mr. Roberts and Roebert were the same man, or if they even ever existed.

Organized Crime

There was a large possibility that there was an organized crime link to the murders for a variety of reasons. First, one of Richard's former secretaries went on to marry a powerful and very rich manufacturing tycoon who was rumored to have ties with organized crime in Cleveland. Around the same time as the murders, the secretary had suffered a miscarriage, and there were that the baby was Robison's and not her husband's after all.

As mentioned before, Richard had swindled a number of families out of substantial amounts of money. One of those families was allegedly associated with organized crime, so the detectives had to consider the murders were a hit as payback. Also, one of the weapons used in the murders, the AR-7, was

very popular among the Mafia hit men at that time. Another rumor was that Robison was behind in his payments to the mob, and if he had paid when he was supposed to, they would still be alive.

Bloxom, Brock, and Matthews

Early in 1970, an inmate at Leavenworth prison in Kansas told a story to the detectives that implicated himself and two other men in the murders of the Robison's. The inmate was Alexander Bloxom, referred to as a career criminal, who had been living in a halfway house with a man named Mark Warren Brock back in 1968. He had driven Brock to a restaurant in Flint for a meeting with a man he thought was called 'Scollata'. Afterwards, Brock traveled to Toledo and collected some weapons. He then headed north with another man named Robert Matthews. Bloxom had stayed behind because he was told there weren't any colored people in Good Hart. Two days after the murders, Brock returned.

Bloxom had the ability to recall a lot of detail. He perfectly described Richard Robison's briefcase, which he claimed Brock returned home with and destroyed later. He also had in his possession a black suitcase with guns inside, among other items, including a photograph of the Robison's and cancelled checks. These items were to be kept for future blackmail purposes, and Bloxom was instructed to get rid of the suitcase at a salvage yard in Alabama. The envelope was hidden at a relative's home.

According to Bloxom, Brock had told him they went to the cabin and knocked on the door, and he then faked having a heart attack. He lay down on the floor, and as Richard tried to help him, Matthews came in to the cabin and opened fire. He also said the wife was shot first, then one of the children who had tried to run, and then they just killed them all.

Brock was in prison when Bloxom's story came out, and he actually verified almost every detail of the story. He even admitted he wouldn't be opposed to carrying out a murder for the right price, but he was adamant he did not murder the Robison family. The three men—Bloxom, Brock and Matthews—were given polygraph tests to confirm or rule out their story. Surprisingly, Matthews passed his test. Bloxom was eager to do his test, but he ended up failing it. Brock flat out refused to take a polygraph test. Without definite

corroboration or evidence, the theory that Brock and Matthews had killed the Robison's was inconclusive, so none of the men were charged.

Monnie Bliss the Caretaker

Many of the locals in the area pointed the finger at Monnie Bliss as being the culprit. His father and he had actually built the homes in the area, including the Robison cabin, and it was afterwards that Bliss took up residency as the main caretaker. Who better to do repairs on the cabins than the very man himself who built them? Despite his handyman skills, Bliss was known to have a short temper and would often be found talking to himself. Some of the locals were even afraid of Bliss, thinking he was a bit odd.

So why would Bliss murder the Robison's? It turns out, when his 18-year-old son was killed in a motorcycle accident while riding drunk, Bliss held the Robison family accountable. Apparently, his son had been with the older Robison boys that same day. To make matters worse, the day before the funeral, Richard had visited the family to offer his condolences and explain they would be unable to attend the funeral. That might not have been so bad, except that Richard then gave his wife just \$20 towards flowers, which Bliss found insulting. It was the very next night the family was murdered.

Some investigators felt that the female victims were subject to overkill and were therefore the target of revenge. The use of a hammer on Susan also brought suspicion on Bliss, as he was a builder by trade, so naturally would own a hammer. There was even a rumor that his hammer had gone missing from his toolbox. However, the police considered this information to be the result of locals having a chat over a beer and speculating, rather than fact, and Bliss was cleared as a suspect. His behavior continued to be more and more bizarre, and at times he was heard to say he thought the Robison's had it coming. In some cases, he claimed he had killed the family during his semi-crazy ramblings.

The Co-Ed Killer

The co-ed killer was otherwise known as John Norman Collins, a man who was charged with one murder but suspected of up to fifteen more. He operated in California and Michigan between 1967 and 1969, and his victims were young women. His murderous spree came to an end when his uncle, a

state police corporal, became suspicious. Collins had actually used his uncle's house to murder an 18-year-old woman named Karen Sue Beineman, a student at the same university Collins attended. Ironically, another fellow student at the East Michigan University was none other than Richie Robison.

Stories came about that Richie and Collins were in the same fraternity there and would therefore have known each other. Others claimed that the two had met during orientation at the university, and Collins could have visited Richie at the family cottage in Good Hart where the murders eventually took place. This would show that Collins knew where the secluded cabin was, an important factor in investigating the crime. Police never considered Collins a strong suspect, but they kept him in the back of their minds as a potential lead.

Collins adamantly denies taking any part in the murders of the Robison family. He is serving a life sentence for the murder of Karen Beineman and has stated that being convicted of one murder is one thing, but to be labelled for things he hadn't done was unfair. It's important to remember, the other murders he was suspected of committing have never been proven to be the work of Collins.

Joseph R. Scolaro – Embezzler?

Within two weeks of the investigation following the discovery of the Robison bodies, the police had a very firm suspect in mind. Joseph Scolaro was an employee of Richard's, and he had disappeared for more than twelve hours on the day of the murders. He had provided alibis for that time period, though none of them were valid. He had also recently purchased guns, the same as the ones used to commit the murders, as determined by forensic ballistic experts. These included a .25-caliber Jet-Fire automatic Beretta pistol and a .22-caliber AR-7 ArmaLite semi-automatic rifle. Forensics compared the four .22-caliber shells found at the cabin with those that had been fired by Scolaro at his family firing range, and they were found to be a match. In his defense, Scolaro claimed he had given the rifle away to someone, but a neighbor stated to police he had seen the gun at Scolaro's house not long before the murders.

Scolaro also claimed to have given away the .25-caliber pistol, and when questioned he provided a second pistol of the same caliber to the police that

he had purchased at the same time as the other ones. At the crime scene were found some SAKO .25-caliber cartridges, which are a rare brand of ammunition produced in Finland. This particular ammunition is only sold during a short and specific time period each year, and one of the purchasers listed in Michigan was Scolaro. Police were able to determine that Scolaro's claims of giving away the guns were untrue, and Scolaro was unable to prove otherwise.

During their investigation, a forensic accountant was brought in to analyze the financial affairs of the Robison's and the advertising company and the magazine Richard owned. It was found that over \$60,000 seemed to be missing from the company accounts. Scolaro had been left in charge of both companies for the summer while the Robison's were on vacation, and this implicated Scolaro as the killer due to embezzlement and his trying to hide his financial crime.

Despite all of this, the prosecutor was unwilling to bring charges against Scolaro without more evidence. The fact that there were no fingerprints at the crime scene and that the guns had gone missing made it difficult to prove Scolaro was ever there. Further doubts arose about the amount of time it would take Scolaro to travel from Detroit to Good Hart, kill the Robison's, and return back to Detroit. The trip one way takes between five and six hours to complete as it is, and with witnesses claim they heard gunshots around 9pm, it would be hard to comprehend how Scolaro got there and back within the twelve hours he was apparently missing. Scolaro's wife stated he was home with her by 11 p.m. that night, so if they were killed at 9 p.m., there was no possible way he could be home with his wife by then.

Furthermore, although Scolaro may have been embezzling money from his employer, it is a big jump to then turn around and murder an entire family, especially considering the brutality shown to the female victims. White-collar criminals tend to stay just that—financial fraud is quite different than physical and violent crime. Besides, although \$60,000 might seem a lot to many people, it's not really the kind of figure you go on a murderous rampage for, even if you are terrified of getting caught. Unless of course the embezzlement amount was much larger. On the morning of the murders, Richard called the bank to check if a deposit he was expecting had been made, to the value of \$200,000. It hadn't, so Richard immediately tried to

contact Scolaro, who also had access to the account. Richard made multiple attempts to get hold of Scolaro throughout the day without any success. Back in the office, Scolaro had been told Richard was trying to get hold of him, and instead of calling him back, he just left and disappeared for the rest of the day.

Another theory was that Scolaro paid someone else to do the hit for him, which would fit in with Bloxom's story (remember the name he recalled—Scollata—is very similar). Perhaps Scolaro provided the guns, the ammunition, directions to the cabin, and could have even paid for the hit using some of the money he stole. The investigators thought there was enough evidence and information to press charges. In 1973, the prosecutor's office was on the right path to being able to file murder conspiracy charges, and Scolaro got wind of it. Shortly after, Scolaro was found dead in his office chair from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. He left a note for his mother in which he stated that although he was a liar, a phony and a cheat, he did not have anything to do with the murders. To others, despite what the note said, his suicide was an indication of guilt, but we'll really never know.

Nothing Resolved....Yet

To date, there has been no resolution in this multiple murder case. In 2013, detectives were still keeping an eye on the open case, and they have continued to investigate as the years have passed on. Although there have been many theories and multiple suspects, they have never been able to just narrow it down to one. With so many people now passed on, a lot of information will have died with them, so it becomes even more complicated as time passes. However, they are not giving up. They are praying for some kind of miracle, that someone will confess or at least come forward with specific information, so they can finally serve justice on the killer or killers of the Robison family.

Chapter 7: Beslanowitch – The Murder of a Teen Prostitute

The killing of prostitutes is nothing new. They have been a particularly popular victim among serial killers due to their transient and high-risk lifestyle. Many of the women working the streets have few friends and very little family contact, and they can be missing for days or even weeks and months before anyone realizes they are missing. This delay is a real asset for a killer, as the more time passes, the less likely the chance is that he will be identified. It's saddening to think that these women are preyed upon simply because their lives have taken a turn for the worse. Drug addiction, abuse, alcoholism, and homelessness are all factors associated with many women who end up as prostitutes. Just because they are desperate, and even though their families may not be in touch as much, they are still human beings—someone's daughter, sister, mother, girlfriend or grandchild. They are still loved.

The Life of Krystal Beslanowitch

The body found on the banks of the Provo River near Midway, Utah, on December 15, 1995, was identified as Krystal Beslanowitch. She had grown up in Spokane, and had fallen by the wayside at the young age of fifteen years. By then, she was already involved in drugs and prostitution. Her mother has said that every time Krystal came back home, she always accepted her back. It seemed that Krystal just wasn't interested in living a normal life, despite the love and support she got at home.

Her stepfather claimed that Krystal had started selling her body much younger, at the age of twelve years old, and he also claimed she had given birth to a baby that was subsequently taken from her. He felt sorry for Krystal and believed she never really stood a chance in life. In July 1995, Krystal and her boyfriend decided to move away, and they moved to Utah. Krystal had been in trouble with the law on numerous occasions while in Spokane. The charges included prostitution, assault, drug violations, and auto theft. Perhaps they thought it was time to try their luck in a different city.

One night Krystal headed out to go to a convenience store and she never came back. Her boyfriend waited two days before he reported her missing.

It's not known why he waited so long. Perhaps she had done it before and always returned. What made him more concerned was that another prostitute who had worked the same area as Krystal, west North Temple, had been murdered that November, just a month earlier.

Cold on the River Bank

Krystal went missing on a Friday, and her body was found the next day by two ranchers. They had been traveling down a country road that was quite isolated and noticed the body on the banks of the river. They notified the authorities immediately, and local law enforcement headed to the crime scene.

Krystal's body was completely nude, and it was obvious to those who saw her that she had suffered numerous traumatic blows to the head and face. The medical examiner would later confirm she had been struck at least eight or nine times with a large rock. She was just seventeen years old at the time of her death, which made it even more intolerable for the hard-nosed detectives. In fact, a sheriff's deputy named Todd Bonner was haunted by the case throughout his entire career. Once they had identified Krystal, they next had to try to find a suspect.

It wasn't going to be an easy task, and there seemed to be no leads whatsoever. It was difficult to say whether she had been murdered by a client while she was working as a prostitute or whether she was the victim of circumstance and just happened to cross paths with the wrong person at the wrong time. One thing is for sure; her boyfriend was ruled out very early on in the investigation.

During the autopsy, forensic evidence was obtained from underneath her fingernails, and forensic experts also collected evidence from the alleged murder weapon, the large rocks that had been used to bash in her head. However, forensic science wasn't as advanced back then, and it lead nowhere.

Reopening of the Case

In 2008, two detectives were assigned to reopen the case with the hopes of a breakthrough using new forensic technology. The detectives worked full time on the case, and forensic scientists were able to extract more DNA from the

rocks found with her body. The DNA was run through the CODIS database and the detectives waited for a match.

The main focus of reopening the case was to further explore the forensic evidence found at the scene of the crime. Rather than re-interviewing people or revisiting the scene, attention was turned to science, and the numerous advances that had occurred. Now it was possible to get a DNA profile from a much smaller sample, and it was this that lead the police straight to the murderer.

DNA Points the Finger

All their wishes came through in January 2009, when CODIS returned a DNA match. The suspect's name was Joseph Michael Simpson, a 46-year-old man who had already served time in prison for murder back in the 1980s. He had lived in Clearfield for a time, and in 2009 was residing in Sarasota County, Florida.

The match encouraged the team to further analyze other forensic evidence from the crime scene, and this came back even stronger as belonging to Simpson. By now Todd Bonner was the Wasatch County Sherriff, and although he wasn't heavily involved in the case, he kept his hand in it, so he was aware of what was going on at all times. Despite having the DNA match, it was decided that they needed more biological evidence from Simpson. Bonner and another detective set off to find Simpson.

They needed a fresh sample of Simpson's DNA, so they tracked him down and followed him. On August 25, 2013, they managed to follow him into a store, a smoke shop, and when he finished smoking his cigarette, Bonner grabbed it. Now they had the DNA they needed. As expected, it was a match. Simpson was subsequently arrested at his home for the murder of Krystal, and it was Bonner who had the joy of placing him in handcuffs.

He was taken to the local jail in Sarasota to await extradition back to Utah, where he would be formally charged with the murder of Krystal. Surprisingly, Simpson didn't try to fight the extradition order and was eventually returned to Utah.

Simpson's History – It Wasn't His First Murder

At the time he was arrested by Bonner, Simpson had been living in Sarasota

County for nearly fourteen years. He was unemployed and living with his parents at the age of forty-six. Before then, he had lived in Clearfield, Utah. Once in custody, more information came about regarding the background of Simpson, and it was found that he had a strong history of violence.

Back in 1987, Simpson had been arrested for stabbing a man in Clearfield. It wasn't a simple stabbing —there were thirteen knife wounds in the victim, causing his death. His trial was relatively swift, and he was found guilty of second degree murder. He would go on to serve roughly eight years for the crime and was paroled in April 1995. He had only been out of prison for a few months when he murdered his next victim, Krystal.

He seemed to favor killing methods that involved being up close and personal. First was the stabbing of his first victim, as you need to be very close to a person to stab them, especially that number of times. Then, when crushing Krystal's skull with a large rock, he needed to be positioned close to or standing over Krystal to repeatedly smash the rock against her head. This method is also perhaps the most gruesome, and shows what Simpson was really capable of.

Even while in jail awaiting trial, he gained another charge of assault against a fellow inmate. As of now, he has not been sent to trial, so it is all just a matter of waiting. Despite the gravity of the crime, the prosecution has stated that they do not intend to seek the death penalty but will go for life imprisonment. Some say this is not enough. He has killed two people now, both in an extremely violent manner, and convicted criminals have been sent to death for less horrific murders. Time will tell what the outcome will be when the trial goes ahead.

Chapter 8: Murder or Accident?

The case of two teenage girls disappearing into the night in 1971 had plagued the families, friends and the community for decades. They were good girls who headed out for some fun and never came back. Were they murdered? Had they been abducted? Some even wondered if they had simply run away. Or was there another reason they vanished...it would be a mystery for forty-three years.

Sherri Miller and Pam Jackson Disappear

Sherri and Pam were both from Vermilion, and both were just seventeen years old and were still attending high school. Sherri was a smart girl and was living with her grandparents after her mother had remarried then moved away. She was very independent and knew what she wanted in life and what she didn't want, a good head on her shoulders. Her grandmother had been diagnosed with terminal cancer, and Sherri willingly looked after her through the spring in 1971, as well as taking care of her grandfather. It was her job to get her grandfather out of bed in the morning, fix his breakfast, and take care of the daily chores. Because of her caring nature, she ended up working after school hours at the local Dakota Hospital, which is where her friend Pam Jackson worked as well.

Sherri wanted to go into the fashion design industry and was an avid sewer. Her plan was to move to California once she had graduated from high school, along with her cousin Pam Stewart. Pam Jackson also had an interest in dress design, and the two of them had many other things in common. On the night of May 29, 1971, Sherri had invited Pam Jackson to go out with her that night, and although Pam's mother said no at first, she ended up giving in. Pam Stewart was also going to go along with the girls, but she was called out to babysit at the last minute.

The girls made a stop at the hospital to visit with Sherri's grandmother and left there around 9:30 that night. They were driving around in Sherri's grandfather's 1960 Studebaker, a solid car that ran well. They met up with some boys from school after leaving the hospital and were invited along to a party taking place at a nearby gravel pit. The girls agreed to follow the boys there.

At one point, the boys in the car ahead had made a wrong turn, and when they doubled back there was no sign of the girls and the Studebaker. At 4 a.m. the next morning, Pam Jackson's mother noticed Pam hadn't turned off the kitchen light like she normally would when she got home. She had a look in her room and discovered she wasn't home. She assumed the girls had experienced car trouble and probably stayed in town for the night with a friend.

Later that morning, Pam's parents started to call everyone they could think of to see if the girls had spent the night, but nobody had seen them. Sherri's grandmother was critical, and in fact, she died just six days after Sherri went missing. The police naturally assumed the girls had run away, but they hadn't taken any clothing, makeup (they were teenage girls after all), or even the paychecks they had received that day. There was also no way Sherri would have abandoned her grandmother when she was so gravely ill.

The suggestion was made to drag the river to see if the girls had crashed, but it was decided that the current was too swift and it wouldn't be safe. The visibility in the water was very poor, so sending down divers wouldn't have achieved anything either. Pam's father would spend days walking up and down the gravel roads and across the nearby fields looking for any signs of the girls. Sherri's father would sit at the local police department looking at photo after photo of unidentified deceased girls, and he checked her social security to see if it was being used by anyone, but it wasn't. The girls had vanished into thin air.

A False Accusation

How a man named David Lykken came to be accused of murdering both Sherri and Pam is quite extraordinary. When questioned, he was already serving 225 years in prison for rape and kidnapping. With no bodies, no forensic evidence, and no witness statements it's hard to believe he was considered for the alleged crime in the first place.

However, Lykken had a very dark history and was in the area of Vermillion at the time the two girls disappeared. The case was handed on to the newly-formed cold case unit in 2004, and was one of the first cases investigated. The fact that Lykken had lived close to the gravel pit where the party was meant to take place that night, and because he had a history of violence

towards women, it was deemed he needed to be investigated further.

While going back over the previous records and documents, there was one piece of information gathered back in 1971 that further convinced the investigators to look at Lykken. A neighbor of Pam Jackson's family had reported that she had overheard a party line phone conversation a month before the girls disappeared. It was reportedly a conversation between Pam Jackson and a man named David. The neighbor believed David was a student at the University of South Dakota, but wasn't sure.

They began to question Lykken's victims to try and find out as much information as they could about the crimes he had committed. They also spoke to his younger sister, who claimed he was often violent and threatening. She even recalled an incident in which David told her to drive, and he climbed into the back of the car and raped a female passenger. According to his sister, David had taken the same school bus with Sherri, and he knew both Sherri and Pam through the church.

His sister recalled a time shortly after the disappearances when her family was digging large pits on their farm and creating a large fire. Her parents had often tried to cover for David when he got into trouble, but he still had a lot of anger towards them. The sister didn't know why this was, but she had been told once it was something to do with a girl buried on the farm. At this point in time, she was unaware the cold case team were interviewing her about Sherri and Pam.

Some of the information given by his sister was clearly not true. When asked if she had seen a car on the farm and was shown pictures of different models of Studebaker, she identified the same model Sherri had been driving that night. When asked if she saw any bodies, she claimed she saw Sherri slumped over the steering wheel and Pam with her head on the passenger window. It seemed she was feeding off the suggestions that were given to her instead of recalling actual facts.

With all of the information at hand, the investigators obtained a search warrant for David's possessions that were stored at his parent's farm and for the farmland itself. They dug up many areas as indicated by David's sister on a map, but nothing was found. Numerous other interviews with his sister took

place, including under hypnosis, and it seemed as though she was recalling real memories.

In 2006, the investigation team received further information from an inmate named Aloysius Black Crow, who was incarcerated with Lykken. He claimed Lykken had confessed to him that he had murdered Sherri and Pam. They fitted him with a wire and asked him to go back and interview Lykken. He did so, and the audio recording captured Lykken stating he had asked the girls for a ride, and he had raped Pam and tied Sherri up for hours.

It was discovered in 2008 that the tape recordings were all fake, and that it was another man's voice on the tape, not Lykken's. The investigators had been sent down the wrong path—first by Lykken's own sister, then by a fraudulent inmate who was only out to gain for himself. Therefore, the charges against Lykken were dropped.

Skeletons in the Studebaker

In September 2013, the forty-three-year mystery surrounding the disappearance of Sherri Miller and Pam Jackson was finally solved. A fisherman at Brule Creek noticed wheels underneath the bridge while the water levels were low and notified the authorities. On investigation, they discovered that it was the 1960 Studebaker Lark that Sherri had been driving that night.

Inside the car were the skeletal remains of two females who would later be identified as Sherri and Pam. Their identities were confirmed through the use of DNA, and there were a number of personal items found inside the car that belonged to the girls. On examination of the bodies, it was determined that there were no signs of injuries that would indicate foul play or homicide. Instead, the girls had simply run off the road and vanished into the murky depths of the creek.

Despite the area being searched multiple times following the disappearance, the car could not be seen due to higher water levels. Tragically, Pam's father had passed away just five days before the car wreck was discovered. Although it is still a terrible tragedy that the girls were found deceased, it at last puts to rest all of the suspicions, accusations, theories, and what ifs that have plagued the families and the community for nearly fifty years.

Chapter 9: When Suicide is Murder

It's not always easy to tell the difference between a suicide and a murder, and sometimes information comes to light much later on that further clarifies the difference between the two. The case of Pamela Shelly is one such case. At first, it was considered a suicide by the authorities, but thanks to a true crime television program many years later, a man was subsequently caught and put behind bars for her murder.

The Death of Pamela Shelly

Pamela Shelly had been living with her boyfriend Ronnie Hendrick in De Witt County, Texas, not far from where Ronnie's parents lived. Her children Kayla, 12, and Dustin, 9, were also living with Pamela and Ronnie. The rest of her family was back in Arkansas, where she had also been living before Ronnie moved her to Texas. Pamela and her kids had only been at Ronnie's for about five months, and she was planning to leave him. Ronnie was abusive, and Pamela was taking the kids and moving back to Arkansas.

January 6, 2001, Pamela had packed her belongings and sorted the children's things out and was about to leave. They were leaving in twenty minutes time when something happened that would forever change the lives of many. A gunshot was heard, and Pamela was lying on the floor of the bathroom with a bullet wound to the head. Ronnie's stepfather placed the call to 911 asking for assistance because Pamela had attempted to kill herself.

When the ambulance got there, Pamela was still breathing. They quickly loaded her onboard and headed to nearby Cuero, where the hospital was, twenty minutes away. Ronnie was in the front cab of the ambulance giving directions, as the ambulance staff had come from out of town and didn't know their way around. By the time the police arrived at the scene, the ambulance along with Pamela and Ronnie had already left.

Many years later, the emergency services people who attended the incident all stated they must have believed it was a suicide, as there was no fear about entering the house. Usually if there is a firearm incident, the ambulance staff waits at a safe distance until the police clear the scene. This wasn't considered necessary this time and is most likely because the adults that were

present all stated Pamela had tried to kill herself.

Ronnie's family made sure the authorities believed Pamela was suicidal. Ronnie claimed that Pamela was happy there, but her daughter Kayla wasn't, and so she had to return to Arkansas even though she didn't want to. Ronnie believed this was the final straw for Pamela, and she took her own life. There was apparently a family history of suicide in Pamela's family, including her sister who had successfully killed herself. Therefore, it's no wonder it seemed so plausible to the investigating officers.

The autopsy performed on Pamela showed a typical suicide gunshot, and adding to that the information given that she was suicidal and depressed, the medical examiner happily labelled the death as a suicide. The police, however, were still uneasy and requested Ronnie take a polygraph, which he agreed to do. They arranged for the test to be done on two separate occasions, but Ronnie failed to appear each time. Weeks after Pamela's death, Ronnie disappeared.

Several years later, in 2008, a new investigator, Carl Bowen, joined the county sheriff's department. The current sheriff was Jody Zavesky, and because Carl had been on the force when Pamela died, he was aware of the case and convinced Jody to take another look at it. Carl had always been bothered by the fact that Ronnie had never taken the polygraph test and had disappeared almost immediately after Pamela died. Fueled by their own determination and personal interest, Jody and Carl reopened the case.

Carl was pleasantly surprised when that summer Ronnie Hendrick was arrested and arrived at the De Witt County Jail. He had been charged with domestic abuse, having beaten up the woman he had been sharing a home with. It turned out that following Pamela's death, Ronnie had traveled to South Dakota and spent time in prison there for felony DWI, as well. All of a sudden, things started to fall into place for Carl as he realized Ronnie was a chronic alcohol abuser and woman beater.

Finally Carl was able to get Ronnie to take the polygraph test. Not surprisingly, he failed it, and when questioned by the polygraph examiner after the test, he requested legal counsel. He told four different people that he had lied about not being in the bathroom when she was shot, but that he did

not pull the trigger. Originally he had claimed to be outside the house when Pamela was shot. Things were getting more and more suspicious.

Television Steps In

Carl discovered there was a television program looking for cold cases they could work on and help solve for a new television show called Cold Justice. Although hesitant at first, it was agreed by the higher authorities that the case of Pamela Shelly could be put forward as a possible case for the program. The producers of the show jumped at the chance right away. The main investigators in the program were former Harris County ADA Kelly Siegler and a former crime scene investigator, Yolanda McClary, from Las Vegas.

The team tends to focus on police departments that are understaffed, where their expertise can be used more effectively. They arrived in June and set to work. With them came the opportunity to have access to high-tech scientific evidence results with a remarkably quick turnaround. Immediately the gun was sent for DNA analysis. Unfortunately, this did not produce the results they wanted or needed.

Next, they took a look at Pamela's medical history and noted there had never been any issue with depression or any other form of mental illness, which completely undermined Ronnie's story. They were able to cross off any information that was no longer relevant or had been disproved, while at the same time gathering new information through witness interviews, crime scene reenactments, and reanalyzing all the previous data that had been gathered. When they presented the case and new evidence, the DA took his time deciding whether or not to proceed.

The final piece of the puzzle that persuaded the DA was an interview conducted by Carl with Pamela's ex-husband Jessie, who was incarcerated in a prison in Texas. According to Jessie, he had a phone conversation the same day Pamela was shot, reconfirming that she and the children were moving back to Arkansas. He also claimed that he and Pam were going to reunite and get back together. During the conversation, Ronnie had grabbed the phone and told Jessie the only way she was going back to Arkansas was in a box. To see if he was being deceptive with his story, Jessie was given a polygraph and passed.

Ronnie Hendrick

In November 2012, Ronnie was indicted for murder. He was set to go to trial in September 2013. Unfortunately, Cold Justice had scheduled the screening of the episode about Pam just six days before the trial was due to begin. Carl contacted the producers and asked if the date could be changed, but they refused. The concern was that if the local people watched the show, they would be useless as a jury. Sure enough, when jury selection came around, so many had seen it and already formed an opinion regarding his guilt that they could not be used as jury members, so a mistrial was called.

Another date was set for the trial, which was to be in June 2014. Although what people had seen on the program may have worn off by then, there was still the chance that a jury could be difficult to select. The DA decided to use that to his advantage and had a meeting with Ronnie's attorney. When it was pointed out that every person who had watched the Cold Justice episode was likely to believe Ronnie was guilty, then the jury was going to be the same. Therefore, it was likely he would be found guilty even if a jury could be selected. The next day, Ronnie pled guilty to murder and was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison.

Chapter 10: Snatched From the Snow

The story of Maria Ridulph is a tragic tale and one of innocence lost that would affect not only her family, but her community. It would also greatly affect a friend, who had been with her that night and witnessed the abduction, for the rest of her life. Two little girls innocently playing in the snow outside the house were ripped apart by a real life boogeyman who swept in and swept out, carrying little Maria away with him.

The Disappearance of Maria Ridulph

Maria was one of four children born to parents Michael and Frances, and they lived in Sycamore, Illinois. Most of the adults in the area worked on local farms, but Michael worked at a factory, one of the few that existed there at that time. Frances was a homemaker, taking care of the family and the home, and they seemed to have a good life.

It had started snowing on the evening of December 3, 1957, and Maria begged her parents to let her go out and play in the snow with her friend Kathy Sigman. Although it was dark out, her parents said yes, and after dinner they went outside near Maria's home and were playing a game they called 'duck the cars', where they ran back and forth avoiding the headlights of cars coming down the street. In that era it wasn't considered dangerous to let the kids out at night, as it was a fairly innocent time, a time when murders and violent crimes were not common at all.

While they were out playing, Kathy stated a man had approached them who said his name was Johnny. He told them he was twenty-four years old and had no wife, and he offered Maria a piggyback ride. She went back to her house and retrieved her favorite doll to show the stranger, as it was her prized possession. When she returned, Kathy went back to her own house to get her mittens because it was so cold. When Kathy came back, both Maria and the stranger were gone.

Unable to find Maria, Kathy went to her parent's house to tell them she couldn't find her. Maria's parents assumed she was hiding somewhere and sent their 11-year-old son out to find her. When he had no luck, the parents then called the police. Within an hour, the police had arrived along with

armed civilians to search the town. They could find no trace of the little girl or the man who she had last been seen with.

Within two days of her disappearance, the FBI was called in due to the possibility Maria had been kidnapped and taken across state lines. Numerous people had seen the two girls playing together that night, but nobody had seen the stranger with them up until 6:30 p.m. They therefore believed this stranger, 'Johnny', had approached Maria and Kathy after that time, and that Maria had been taken somewhere between 6:45 and 7:00 p.m.

Because Kathy had been the only one to see Johnny, she was placed in protective custody in case he returned to take her or harm her. She was shown photos of possible suspects or those who had been convicted before to see if she could identify the man who called himself Johnny, but she could not. She was also asked to look at a lineup of suspects, and she pointed out a man named Thomas Joseph Rivard. However, Rivard had a tight alibi and couldn't have been the man they were looking for. He had only been placed in the lineup to fill up the numbers.

A Tragic Discovery

Near Woodbine, Illinois, some 100 miles away from Sycamore, two tourists were searching a wooded area looking for mushrooms on April 26, 1958. What they found was the skeletal remains of a young child. The only clothing present was a shirt, socks, and undershirt, and the tiny body was beneath a tree that had partially fallen over. The state of decomposition indicated the body had been there for months, and it was later identified as Maria through dental records. The rest of the clothing she had been wearing the night she disappeared was nowhere to be seen.

Photographs of the crime scene were not taken, as the coroner didn't want the media to get hold of them, particularly because the body was that of a child. As the body was found within the state, the FBI stepped back and left the case with the local and state police to investigate. The autopsy done at the time showed no indication of the manner of death. This was apparently due to the level of decomposition, which many years later would be handled in a different manner.

Prime Suspect Right From the Start – Was Tessier Johnny?

A young man who was considered a suspect right from the beginning was John Tessier. Originally from Ireland, he had moved to Sycamore after World War II ended with his British mother and American stepfather. Before his mother's remarriage, John's surname had been Cherry, and he would still use it from time to time.

The family home was just around the corner from the Ridulph's, and at the time John was eighteen years old and planning on joining the Air Force. During the initial search and investigation into Maria's disappearance, investigators had visited John's home and spoken to his mother. She claimed John had been home all night, whereas his sisters would later testify this wasn't true. The investigators had received a tip regarding John, and it was speculated that it may have come from a resident or John's parents themselves, trying to clear their boy's name since he had the same name as Johnny and his physical description was a match.

The next statement John made was that he had been in Rockford the night in question enlisting in the Air Force, which completely contradicted what his mother had said previously. He claimed he had called his parents from Rockford to get a ride home, as he had left his car back at the house. There was a telephone record of a collect call being made that night at 6:57 p.m. by a John Tessier. He then met with recruiting officers to drop off some paperwork, and they confirmed to the authorities that this occurred at around 7:15 p.m. that night.

Despite this, an officer wasn't convinced and asked Tessier to take a polygraph test, which he complied with and passed. Because his alibi seemed to be truthful and he had passed the polygraph, he was released and taken off the list of suspects. Of note, Kathy Sigman was never asked to identify John or look at his photograph. The following day, John left for training at the Air Force Base.

John was to complete thirteen years in the Air Force, and he obtained the rank of captain before then undertaking study to become a police officer. He worked as an officer in Lacey, Olympia, then moved to Milton, Washington. Trouble would find him in Washington in 1982 in the form of a 15-year-old runaway named Michelle Weinman and her friend. John had taken the girls in, and not long after, Michelle filed a complaint that John had fondled her

and performed oral sex. He was charged with felony statutory rape and discharged from the police force. He negotiated a plea deal and pled guilty to communication with a minor for immoral purposes, which is a misdemeanor instead of a felony. John would later change his name to Jack Daniel McCullough, supposedly to honor his deceased mother.

A Mother's Deathbed Confession

In 2008, John Tessier's half-sister Janet provided new information that led to the case being reopened. She made a startling revelation that on her mother's deathbed she had stated the following: "Those two little girls, and the one that disappeared, John did it. John did it and you have to tell someone." Janet immediately assumed her mother was talking about the murder of Maria Ridulph and had been told by her elder sisters that their mother had lied to the police that night about John's whereabouts. Another of the half-sisters, Mary, was also there when their mother made the statement about John being guilty, but she only heard the words 'he did it'. Nevertheless, she also assumed it was to do with the Maria Ridulph case. At the time of their mother's death, John was not involved in the family, having previously molested a younger half-sister and threatened Janet with a gun. He wasn't even allowed to come to his mother's funeral.

Janet had made numerous attempts since her mother's death to get the Sycamore police and the FBI to consider her mother's statement. She eventually sent an email to the Illinois State Police tip line, and it was handed to the cold case unit to investigate. All of John's sisters had suspected him of being the murderer. The investigators were able to create a different timeline showing that John did have time to drive to Rockford after snatching Maria and making the phone call to his parents and meeting with the recruitment officers. This shed a whole new light on his so-called alibi.

Finally, Kathy Sigman, Maria's friend who had been there that dreadful night, was shown a photograph of John as he was back then. She immediately identified him as the stranger, 'Johnny', who had disappeared with Maria. More and more evidence was stacking up against John, as witnesses recalled new information and other witnesses came forward. In 2011, John was asked to come in to the police station to answer some questions. Whenever he was asked about that night or Maria Ridulph he would become aggressive and evasive with his answers. He refused to answer any further questions and was

subsequently arrested for the abduction and murder of Maria.

The same month, Maria's tiny body was exhumed and tested for DNA evidence with no luck. A forensic anthropologist examined the skeleton and was able to determine she had been stabbed in the throat with a long blade at least three times. Although this was most likely the cause of death, other causes couldn't be ruled out due to the lack of soft tissue, with which other injuries such as strangulation may have been identified. Nevertheless, the case was pursued and a trial set.

A Long-Awaited Trial

John went to trial in September 2012 for the murder of Maria. Evidence and testimonies were heard from those who had been involved in the case, as well as from some inmates who claimed John had confessed to the murder while awaiting trial. One claimed John said he strangled her with a wire, while another claimed John said he smothered her accidentally while trying to stop her from screaming. On September 14, he was found guilty of the abduction and murder of Maria and was given a life sentence. A parole period of twenty years was given, however, John was seventy-three years of age at the time of the sentencing.

John filed a petition for post-conviction relief in 2015, and after extensive investigation by the state's Attorney, it was determined that he was innocent. A court hearing took place in March 2016 and the conviction was overturned. The dismissal of the charge of murder was without prejudice, which means that another charge of murder of Maria Ridulph could be brought against him in the future.

Chapter 11: Captive for 24 Years – the Joseph Fritzl Case

This case takes place in a town called Amstetten in Austria, when it was discovered a man had kept his daughter captive for twenty-four years in the basement of the family home. She had been abused, raped, and assaulted, and would not be free until she was forty-two years of age and had birthed seven children by her father. For a daughter to be treated so heinously by a man who is supposed to love and protect her is abominable and that the children they created suffered such psychological damage is horrendous. This man and his wife were the epitome of evil.

An Incestuous Situation

Joseph Fritzl and his wife Rosemarie had a large family, comprised of seven children. There were five daughters and two sons. Elisabeth was born in 1966, and her father began to abuse her from the time she was eleven years old. She went on to complete the required education, and at fifteen she undertook study on waitressing. Elisabeth ran away from home in January 1983 and fled to Vienna with a work friend. The police were notified, and she was found and returned to her parents. Reluctantly, she had to go back, but she did finish her course and was offered a job.

When Elisabeth was eighteen, her father told her he needed help carrying a door down into the basement of the home. She agreed to help and even held the door in place while he attached it to the frame. Little did she know that it was this door that would keep her locked inside. Josef then held a towel soaked in ether over her face, and once she was unconscious, he locked her in the basement.

Following her disappearance, her mother filed a missing person report with the authorities. Josef then began forcing Elisabeth to write letters saying she no longer wanted to live with her family and she had moved away with her friend. One letter stated that if they came looking for her she would flee the country. Josef had also told the authorities that he believed she had joined a religious cult. All of this was nonsense, of course, as she was in the basement of the family home the whole time.

Elisabeth was repeatedly raped by Josef during the twenty-four years he held her captive. She gave birth to seven children without any medical treatment whatsoever. One baby died just after he was born, and three of them were sent upstairs to live with Josef and Rosemarie. They told social services that the children had just appeared on the doorstep, and they were left in their care by the authorities with regular checkups. At no time was there any suspicion by social services as to what was really going on.

After the birth of the fourth child, Josef enlarged the captivity area so that Elisabeth had more space for herself and her children. Instead of bringing her food every few days, she now had a refrigerator to store food in, as well as hotplates to heat the meals up. They now had a radio, a television, and a video player to entertain them. Elisabeth spent her time teaching her children basic schooling, such as how to read and write. If Josef felt they needed punishing, he would switch off their light supply or refuse to bring them food for days at a time. Elisabeth was told by Josef that if they tried to escape, they would all be gassed.

A Visit to the Hospital Invokes Suspicion

The eldest daughter of Elisabeth and Josef, Kerstin, was unwell and fell unconscious on April 19, 2008. Josef agreed to seek medical care for Kerstin, and Elisabeth helped him carry her upstairs. It was the first time Elisabeth had been out of the basement for twenty-four years. She was ushered back to the basement, and Kerstin was sent by ambulance to the hospital. Josef arrived later and said he had found a note by Elisabeth. The staff at the hospital found this very strange and alerted law enforcement on April 21. They made a media appeal for Elisabeth to come forward, and at the same time reopened her missing person's case. Again, Josef reiterated his beliefs that she had joined a cult and produced another letter from January 2008 as the most recent one he had received. It was found that the postmark on the letter was not an area known for cults, and the way the letters were written seemed as though they had been dictated.

Elisabeth was desperate to see Kerstin, and Josef finally agreed on April 26. Once at the hospital, the doctor taking care of Kerstin alerted the police that they were there, and they were subsequently detained and taken to the station for questioning. Elisabeth wouldn't say anything until the police promised her that she would never have to see Josef ever again. She then proceeded to

tell them in great detail of her ordeal in the basement and all the horrific things Josef had made her do. Following her statement, Josef was immediately arrested under suspicion of serious crimes committed against family members.

The Trial of Josef Fritzl

Josef's trial was perhaps one of the shortest in history, lasting just four days. He had pled guilty to all charges, included rape, incest, coercion, enslavement, false imprisonment, and the negligent homicide of the baby, Michael, who died shortly after birth due to lack of medical care. He was ultimately sentenced to life imprisonment, while Elisabeth, her children, and her mother were all taken into care. Throughout the trial, more was learnt about the background of Josef. He had a long history of violent crime, including rape and attempted rape. He was also known for indecently exposing himself. Although he had once been incarcerated, the conviction was expunged after a period of fifteen years, so when social services became involved, his background check did not reveal his previous crimes.

The Psychological Scars and Fighting Back to Normality

Following their arrival into care, Elisabeth, the children, and her mother were placed in a clinic where they could receive all the medical and psychological treatment they might need. They were shielded from the prying outside world as they grasped the enormity of what they were going through. The three children who had been kept in the basement and even Elisabeth needed therapy to adjust to natural light after being kept in a semi-dark space for so long. It was also difficult to adjust to having space to move around in.

All were plagued with panic attacks and anxiety. One child was unable to walk properly due to having to stoop for so long in the basement. Another tore her hair out and stuffed her clothing into the toilet. The children that had been kept upstairs had issues with resentment and anger. The treatment and therapy for Elisabeth and her children will be an ongoing need for many years to come.

Chapter 12: A Controversial Case of Police Misconduct – Or Was it Murder By Cop?

Nizah Morris was an entertainer who also happened to be transgender. She had been living as a female since her early 20s, and her day job was working for her mother at her daycare center. At night she would perform in a drag show at a bar called Bob and Barbara's in Philadelphia's Center City. She was also a practicing Buddhist, calm by nature and making a good life for herself. Tragically, all that came to an end on December 22, 2002. The controversy that followed would rock the legal system and create support from all walks of life for the rights of transgender people.

Nizah Morris Left Lying in the Street

Nizah had been to a party at a bar located at the intersection of Chancellor and Juniper streets in Philadelphia. The bar was called the Key West Bar, and she reportedly left at around 2 a.m. On exiting the bar, Nizah collapsed on the ground outside, intoxicated. Those who were outside the bar formed a group around her and alerted the paramedics. Nizah was unable to even stand unsupported at this point.

An officer from the 6th District police precinct arrived, and because Nizah refused to go to hospital the ambulance was cancelled. Instead, the police officer offered her a ride to the hospital, but she declined this also. All Nizah wanted to do was go home. Those who were nearby helped Nizah into the police car, and the officers proceeded to take her home. Her address was in the 5000 block of Walnut Street, but the officers claimed she wanted to be let out of the car at 15th and Walnut streets. They noticed her walking towards 16th Street.

Just minutes later, a motorist driving by saw Nizah lying on the sidewalk. She had an injury on the side of her forehead that was bleeding, and a call was made to 911 asking for medical assistant. This time an officer for the 9th District precinct arrived. A call was not made to a supervisor, and the situation was not considered nor treated as a crime.

By the time Nizah arrived at hospital, her condition was critical. Life support

was removed on December 23 and she was pronounced dead on December 24 at 8:30 p.m. The medical examiner ruled the death as a homicide on December 25, but the police department's homicide unit would not accept it. They instead classified it as an accidental death. A second opinion was then requested.

Police Request a Second Opinion

The controversy surrounding this case was whether or not the police officers acted appropriately in their interactions with Nizah that night. For starters, even though she was refusing medical treatment in the first instance, the ambulance should not have been cancelled. Also, even though the police officers were not required to drive her home, once they had agreed to do so, they were responsible for getting her home safe and sound. They certainly shouldn't have dropped her off elsewhere and let her walk off when earlier she couldn't even stand unaided due to her level of intoxication. If it was only minutes later that she was found injured on the sidewalk; the officers couldn't have been watching her walk away safely.

The family, friends, and the community in general had many questions regarding what happened to Nizah that night. It would be easy to assume it was an accident—she was drunk and quite easily could have fallen and whacked her head. But, the medical examiner called it a homicide. So who was the perpetrator? Was there an assailant or was it homicide by negligence and failure to provide due care?

According to Nizah's family members, the photographs they were shown at the medical examiner's office showed marks on her wrists like indentations, as well as what appeared to be defensive wounds on her hands. The local newspaper ran a story on the tragedy on December 31, but they abhorrently referred to Nizah as a prostitute and a male. This further fueled the fires that were already burning among her family and friends. She was cremated on January 1, 2003, with more than 300 people attending the service.

A second opinion was sought from a brain injury specialist. The tests undertaken showed that she had died due to a cerebral injury, otherwise known as a brain injury. On January 30, the homicide division declared the case a homicide.

There were numerous inconsistencies in the police reports from that night in relation to witness statements. Protests were being held due to the handling of the case by the police department. There were issues surrounding Nizah not being identified for nearly 64 hours while she was in the hospital, despite her fingerprints being on record. One of the officers present actually knew Nizah, but he did not identify her either. Those who had been at the scene also told the police officers who Nizah was, but this information was never passed on either.

There were too many questions and not enough answers, and the community was rallying for further investigation. In April 2003, the District Attorney launched an investigation into the case, but it would be short-lived and provided no answers at all, just more questions.

The Investigation into the Officers

The investigation started by the District Attorney quickly ended in December, failing to find who was responsible for Nizah's death. The DA appealed to the public for help, and declared at the same time that the three police officers involved in the incident had all acted appropriately. Complaints were lodged by Nizah's mother against the police department for not providing all of the information to the family. A civil suit was brought against the bar that allowed Nizah to become intoxicated, as well as the officers involved, the EMTs, and the city of Philadelphia, by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Civil Rights. Interestingly this suit was settled in May 2004 for \$250,000.

Police Advisory Commission Called In

An initial investigation undertaken by the Police Advisory Commission asserting that the only officer who hadn't acted properly that night was an Officer Skala. The Philadelphia Police Department advised the Commission within days that they had not received all of the documentation, as some of it was missing, including the homicide report, which had been missing since 2003. As a side note, this report miraculously reappeared in 2011 in the archives.

The Commission voted to reopen the investigation in March 2008. This investigation proved to be fruitless and pointless, so the initial findings remained standing. Once again they voted to reinvestigate in 2011, and at the end of the investigation they called for the U.S. Attorney General's Office to

fully investigate the case. They in turn, declined. By 2015, the only result from all of the investigations was that Officer Skala received a verbal reprimand, even though it was found that she had lied and deliberately deceived the department about her interactions with Nizah that night. She eventually ended up working in the commissioner's office—what a punishment! No wonder so many people lost their faith in the Philadelphia legal system.

Conclusion

Crime is a terrible thing, but there is no mistaking that some crimes are so astonishing that their story needs to be told. As humans, we can learn a lot about the frailties of the human condition by examining some of the most astonishing crimes in our history. The examination demonstrates that people from all walks of life and all socioeconomic classes, can possibly become the victims of a serious crime.

The examination also shows that there are people from all backgrounds who can and do commit these astonishing crimes.

The twelve cases profiled in this book graphically depict how serious crimes can happen to anyone and come from anywhere.

True Crime Stories

12 Shocking True Crime Murder Cases

True Crime Anthology Vol.6

By

Jack Rosewood

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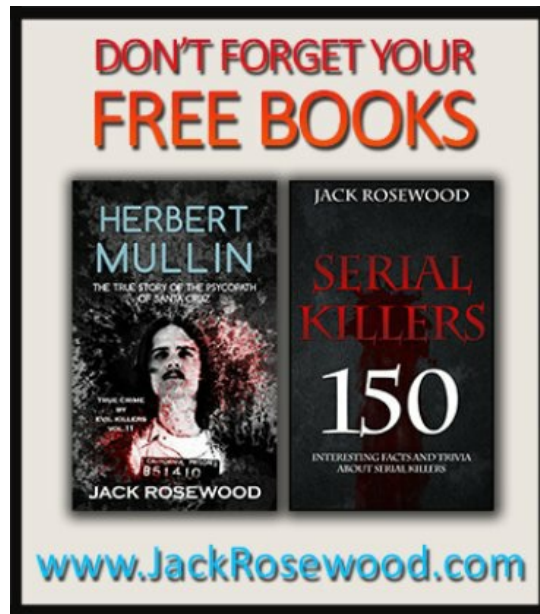
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150 interesting trivia about serial killers and the story of serial killer Herbert Mullin.

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Introduction

In the following anthology, you will be introduced to twelve crimes that have shocked people for decades and longer. Many of these cases perplexed law enforcement officers because the perpetrators carefully planned their diabolical plots, while the manner in which their crimes were carried out, continues to make people shudder.

In this volume, you will read about a number of notorious mass murders from around the world. Two cases of mass murders come from the normally quiet and peaceful Nordic countries, while another is the well-known annihilation of the DeFeo family, which helped spawn *The Amityville Horror* book and movie franchise.

A number of the cases profiled here can only be described as bizarre. You will read about a failed South African witch doctor, one who killed more than a dozen people to collect medicine for his evil practice. As bizarre as this aspect of the story is, his supernatural escapes from prison make the story even stranger. There is also the curious case of Robert Dirscherl, whose death was ruled a suicide in the autopsy report, but a letter addressed to one of his children seems to suggest otherwise. You will also read about two potential curses, one used by a killer named Jake Bird, and a victim Sylvia Likens, which left a number of people associated with the cases dead at an early age.

Like previous installments of my books, there are high-profile cases included to give reality television junkies their fix. The ongoing murder trial of best-selling novelist Michael Peterson is covered, along with the murder of former British television actor, Sian Blake.

Finally, some of the cases profiled in this book prove that you should not always judge a book by its cover. The Sylvia Likens case demonstrates that women are capable of inhuman cruelty as much as men are, and the Jake Bird case proves that killers come in all shapes, sizes, and colors. Usually, there is more than meets the eye when it comes to complex cases such as the ones profiled in this book. The following chapters will peel layers away from these cases, in order to examine the entire truth. After reading this book, you will be able to make informed conclusions concerning these cases.

So open the pages of this book and read about twelve more of the world's most incredible true crime cases.

Chapter 1: The Bloody Badge of Antoinette Frank

Recently, the behavior of the police has been at the top of the news in the United States. This is due to the number of high-profile killings of black men by police. These cases have been extremely polarizing and were part of the discourse in the recent U.S. presidential election. One result from these cases is the creation of the “Black Lives Matter” movement, which has been as polarizing as the killings. Proponents of the Black Lives Matter movement argue that police departments are inherently biased against blacks, while those opposed, point to crime statistics showing black males commit a disproportionate amount of crimes, and police officers have one of the most dangerous and stress-filled jobs in the country.

There are no signs that either side will come together soon to reach a compromise.

The reality is that most of these cases take place in a spectrum, and are actually quite grey. Many of the men killed by police have criminal records, and grand juries have cleared a majority of the officers involved in the shootings. No doubt these incidents will continue, and American police departments will face increased scrutiny.

The reality is that most police officers follow the law. The bad ones make the rest look corrupt.

But it is also true that some cops are bad, and in fact, some are downright evil.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, the New Orleans Police Department suffered from an epidemic of corrupt cops, who tarnished the badge and made the streets of the Crescent City more dangerous.

Many of these corrupt cops robbed and killed drug dealers in crimes that would make the fictional corrupt cop Vic Mackey, and other police officers on the televised show, *The Shield*, blush.

Among the corrupt cops on the New Orleans Police force, was a twenty-three-year-old woman named Antoinette Frank.

But instead of focusing her criminal fury on drug dealers and gang members, Frank chose to brutalize innocent people who trusted her because she wore a badge.

Antoinette Frank

When Antoinette Frank was born in 1971, few would have thought she would become a police officer. She was born into a poor family in New Orleans, and although her mother worked hard to provide for Antoinette and her siblings, her father was never a significant part of her life. When Antoinette's father was around, it was because he had been recently released from a state prison or county jail.

Antoinette Frank's father was a career criminal.

Frank's father never gave her much guidance or positive reinforcement. In fact, family and friends of the Frank family say that he abused Antoinette physically, emotionally, and possibly, even sexually.

Many people who suffer from the type of abuse and abandonment that was inflicted on Antoinette, go on to commit similar abusive behaviors in their own lives. The vicious cycle of abuse leads many abused children into lives of crime, drug addiction, and sexual promiscuity. The children do what they see their parents, and other adults in their lives, do.

But Antoinette Frank took a different path.

Perhaps out of rebellion against her father's abuse and abandonment, Antoinette became interested in police work at an early age. She dreamed of patrolling the mean streets of New Orleans to make them safe. She vowed to be everything that her father was not.

After she graduated from high school, Frank worked at various jobs until she decided to take the big step to realize her dream of becoming a police officer.

Antoinette Frank's dream would become a nightmare for the people of New Orleans

Officer Frank

Frank took the first step to becoming a police offer, when she formally

applied to the New Orleans Police Department in early 1993. It is standard procedure in nearly every police department around the world, for prospective police officers to take a number of written exams and oral interviews, before an applicant will be allowed to proceed to the training phase. The purpose of the exams and interviews is to filter out undesirables, including people with criminal histories and/or connections to the criminal underworld, illicit drug users, and mentally unstable individuals prone to corruption and/or violence.

It became clear to the test administrators that Antoinette Frank should not be a police officer.

She failed two psychiatric evaluations, and she was described by the interviewers as “shallow and superficial.” To make matters worse, several inconsistencies were noted on the written portion of her exams, and she was caught more than once in lies.

It seemed that Antoinette Frank’s dream of becoming a police officer was over, or would have to wait for a while.

But sometimes the hand of Fate intervenes.

Despite Frank failing the written and oral examinations, the New Orleans Police Department was in desperate need of new police officers. Due to extensive corruption that cut through the ranks of the police department since the late 1980s, many of New Orleans’ finest officers were fired, and others were sent to prison. The situation left the police department shorthanded, so the city of New Orleans willingly overlooked failed exams by applicants.

Frank also had a few other factors in her favor.

At the time, the New Orleans Police Department had a strict policy of only hiring officers who were residents of New Orleans, which Frank was. The fact that she was a black female also worked in her favor. All of these combined factors allowed Frank to be hired by the New Orleans Police Department on February 7, 1993. Once she was formally hired, Frank was immediately sent to the police academy. She graduated three weeks later.

Unfortunately, for the crime-beleaguered residents of New Orleans,

Antoinette Frank had finally realized her dream of becoming a police officer. Instead of getting someone who was determined to uphold the law and help the citizens of New Orleans, they got an easily manipulated woman with the mind of a child.

Rogers Lacaze

In 1994, Rogers Lacaze was an eighteen-year-old man doing nothing constructive with his life. Already a father, he was also a drug dealer, gang member, and all-around street thug. Lacaze had managed to create a long juvenile rap sheet, and in 1994, when he was barely an adult, he had a number of arrests that put him on the New Orleans Police Department's radar. He spent most of his time getting high, drinking, selling drugs, and victimizing the residents of New Orleans. He could often be found on the streets of the tough Ninth Ward at night, robbing other drug dealers and unsuspecting persons who happened to cross his path.

At first glance, there was little that Lacaze and Antoinette Frank had in common.

Beyond their chosen lines of work, though, the two had similar backgrounds.

Both Frank and Lacaze were born into poverty and grew up on the mean streets of New Orleans. They were also products of single-parent homes, where chaos was the norm and stability was a dream. While Frank pursued her dream of working in law enforcement, Lacaze quickly fell in with older kids in his neighborhood who taught him how to fight, steal, and sell drugs.

The trajectories of Frank's and Lacaze's lives were moving in different directions during 1994, but fate interceded to bring the pair together.

In November 1994, Antoinette Frank had been a police officer for about a year-and-half. Her time on the force was rocky, to say the least. Other officers complained about her inability to do the simplest of tasks, and she did not get along with her co-workers. For a while, it looked as though she might be sent back to the academy for more training, or perhaps washout of the department altogether.

But after a few months, Frank's position on the force began to stabilize. She got along better with her fellow officers and completed most of the required

tasks on her job. Frank was not doing exemplary work by any means, but she did well enough to solidify her position on the New Orleans Police force.

Then she met Rogers Lacaze.

Frank met Lacaze when she responded to a report of a shooting in November, 1994. Lacaze was involved, but it was unclear what role he played. There were no witnesses, at least none who were willing to talk to the police. Despite Lacaze being involved in a violent incident and having a police record at the age of eighteen, Frank was immediately attracted to the young, tough Lacaze.

The two began a sexual relationship almost immediately after they met.

Perhaps owing to her lack of maturity and/or intelligence, Frank not only became romantically involved with a known criminal, she also brought Lacaze on police calls with her.

When Lacaze accompanied Frank on calls, she introduced him as a cadet or officer in training. She let him drive her police car on occasion. The bizarre situation became more so, when Frank brought Lacaze around other officers who recognized him as a local criminal.

None of that seemed to bother Frank. Antoinette Frank was living in the world of her own making.

It is unknown if Frank used her influence as a police officer to help advance Lacaze's criminal career directly, but in early 1995, she used her badge to help the young thug avoid arrest. Lacaze had just been involved in a violent altercation with another drug dealer, when the police showed up to arrest everyone. Frank heard the call on her radio and rushed to the scene to extricate Lacaze from the situation.

The pair was free to continue their affair—and murder three people just over a month later.

The Kim Anh Restaurant Massacre

When the Vu family emigrated from Vietnam to the United States in the 1970s, like many from their culture, they opened a Vietnamese restaurant. They came as refugees to a part of the United States that had few Asian

immigrants. It took time for the Vu family to assimilate. By the late 1980s, they had built a thriving business known as the Kim Anh Restaurant. The Kim Anh specialized in serving Vietnamese cuisine, but it also offered traditional Cajun and southern fare. The selections of food, the service, and friendly attitude the Vu family offered their customers, made it a popular restaurant in the city.

There was just one problem with the Kim Anh Restaurant—its location. The Kim Anh Restaurant was located in a high-crime neighborhood on the east end of New Orleans. The crime from the surrounding neighborhood bled into the restaurant. Some of the owners, employees and customers had been mugged at gun point. The Vu family's answer to the crime problem was to hire off-duty New Orleans police officers to moonlight as security. Since the New Orleans Police Department paid far lower wages than most American police departments of comparable size, the Vu family had no problem finding officers to fill their security positions. Moonlighting by cops was not against the policies of the New Orleans Police Department at the time, so there was a line of potential police officers waiting to work at the Kim Anh.

Unfortunately, the decision to hire one particular off-duty police officer led to mass murder.

On March 4, 1995, Antoinette Frank had been moonlighting as a security guard at the Kim Anh Restaurant for several months, along with fellow officer Ronald A. Williams III. Frank got along well with Williams, also with the owners and employees of the Kim Anh, but on the evening of March 4, something went wrong.

Frank and Lacaze had already been in the restaurant twice that evening, when Chau Vu saw the duo approach the front door a third time, near closing time.

She knew something bad was about to happen.

Vu noticed the front door key was missing. She realized with horror that one of her security guards was about to rob the restaurant. Vu immediately ran to the kitchen to hide the night's proceeds, when all hell broke loose.

Frank used the door key she stole on her second visit to the restaurant that night, to open the front door. She quickly ran past a confused Williams, as

she corralled Chau, Chau's brother Quoc, and another employee into the kitchen.

Before Williams could react to the situation, he was shot twice in the head at point-blank range by Lacaze, who stood behind him. Williams was killed instantly.

Williams was just twenty-five-years-old, and he left behind a wife and two children.

In the midst of the chaos, Frank lost track of her first three victims, but she soon found twenty-five-year-old Ha Vu and her seventeen-year-old brother Cuong in the kitchen. Frank made the two terrified siblings kneel on the floor and she repeatedly pistol-whipped Cuong, demanding that they tell her where the money was.

Since she was familiar with the restaurant, Frank knew that the Vu family always had a lot of cash on hand at the end of the night.

Frank eventually found the cash in a microwave, but instead of leaving with her criminal cohort and their ill-gotten gain, she attempted to eliminate the witnesses. She shot Cuong and Ha Vu execution style, and then she did a cursory search for the other three missing employees. After a few minutes of futile searching, Lacaze convinced Frank they needed to leave before the police arrived.

Survivors and Witnesses

It seemed like an eternity to Chau and Quoc Vu, as they waited in the restaurant's walk-in cooler for the two cold-blooded killers to leave. Once they were sure that the dastardly duo was gone, the surviving Vu siblings and the other employee emerged from their hiding spots.

They were shocked to find their restaurant turned into a house of horrors.

As she made her way past the corpses in the kitchen, Chau made a frantic call to 911. Within minutes, members of the New Orleans Police Department were at the scene of the Kim Anh Restaurant massacre.

Antoinette Frank also heard the call.

It will probably never be known why Frank responded to the 911 call and returned to the scene of the crime—perhaps she thought that she could tamper with the crime scene—but when she arrived, the crooked cop tried to engage Chau. Nearly hysterical and speaking in broken English, Chau pulled herself together enough to point the finger at Frank.

Antoinette Frank and Rogers Lacaze were arrested on charges of first-degree murder.

The men and women of the New Orleans Police Department were upset to learn that, not only had one of their own dived into the abyss of the criminal underworld, but worse, she had killed one of their police brethren.

The blue wall would not protect Antoinette Frank this time.

The Trials

Both Frank and Lacaze were indicted on capital murder charges, which meant in the state of Louisiana, they faced the death penalty. The two defendants were tried separately, and although most murder cases take at least a year to go to trial, Frank and Lacaze went before juries just six months after they committed their notorious murders.

Based on eye-witness testimonies, the cases against Frank and Lacaze were open-and-shut cases. Lacaze went to trial first and was found guilty of capital murder; he was sentenced to death in July 1995. Frank received the same verdict and was sentenced two months later.

The Vu and Williams families, as well as the honest members of the New Orleans Police Department, were pleased with the verdicts and sentences. Although nothing could bring back the dead, they were satisfied to know that one day Frank and Lacaze would pay the ultimate price for their crimes.

Or would they?

Capital punishment in the United States is a controversial concept. Each state must determine if the death penalty is an appropriate sanction for a crime, and if so, determine how that penalty will be carried out. Most states that have the death penalty have a fairly high threshold for the death penalty in “capital” cases. A murder committed in the “heat of passion” is not considered a

capital case, but a murder committed during the course of a robbery, rape, or other serious crime, would be. A mass murder, as in the case of the Kim Anh Restaurant, is also considered a capital crime in states with the death penalty.

Each state is allowed to determine how a condemned person will be executed. Because condemned individuals have challenged various methods of execution in the courts under the Eighth Amendment of the United States Constitution, which prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment,” most states have eliminated hanging, electrocution, firing squads, and the gas chamber, in favor of lethal injection. Today, the execution method of lethal injection is also being challenged by death row inmates and opponents of the death penalty as a form of cruel and unusual punishment, because some executions using injections have been botched.

The legal challenges over the method of execution have contributed to fewer executions being performed, and along with the standard appeals that every inmate is afforded under the Constitution, some inmates spend decades on death row. In fact, inmates on California’s death row are more likely to die from natural causes than execution—there has not been an execution in that state in over ten years.

Both Frank and Lacaze have used the appeals process to avoid the needle so far. Currently, Frank is the only woman on Louisiana’s death row. The state of Louisiana has not executed a woman since 1942.

Lacaze almost received a new trial when it was discovered that a state trooper was on his jury. An appellate court has since overturned the new trial ruling, so he continues to sit awaiting his date with death.

An execution date has not been set for either Frank or Lacaze.

Loose Ends

Like many crime cases of this magnitude, the effects of Frank’s and Lacaze’s murders will continue long after they are executed. One of the more macabre footnotes of this case was revealed a couple of months after Frank received her death sentence.

Police were conducting a final search of Frank’s home, when a K-9 unit hit on something under the house. After digging, police officers discovered a

human skull with a bullet hole. It turns out that Frank's father was staying with his daughter for a short period before the Kim Anh murders, and she reported him missing during the summer of 1994. The New Orleans Police believe the skull belongs to her father, but they are not willing to pursue the investigation further, because she is already on death row and more investigations would be costly.

Although the Vu family was devastated by the events of the night of March 4, 1994, they kept the restaurant open for another ten years, until flooding from hurricane Katrina in 2005 destroyed much of the structure. What was left of the business was then destroyed by looters. The Vu family collected insurance and moved their business outside of New Orleans to a much safer Metairie, Louisiana.

Even after Antoinette Frank is finally executed, the people of New Orleans will always remember how she tarnished the badge in a most heinous way.

Chapter 2: Jake Bird, an A-typical Serial Killer

The more we learn about serial killers, the more we realize that many perceived “facts” do not jibe with reality. Perhaps this is because the serial killer archetype has slowly become a pervasive part of modern pop culture. On any given night of the week, one only has to watch cable television channels to find documentaries and movies about serial killers. These shows, both facts-based and fictional, are very common. The media has contributed to creating an image of the serial killer that most people now have—serial killers are almost all young, white male loners who are often geniuses.

Because of the influence of the media, we tend to think of every serial killer as *Hannibal Lecter*.

Statistics show that this image is not accurate.

We have learned that many serial killers, such as the Green River Killer and Gary Ridgeway, have families and stable jobs. Ted Bundy and many other serial killers were far from loners, and although Bundy’s IQ was listed as above normal, most serial killers test in the average IQ range.

The Radford University Database, which is one of the most comprehensive databases of serial killer demographics in the world, reveals that roughly sixty-seven percent of all American serial killers are white, and twenty-five percent are black. The percentage of white serial killers is nearly consistent with the share of the white population in the United States, while the black share of the serial killer population is nearly double their percentage of the national population.

Although males make up over ninety percent of all serial killers, men in their twenties make up less than twenty percent of serial killers.

With all of this available information, it is a good thing that police are not influenced by media perceptions of serial killers.

Or are they?

In the racially segregated United States during the early twentieth century, a

black serial killer named Jake Bird followed trains from town to town, claiming numerous young female victims along the way. Bird operated for thirty years before the term “serial killer” was first coined, and he lived in an era when few would have suspected a black itinerant worker of engaging in a cross-country killing spree, of mainly white women.

The case of Jake Bird breaks many of the standard perceptions of serial killers in several ways, and serves as an example, that nearly anyone from any demographic, can be a serial killer.

The case also has a bizarre post-script.

Mysterious Origins

In the case of most serial killers, their early lives are fairly well-documented, allowing experts to identify certain traits and behaviors from their childhoods, revealing clues to future serial killers. For instance, many serial killers are known to have abused animals and other children during their adolescence, and many were abused by their parents and other adults.

It is unknown if Jake Bird suffered from, or inflicted these types of traumas, on others.

The only fact known about Jake Bird’s early life, is that he was born in the swamplands of segregated southern Louisiana in the year 1901. Bird admitted later, that he was not sure what township he was born in.

It was as if he just appeared in the bayou one day.

Although Bird is believed to have had little formal education, experts later surmised that his IQ was at least average.

At the age of nineteen, Bird said goodbye to his family and familiar surroundings and he began work laying tracks for the railroads.

Jake Bird would never return to Louisiana.

Bird’s work brought him to the Upper Midwest and western states, which proved to be a culture shock to the young black man from Louisiana. He saw snow for the first time, and he experienced life outside of the legally segregated south, although in many places he worked, the racial hierarchy

was still the same. He soon learned, that in places like Illinois and Michigan where there were sizable black communities, there were still places he could not go, even if there were no signs telling him so. Bird also learned that in states where there were few blacks, like Iowa and Utah, he was simply ignored.

Bird used his job with the railroad to advance his criminal endeavors.

Bird would arrive in a city to work on the railroads and scope out potential victim targets. His favorite crimes were burglary, theft, and larceny, but at some point he graduated to murder. He targeted women, usually white ones, who were alone. Many of his murders were crimes of opportunity. He set out to commit property crimes, but raped and murdered any woman unfortunate enough to be at the crime scene.

Once he strangled or stabbed to death one of his victims, he would hop a train and go to another state.

His killing pattern did not always work smoothly.

From the age of nineteen, until he was finally arrested for murder in 1947, Bird spent more time in prison than out on the streets—but never for murder.

Bird did prison stretches for burglary and theft, but he was never a suspect in the dozens of murders he committed. The transient serial killer was crafty enough to commit his murders away from crowds; therefore there were never witnesses to his crimes. When the bodies of his victims were finally discovered, the police usually thought their perpetrator was white, since there were either few blacks that lived in the vicinity—or they lived in a segregated area distant from the crime scene. Even if a witness would have spotted Bird after a murder, Bird would quickly be on the next train out of town.

Jake Bird was a serial killing specter, one who was always one step ahead of the authorities,

The Tacoma Axe Man

In the early morning hours of October 30, 1947, Jake Bird's luck finally ran out. He was working in Tacoma, Washington, when he decided to go out and commit burglaries. When he happened upon the Klundt home, Bird's

murderous impulses were manifested once more, after he saw fifty-two-year-old Bertha and her seventeen-year-old daughter Beverly, through a window.

Bird went to work.

Silently, he entered the home like a cat but before he could strike, Bertha noticed the intruder and screamed. Bird struck Bertha with an axe numerous times and then moved on to Beverly, who attempted to run from the house. He dispatched his two victims within minutes, but a neighbor heard the screams and called the police.

The two responding police officers saw a barefooted black man running from the scene, so they gave chase. The surprisingly fit serial killer was able to elude the officers for several blocks, but was eventually cornered in a dead-end alley.

Bird was not going down without a fight.

Although he left his murder weapon behind, Bird always carried a pocket knife for backup. He pulled out his knife and stabbed both cops, but the knife was small and the wounds were superficial. The officers quickly subdued him.

When the officers of the Tacoma Police Department surveyed the crime scene, they were sickened by what they found. Tacoma had its share of big city crime in 1947, but brutal axe murders were unheard of.

Emotions among the officers ran high and Jake Bird nearly did not make it to the county jail.

“I regret to say that I lost my temper after returning from the Klundt home and viewing the terribly hacked bodies of the two women. I had asked Bird as we sat in the patrol wagon why he murdered the two women,” testified Tacoma Police officer John Hickey at Bird’s trial. “He said he didn’t do it. I asked him who did it then, and he said, ‘It was LeRoy.’ ‘Who’s LeRoy?’ I asked him. ‘Oh, another Negro around town,’ Bird replied. ‘You’re lying,’ I replied, and he looked at me with a smug and insolent look. I know I shouldn’t have done it, but I hit him in the jaw with my fist, knocking him to the front of the patrol wagon. Then I struck him a number of times with my

night stick until he said, 'Don't kill me.' That brought me to my senses and we took him to the hospital where a nurse said he wasn't badly hurt."

The case against Jake Bird appeared to be open-and-shut, but his trial was far from ordinary.

The Trial and Hex

The American court system worked much differently in 1947, than it does today. Cases rarely dragged out for more than a few months, even if they were murder cases. Well-publicized cases such as Jake Bird's were rarely tried in the media.

Bird's trial was conducted less than a month after the double murder of the Klundts, and it lasted two days. It only took the jury minutes to return a guilty verdict. In December 1947, Jake Bird was sentenced to death by hanging.

Although the case garnered enough local media attention for Bird to acquire the moniker, "The Axe-Man of Tacoma," the details of the legal proceedings were of little interest to people; that is, until Bird's sentencing.

That is when Jake Bird put his hex on the system.

"I'm putting the Jake Bird hex on all of you who had anything to do with my being punished," proclaimed a defiant Bird at his sentencing. *"Mark my words; you will die before I do."*

The eerie prophecy turned out to be true for six men associated with the case. The men, who included Bird's attorney James Selden and Judge Edward Hodge, all died within a year of Bird's sentencing. All of the men who died were middle-aged and older, but one cannot help but wonder if the mysterious Bird used Louisiana voodoo to help them to the grave.

If Bird was in communion with demons, they did not save him from his own fate.

More Murders

While awaiting his date with the hangman's noose in Walla Walla prison, Bird educated himself about the law and became a jailhouse lawyer. Besides helping other inmates in the prison with their cases, Bird was able to win

several appeals long before appeals were common.

With his execution date approaching, Bird decided to change tactics by confessing to dozens of murders across the United States. The tactic worked, at least temporarily, as representatives from police departments around the country came to Washington to get statements from Bird.

Once Bird began talking, the law enforcement community was shocked.

He claimed that his killing spree began with the murder of two Evanston, Illinois, women in 1942, but many believe it started years earlier. By the time he was done talking, Bird helped authorities clear eleven cold murder cases, but experts now believe he probably killed closer to forty women.

In the end, all of Jake Bird's appeals and hexes were not enough to save his life. On July 15, 1949, Bird was executed by hanging at Walla Walla prison in Washington.

Serial killer experts and profilers point to this case as a perfect example of why we should not approach crime with preconceived notions.

Chapter 3: The Torture and Murder of Sylvia Likens

Unfortunately, the world we live in is full of cruel people. It does not take long to find stories about “humanity’s cruelty to one another” taking place in the form of despicable crimes around the world. On any given day, one can read about terrorists killing scores of people in bombings and shootings, or third world dictators and potentates silencing their opposition at gun point.

Cases involving torture tend to be the worst.

For a normal person, it is difficult, if not impossible, to conceive how one human could derive pleasure from torturing another human. Pain is something that all of us try to avoid and something that few of us wish on others, even those we do not like.

The abuse and torture of children is especially despicable.

Children are innocent, and for the most part, incapable of defending themselves against the twisted natures of some adults. The innocent and vulnerable nature of children is what makes most of us cringe when we see or hear about one who is victimized, but it is exactly that same vulnerability that drives the most disturbed individuals to prey upon them.

Statistics show that most child predators are men who were abused when they were children. Although normally adjusted people are rightfully disturbed when they hear about an adult male victimizing a child, few are shocked.

Perhaps it is an unfortunate sign of the times.

But all of us are shocked when we learn about a female child predator in our midst.

The fact that female child predators are rare adds to the shock factor, but even more so, it destroys our pristine image of women as mothers and caregivers. Most of us have good images of our mothers and other women in our lives. We see how they care for us and care for others in our circle of family and friends. Just as it is in nature, most human mothers will give their own lives

for those of their children. The maternal instinct with which women are naturally imbued, allows women to accept and care for children who are not their own.

But sometimes, the maternal instinct is dysfunctional or lacking in some women.

Gertrude Baniszewski was such a woman. She had no maternal instinct, or if she did, it was seriously flawed beyond recognition to those outside of her immediate family.

Her lack of maternal instinct alone would probably not be enough to land Baniszewski among the rogues' gallery of criminals in this book. However, she also had a streak of cruelty coursing through her veins that would have made Joseph Stalin blush.

Gertrude Baniszewski was truly an evil woman.

Gertrude Baniszewski

Gertrude Baniszewski was born in Indianapolis, Indiana, to a working-class family headed by Mother Mollie and Father Hugh Van Fossen. Gertrude grew up during the Great Depression, and she saw firsthand how tough things were and how valuable something as simple as a bowl of soup could be. The Van Fossen family, like most people during the Depression, had to save every penny to make it to the next meal. Hugh provided for the family in the best manner possible, but the stress of the situation resulted in a heart attack that killed him when Gertrude was eleven.

The remainder of Gertrude's childhood can best be described as unimpressive. She did not excel in academics or athletics, and she showed no ambition to enter the workforce — which was becoming increasingly open to women during World War II.

Gertrude did not appear to excel in anything during any point in her life, other than cruelty and sloth.

About the only option open to a woman lacking in skills, intelligence, and ambition such as Gertrude, was to get married. Shortly after she met John Baniszewski, Gertrude dropped out of high school, and the two were married

in 1945. The relationship was extremely volatile. John repeatedly beat Gertrude, and despite being John's daily punching bag, Gertrude stayed with him long enough to have six children. The beatings continued for ten years until the two decided to divorce.

A casebook co-dependent, Gertrude moved on to a man named Dennis Wright who was sixteen years, her junior. Although Gertrude had a child with Wright, the two never married, which was scandalous in early 1960's America. The scandal of "living in sin," became the least of Gertrude's problems at that point—the daily violence she left behind when she divorced John was quickly replaced by the fists and feet of her new man, Dennis.

The daily beatings that Baniszewski—she kept her ex-husband's name—received from Dennis Wright were witnessed by all her children. The Baniszewski home was a daily orgy of violence. Dennis kicked, punched, and threw Gertrude down the stairs when things did not go his way. Once the beatings began, the kids scurried for any cover they could find because they were liable to be beaten if they got in their step-dad's way. Dennis Wright preferred to beat Gertrude, but he would focus his wrath on the children, if need be.

Despite the daily beatings, Baniszewski stayed with Wright.

Not long after Gertrude gave birth to the couple's son, Dennis, Wright packed his bags, left Indianapolis, and was never heard from again.

He left Gertrude Baniszewski with seven mouths to feed.

Indianapolis, 1965

With so many children to take care of, and no stable source of income, Baniszewski found herself in a difficult situation. In the early 1960s, there were limited forms of public assistance available, but not enough for a single mother with seven children. Although the age ranges of the Baniszewski children meant that the oldest could have watched the younger ones while Gertrude worked, Baniszewski was naturally lazy and not interested in finding a job.

To make ends meet, Baniszewski decided to take in boarders. Most of the boarders who lived in the Baniszewski house were children whose parents

had to leave the area for work or emergencies, for extended periods of time. The parents left their money with Gertrude, or they sent money in the mail weekly. In return, Gertrude was to ensure the children were going to school, were being fed, and were disciplined if necessary. To make sure that she came out ahead, Gertrude served small portions for meals and never bought new clothes for the children, even if they needed them.

In the fall of 1965, Lester and Elizabeth Likens approached Baniszewski with a request to watch their two daughters, sixteen-year-old Sylvia and fifteen-year-old Jenny for a few months. The Likens worked in carnivals, and therefore traveled around the country quite a bit. They had brought Sylvia and Jenny with them before, but they thought, due to their ages, the two girls needed a more stable environment.

There were also other considerations.

Lester and Elizabeth had recently separated and were attempting to reconcile. They hoped their time away from the children might give them a chance to rekindle the passion that had gone out of their marriage. Elizabeth had also been recently arrested for shoplifting in Indianapolis, so between the constant moving, problems between Lester and Elizabeth, and Elizabeth's legal problems, the Likens' home was not the ideal place for two teenage girls to be raised.

But it was infinitely better than the Baniszewski home.

It would be an understatement to say that Gertrude Baniszewski had her hands full raising her troupe of children which included: Paula, seventeen, Stephanie, fifteen, John, twelve, Marie, eleven, Shirley, ten, James, eight, and infant Dennis Wright Junior. There are plenty of single mothers who have taken on similar responsibilities and done well, but Gertrude was not one of them.

Before the Likens girls arrived at the Baniszewski home, the home was known around the neighborhood for being unkempt and dirty. Gertrude preferred watching television to cleaning the house. Because Gertrude's income was small, and she had so many mouths to feed, the Baniszewski children were malnourished, and they often visited neighbors' homes for meals.

Gertrude Baniszewski had no business taking in more children. The Likens parents, who viewed the conditions of the home before they dropped their daughters off, should never have entered into an agreement with Baniszewski. They were aware of the harsh punishments that Gertrude inflicted on her children which the Likens, were not only okay with, but they expressed that their own girls could use a little more discipline.

But Gertrude went far beyond merely disciplining the Likens girls!

A House of Horrors

The first week at the Baniszewski home went all right for the Likens girls. Sylvia and Stephanie Baniszewski developed a friendship over their shared tastes in pop music, and developed a song and dance routine that they performed for the other children in the home. The Likens girls had their own room in the house, and they went to the local high school with the oldest Baniszewski children.

Everything changed when Sylvia and Jenny arrived home from school at the end of the first week.

The two teenagers were met at the front door by Gertrude, who immediately ushered them to their upstairs room, where she proceeded to pummel them with her fists. Gertrude focused on beating one girl at a time so the other would repeatedly ask why they were being beaten. Unfazed by the girls' protests and cries, Gertrude kept beating them until they were bloody. The frightened girls, shocked that their guardian was beating them, eventually quit asking why and took their beatings without protest. Gertrude finished beating them when her hands began to hurt.

After the beatings were over, Gertrude told the girls that she did not receive the weekly rent money their parents promised to send. The abusive guardian closed the girls' door behind her and did not offer them food that evening.

The rent money came in the mail the next day, but the beatings from the previous night seemed to have flipped a switch in Gertrude and opened a Pandora's Box of violence that would only get worse as each day passed.

The majority of the physical and mental abuse imposed on the Likens girls was directed towards Sylvia. Police and prosecutors later surmised that there

were a few different reasons for Gertrude's sadistic preference. Sylvia was older and more assertive than Jenny, so any back-talk or frowns from her were sure to raise the ire of Gertrude. Jenny was also a polio survivor and walked with a limp, which may have invoked some degree of pity from Baniszewski. It should also be considered that Sylvia may have purposely provoked Gertrude in order to protect her younger sister. Whatever the reasons for her targeting, Gertrude Baniszewski's cruelty knew no boundaries towards Sylvia.

Gertrude used a combination of mental/emotional and physical abuse to break down her victim. In many ways, the mental abuse was just as bad as the beatings, although it was not what eventually killed Sylvia. Gertrude told neighbors that Sylvia was a prostitute, and she had her oldest children spread her lie at their high school. She told neighbors that Sylvia was pregnant but she did not know who the father was. At home, Sylvia was often prohibited from wearing clothes, and she was repeatedly called a "*slut*" and a "*whore*."

Gertrude was obviously projecting her own life failures on the defenseless teen.

Finally Gertrude isolated Sylvia from the outside world—and any chance of her getting help—by forbidding Sylvia to attend school. The ban was no doubt meant to break Sylvia down mentally and emotionally, but it also served the practical purpose of hiding evidence of the extreme bouts of physical torture that were being inflicted on the girl.

Gertrude initiated the physical abuse of Sylvia, but by the end of the ordeal, nearly all of the Baniszewski children and some of the neighbors, were involved with Sylvia's beatings. Gertrude began the abuse by slapping, punching, and kicking Sylvia and when that no longer satiated her violent urges—she used broom handles, sticks, and hammers to inflict more damage.

Baniszewski made naked Sylvia insert a soda pop bottle into her vagina to cause further humiliation.

But Sylvia's torture was far from over.

After a couple of weeks of beating and humiliating Sylvia, Gertrude encouraged her children and their friends to unleash their anger on the

hapless girl. Gertrude preached that Sylvia was getting her just rewards for being promiscuous, and that it was God's will to punish her.

Ironically, Gertrude's oldest daughter, Paula, was pregnant out of wedlock when Sylvia was being tortured. One would think that, due to her age and the fact that she was carrying a child, Paula would be sympathetic to Sylvia's plight, but Paula proved to be just as sadistic as the others. On numerous occasions, Paula kicked Sylvia repeatedly in her genitals, which caused immense damage.

The other Baniszewski children also got into the act.

The boys and some of their friends used Sylvia as a punching bag to practice martial arts moves, and smokers were encouraged to extinguish their cigarettes on the girl.

Gertrude solved the problem of a small food budget by depriving Sylvia of food and water. When it looked like Sylvia really did need food, they fed her feces and urine.

Other times, when the Baniszewski's were bored, they tied Sylvia to a chair and dumped scalding water on her body. After that, they popped the blisters and rubbed salt into her wounds.

Every minute in the Baniszewski house was living hell for Sylvia and one step closer to her ultimate demise.

Perhaps the most perplexing aspect of this case was that no one bothered to help poor Sylvia, even when they were fully aware of the horrid situation.

It was reported at the trials later, that at least one female neighbor stopped by the Baniszewski house and saw the abuse, but did not say anything at the time nor call the police. It was said that Sylvia sometimes screamed in pain so loudly, that she could be heard more than a block away. The closest neighbors also often heard the thuds of Sylvia being punched and thrown down stairs, but no one called the police.

Even worse, one neighbor, a teenager named Ricky Hobbs, actually helped the Baniszewskis torture Sylvia. He helped Gertrude hold Sylvia down to brand the words, "I'm a prostitute and proud of it," on her stomach with a hot

iron.

For her part, there was little that Jenny could do. Outnumbered and crippled from the effects of polio, she was threatened and beaten whenever she attempted to help her sister.

Still, Jenny made one last effort to save her sister's life.

As the torture of Sylvia continued through the fall of 1965, Jenny decided to write a letter to her sister Diana in Florida, detailing the abuse. At first, Diana discarded the letter as a teenager's attempt to get out of an unfavorable situation. She thought her two younger sisters were merely bored, or hated living with a strict guardian, but the more she read the letter, the more she could sense the pain in Jenny's words.

Diana called social services in Indianapolis.

The Department of Social Services sent a representative to the Baniszewski home, but Gertrude and her malevolent brood were prepared for this situation. They cleaned Sylvia up and threatened her and her sister with death if they said anything. They also synchronized their stories so well, that the social services worker left the house firm in her belief, that nothing was amiss at the Baniszewski home.

Time was running out for Sylvia.

After the social worker left the home, Sylvia attempted to escape on October 25, but was caught, brought back inside, and subjected to more torture. After weeks of mental torture, physical beatings, and starvation, Sylvia Likens finally died on October 26, 1965. The immediate reaction by the Baniszewski family was to cover the murder by telling the police that she was abducted and gang-raped by a group of young men. Gertrude also gave the police a forged note that she said Sylvia wrote about the alleged incident. The police were apparently willing to believe Gertrude initially, because they were about to leave the home, when Jenny told an officer, "Get me out of here and I'll tell you everything."

Her statement led to numerous arrests, trials, and convictions that gave the city of Indianapolis a black eye that lasted for decades.

The case would also shock and sadden America when it became national news.

How could a mother do such a thing to a child?

The Trials

When the autopsy of Sylvia's body was made public, it horrified all who read about it. The teenager suffered from over 100 wounds that included burns, punctures, breaks, and bruises. She was also severely malnourished and suffered from a cerebral hemorrhage. The cause of death was listed as a combination of all of the above.

The evidence was straight forward, and it appeared that convictions would not be difficult to get, but the problem was determining who to charge, and with what. Since there were so many people involved in Sylvia's torture, the county prosecutors would have to charge many people, and they would have to make deals with some, in order to testify against the others, whether the Likens and the public liked it or not.

Murder charges were leveled against Gertrude, Paula, Stephanie, and John, along with Stephanie's boyfriend, Coy Hubbard, and neighbor Ricky Hobbs. Neighborhood kids Mike Monroe, Randy Lepper, Darlene McGuire, Judy Duke, and Anna Siscoe were all charged with "*injury to person*," a felony, for their lesser involvement in the prolonged torture.

The trials went as well as the Likens family could have hoped.

Gertrude pleaded not guilty by reason of insanity, but was convicted of murder in May, 1966 and sentenced to life in prison.

Paula Baniszewski was convicted of second-degree murder and was also given a life sentence.

Hobbs, Hubbard, and John Baniszewski, Jr were all convicted of manslaughter, and they received two to twenty-one year sentences.

Although the worst offenders were given lengthy prison sentences for major offenses, most of them were back on the streets by the early 1970s.

Sentencing guidelines were different in the era before states began to "get tough on crime" in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The majority of Sylvia

Liken's tormentors benefited from lighter laws, but Gertrude remained in prison long after all her children were released.

While in prison, Gertrude was a model prisoner, who was ironically seen by the other inmates and guards as a matronly figure. Despite public pressure to keep her locked up, Gertrude Baniszewski's clean prison record helped her earn parole in 1985. After her release from prison, Gertrude moved to Iowa where she lived in obscurity in a small town, until she died from lung cancer in 1990 at the age of sixty-one. When Jenny learned of Gertrude's death, she wrote to her mother:

"Some good news. Damn old Gertrude died. Ha ha ha! I am happy about that."

Strangely, Gertrude outlived most of those involved with Sylvia's murder.

The Curse of Sylvia Likens?

In what is probably the most bizarre post-script of this horrible case; most of Sylvia's killers died at relatively young ages. Some might say this was poetic justice or some sort of divine karma, while others may say it was just coincidence.

You can decide for yourself.

Not long after he was released from prison, Ricky Hobbs died from cancer at the ripe age of twenty-one.

Anna Siscoe died in 1996 at the age of forty-four, and John Baniszewski, Jr met his maker in 2005 from diabetes. He was fifty-four.

Coy Hubbard spent most of his relatively short and meaningless life in and out of prison, until he died from a heart attack in 2007 at the age of fifty-four.

Randy Lepper, who was only eleven when he took part in the torture of Sylvia, died in 2010 at the age of fifty-six.

Paula and Stephanie Baniszewski, who changed their names after the trials, are both believed to still be alive, but their whereabouts are unknown. Stephanie avoided prison time by testifying against her family.

The curse appears to have also extended to members of the Likens family, who could have ostensibly done more to save Sylvia. Jenny died of a heart attack in 2004 at the age of fifty-four, and her sister Diana met an even more bizarre fate.

In 2015, after Diana and her husband left a casino in Southern California, they decided to take a shortcut home through the mountains, but their car got stuck. Search teams found Diana two weeks later, barely alive and her husband dead.

Hopefully Sylvia Likens can finally rest in peace.

Chapter 4: The Never Ending Legal Saga of Michael Peterson

Of all the crime cases profiled in this book and others I have written, nearly all of them have had some type of resolution. Most of the cold cases profiled have resulted in a killer being caught, or at least identified years later.

But then there are the cases that have no resolutions.

Most of the cases that fit into this category involved an unsolved murder where there are no suspects, there is not enough evidence to bring charges against a potential suspect or suspects, or the body of the victim has never been found. Very rarely do unresolved cases involve a murder suspect in perpetual legal limbo.

When Kathleen Peterson died on December 9, 2001, a long legal case began, in which her husband became the prime suspect in what prosecutors believed was her murder.

The case became high-profile and was shown on the cable network *Court TV* for a number of reasons. The circumstances surrounding Kathleen's death were certainly odd, if not criminal, but even more, the cameras were pointed directly at her colorful husband, the man eventually charged with her murder, Michael Peterson. Peterson's trial became more about his character than the forensic evidence, and after countless hearings and a murder trial, the case still remains unresolved over fifteen years later.

Bizarre Circumstances

The circumstances surrounding the death of Kathleen Peterson are bizarre, to say the least. Police and first responders were called to the North Carolina home of Michael and Kathleen Peterson in the early morning hours, after Michael called 911 to report that his wife had apparently fallen down the stairs.

The police were immediately suspicious of the story Michael gave them, which eventually led to his arrest and conviction for his wife's murder.

Spousal murder is not uncommon, but the background of this accused killer

most certainly was. Peterson was a veteran of the Vietnam War and a best-selling author. He was intelligent, sophisticated, and cultured, but he also came across as arrogant in his interviews with the press.

Peterson's murder trial had many twists and turns that made for excellent tabloid television, but his trial and conviction were only part of the ongoing story.

His conviction was eventually overturned, He received bail, and now he is a free man awaiting a potential second murder trial.

It is unknown where the Michael Peterson murder case will go from here, but based on the progress of the case so far, it will no doubt make for more interesting reading and television.

Michael Peterson's Early Life

Michael Peterson was born in 1943 to a middle-class family in Nashville, Tennessee. He was the kind of child that most parents desire. He brought home good grades, was never in trouble, and always did as he was told. His hard work in high school paid off when he was accepted to study at the prestigious Duke University in Durham, North Carolina.

Peterson did well in his studies at Duke and instead of spending his free time studying or chasing after coeds, worked on the student newspaper, *The Chronicle*. It was during his work on *The Chronicle* that Peterson first realized that he had an aptitude and love for writing. After bylining numerous articles in the student paper, Peterson was promoted to editor.

Peterson's work with *The Chronicle*, gave him the skill-set and experience that he would later use to make a comfortable living for himself.

When Peterson graduated from college in the mid-1960s, the United States was undergoing radical changes. Desegregation and the Civil Rights movement had divided Americans, especially in the southern states, and the early stages of the Vietnam War and the counterculture movement, were pitting people against each other.

Many people with Peterson's background—a college educated journalist with left-leaning political influences—would have found work, possibly with a

newspaper that questioned the right.

But instead, Peterson took a position with the Department of Defense.

His work with Duke's school newspaper made him a perfect candidate for a research position, and his poise and charisma landed him the job. Peterson's primary task was to research different Cold War scenarios, as well as the history of different nations embroiled in "hot" areas of the world. His position was primarily based in Western Europe, where Peterson would find himself on the front lines of the standoff between the forces of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the Warsaw Pact.

Shortly after finding work with the government, Peterson married his first wife, Patricia, in 1965. The two moved to West Germany where they lived for most of the 1970s and '80s. The couple had two sons, Clayton and Todd, and by all accounts, the Petersons appeared to be a picture-perfect American family, albeit living in another country. Michael's position brought in a nice income for the family, which allowed them to have all the material possessions they could want and the ability to travel around Europe.

Everything was good in the Peterson household, but something was missing for Michael.

Michael had a restless spirit.

In 1968, at the height of the Vietnam War, Michael enlisted in the Marines. Although his educational background meant that he would be sent to officer training, the ongoing war dictated that he would be sent to Vietnam. For his part, Michael never requested a deferment, nor to be stationed in Europe or stateside. After successfully completing boot camp and then officer training, Michael Peterson was sent to Vietnam.

Peterson successfully survived his tour in Vietnam and received an honorable discharge from the Marines in 1971.

Long after the Vietnam War was over, Peterson recalled to anyone who would listen, his experiences in the war. He parlayed his service record into an unsuccessful run for public office, which is also the first time that questions about his character were raised.

When Michael attempted to start a political career, he decided to make his resume more impressive than it actually was. Along with his legitimate education and military credentials, Peterson added numerous medals, including multiple Purple Hearts while he was in Vietnam. With a journalistic background, Peterson should have known his claims would be checked out, but he decided to make the claims anyway.

A number of journalists did their jobs and quickly learned that Michael Peterson was an example of “stolen valor.” This revelation could have landed Peterson in jail, but instead, he quickly dropped his campaign and never again attempted to seek elected office. The issue of Peterson’s possible stolen valor never came up again in his professional career, but it was used against him when he was later on trial for murder.

The Ratliffs

While Michael and his first wife were making a life for themselves in West Germany, they became close friends with George and Elizabeth Ratliff. The Petersons had a lot in common with the Ratliffs: they were both American families living in Europe because of work with the military, and the couples, as well as their children, were all around the same ages. The couples spent a lot of time with each other, and after George Ratliff died, the Petersons became closer with Elizabeth.

Then tragedy struck.

In 1985, Elizabeth was found dead at the bottom of the stairs in her home. Both German and American authorities investigated the death, and the coroner concluded that Elizabeth Ratliff died as the result of a brain hemorrhage which caused her to topple down the stairs. To some, the whole situation seemed strange—it is extremely rare for a relatively young and healthy woman to have a brain hemorrhage. With that said, there was nothing that seemed suspicious to the investigators, so it was ruled a natural death.

The circumstances of Elizabeth’s death were eerily similar to those surrounding Kathleen Peterson’s death over fifteen years later.

George and Elizabeth Ratliff left behind two daughters, Margaret and Martha, but had no immediate family to care for them, so Michael and Patricia stepped in and adopted the girls. Less than two years later, in 1987, Michael

and Patricia divorced. The boys went to live with their mother while Margaret and Martha stayed with Michael. For many people, the loss of two close friends and a divorce would signal the beginning of a period of depression, but for Michael Peterson, it marked the start of his greatest time of success.

Professional and Personal Success for Michael Peterson

Shortly before the death of Elizabeth Ratliff, Michael Peterson embarked on a career trajectory that made him wealthy and well-known within literary circles. Combining his experiences with *The Chronicle* and his time in Vietnam, Peterson wrote a number of novels based on Vietnam, and two non-fiction works. *Immortal Dragon* was published in 1983, *A Time of War* came out in 1990, and finally, *A Bitter Peace* was released in 1996. Peterson would also co-write a biographical book with journalist David Perlmutter titled, *Charlie Two Shoes and the Marines of Love Company*.

The books alone would have been enough to keep most people professionally and economically satisfied, but Peterson was an ambitious man who needed to be involved with numerous projects.

Peterson also had a strong egoistical desire to be the center of attention.

After his divorce from Patricia, Peterson and his adopted daughters moved back to the Durham, North Carolina, area. With one novel to his credit, and one more on the way, the Duke graduate was quickly able to land a job as a writer for the Durham-Chapel Hill area's daily newspaper, *Durham Herald-Sun*.

Peterson was not afraid to cover controversial stories for the *Herald-Sun*, often focusing on corruption within local governments. As a result, Peterson made enemies with a local prosecutor, James Hardin, Jr who was one of the men that later prosecuted the writer for murder.

Peterson's successful career as a novelist and journalist allowed him to provide his family with a comfortable lifestyle, and it introduced him to new circles of wealthy, successful, and influential people.

One person that Peterson met during that time was Kathleen Atwater.

Atwater, who was ten years Peterson's junior, was a bright, educated, and successful woman in her own right. She held a bachelor's degree in civil engineering and a master's degree in mechanical engineering, which she used to find work in a number of major corporations. By the time she met Michael in 1989, Kathleen was an executive with Nortel communications. She was also divorced and the mother of a daughter, Caitlyn.

Kathleen and Michael were immediately attracted to each other. They shared similar interests in the arts and both were independently wealthy and successful. There was no rush by either party to marry, but the two decided to tie the knot in 1996, to bring their families together. Kathleen brought Caitlyn with her to live with Michael and his children, including his two sons who had moved back with him.

By all accounts, the family was happy and lived a very modern version of the "Brady Bunch."

Then came the early morning of December 9, 2001

The Death of Kathleen Peterson

Just before three a.m., Michael Peterson called 911 and told operators that his wife was at the bottom of the stairs bleeding, and she appeared to be dead. When the first responders arrived shortly after the call, they noticed a large amount of blood at the foot of the stairs, seemingly inconsistent with Peterson's story.

Kathleen Peterson was rushed to the local trauma center, but she died later that afternoon.

When Peterson was interviewed by the local law enforcement officers at the scene, they were already skeptical. The story Michael related to them seemed contrived and rehearsed. Peterson told the police that he and Kathleen had dinner at home the previous evening, and afterwards, spent several hours drinking wine by their pool. Michael also added that Kathleen took a valium pill sometime after midnight.

Since the death was suspicious, Kathleen's body was turned over to the county medical examiner for a full autopsy. A toxicology test revealed that Kathleen's blood alcohol content was only .07, which is below the legally

intoxicated threshold of .08.

The most damning aspect of the medical examiner's report concerned the cause of death. The report stated that Kathleen suffered several blows, by what the medical examiner believed was a blunt object to the back and top of her head. The cartilage of the thyroid was fractured. Despite the immense damage that Kathleen suffered to her head, the medical examiner wrote the cause of death was blood loss. Kathleen bled for an hour-and-a-half to two hours before she died, which was contradictory to Michael's story.

It became increasingly clear to the Durham County prosecutor's office that Kathleen Peterson's death was no accident—she was brutally murdered by her husband!

But bringing charges against Michael Peterson, never mind getting a conviction, would be no easy matter. Peterson had no criminal record and he was a pillar of the community. He was a Vietnam veteran with plenty of money, and he had personal connections that were willing to take his side.

The Durham County prosecutors needed to build a stronger case.

Although the medical examiner's report looked bad, and appeared to contradict Peterson's version of Kathleen's death, the prosecutors still lacked a motive for the murder.

Why would a successful, wealthy author murder his wife?

Durham County detectives and prosecutors conducted hundreds of interviews with all of Michael Peterson's known associates, but they were at a loss to find a motive for her murder.

They finally got their break, thanks to computer forensic science.

Computer forensic teams were still a fairly new idea to most police departments in the United States in the early 2000s. The departments that had computer teams usually consisted of no more than an officer or two, who were often more computer enthusiasts than experts. They spent most of their time on duty investigating cases the "old fashioned way." Some of the bigger police departments, though, were ahead of the curve, and not only had full-time computer forensic investigators, but also kept up with the latest

advances and techniques.

The Durham County Sheriff's Department dedicated a fair amount of their resources to computer forensics in the early 2000s.

When the computer experts with the Durham County Sheriff's Department searched Michael Peterson's computers, they uncovered a treasure trove of potentially embarrassing and potentially incriminating evidence.

Their search uncovered thousands of gay porn files that Peterson downloaded and saved, and perhaps even more incriminating, was an email he sent to a gay escort. The prosecutors believed his files and emails proved that Peterson was living a secret gay lifestyle, and he killed Kathleen when she discovered the files.

The Durham County prosecutors argued that the secret gay lifestyle, combined with a one-and-a-half million dollar life insurance policy Michael had on Kathleen, was enough of a motive for murder.

Michael Peterson was charged with first-degree murder.

Michael Peterson Fights for His Freedom

After months of pre-trial motions, the Durham County prosecutors were finally ready to put their murder case against Michael Peterson in front of a jury in early 2003. By the time a verdict was finally reached in late 2003, the case would be one of the longest in North Carolina's history.

The prosecution was led by a team of lawyers that included Peterson's old nemesis, James Hardin Jr, and Mike Nifong, who was later disbarred for his unethical dealings in the infamous Duke Lacrosse case.

For their part, the prosecutors thought they had a slam-dunk case against Peterson. They argued that Michael killed Kathleen after she discovered his secret gay lifestyle. The murder, though, was no *heat of the moment killing*—Michael waited for an opportune moment to kill his wife in order to make it look like an accident.

The medical examiner testified for the prosecution that Kathleen's injuries were more consistent with a beating, not a fall down the stairs. The wounds on her head came from a cylindrical-type object that prosecutors argued was

a blow poke used for fireplaces. To support this claim, Kathleen's sister, Candance, was called to the stand to testify that she gave a blow poke to the Peterson couple as a gift.

The medical examiner also testified that the large amount of blood at the foot of the stairs was not consistent with a fall.

Peterson's lawyers put up a spirited defense, but by the time the trial began, public opinion was squarely against Michael Peterson. Although defense attorneys generally tell their clients to avoid the press and not to speak about the case outside the courtroom, their pleas are sometimes ignored. High-profile people, who are on trial for a crime, are often used to the lime light of the press due to their professions or celebrity status. The added press rarely helps, but Peterson was certain that he could convince the public he was innocent.

The plan backfired.

In press conferences, statements, and interviews he gave to the media, Peterson appeared arrogant and unconcerned about his wife's death. Peterson repeatedly used the pronoun "I" when he went into detail about the trial that was ruining his life. Viewers of *Court TV* called and sent emails stating that if they were in a similar position, they would have asked more questions about their wife's death, and would have appeared more heart-broken and distraught about losing her.

Despite public opinion going against their client, Peterson's lawyers thoughtfully refuted most of the prosecution's main arguments.

Concerning the motive, Peterson's lawyers argued that most of the gay porn the police found on his computer was for research on an upcoming book. At the same time, they stated that Kathleen knew about Michael's bisexual tendencies and was fine with it.

Overcoming the motive for Kathleen's murder was a molehill compared to the mountain of forensic evidence, stacked against Michael Peterson.

With plenty of financial resources at his disposal, Peterson was able to hire the famous forensic scientist, Henry Lee, to work with his defense team. Lee

testified that the injuries Kathleen sustained, and the blood spatter, were in fact consistent with a fall down a long staircase.

Peterson's lawyers were also able to poke holes in the prosecution's blow poke theory.

The blow poke that the prosecution presented as the murder weapon was determined, through DNA testing, to not be the device that did the deadly deed.

With Henry Lee in his corner, the lack of a murder weapon, and legitimate questions concerning the manner of Kathleen's death, Michael Peterson was confident that he would win an acquittal.

But Michael Peterson's confidence was known to border on hubris.

In October 2003, the jury returned a verdict of guilty on the charge of first-degree murder. Michael Peterson was sentenced to life without parole. He could continue writing from behind bars, but the lavish lifestyle that he had become so accustomed to was over—or was it?

New Revelations

When Michael Peterson was sentenced to life in prison, his legal battle was not over. In the modern American legal process, convicted prisoners are entitled to appeal their cases, and if anyone has money like Peterson did, the appeals can last for several years. But Michael Peterson was not filing briefs to stop an imminent execution; he did not have to worry about his life ending unless he was taken by natural causes or at the hands of other inmates.

Peterson avoided problems in prison and worked with his appeal attorneys to raise legal issues that satisfied the requirements for a new trial. It was also reported that Peterson helped inmates with appeals on their cases, although he never trained formally as a lawyer.

Peterson would have to work out the glitches in his own appeal. It turned out there were several.

One of the more interesting and legally questionable witnesses that the prosecutors called to testify against Peterson, was Elizabeth Ratliff's maid. She testified that she saw Peterson and Ratliff together earlier on the day of

Elizabeth's death, and that when she discovered the body, it was in a large pool of blood.

Obviously the maid was no forensic expert, and the police reports from both the German and American authorities stated that there was very little blood near Ratliff's body. Peterson's attorneys argued that the maid's testimony should never have been allowed at the trial, because it was not relevant and was prejudicial to the jury.

But that was not Peterson's only argument for a new trial.

As Peterson languished in a tough maximum security prison, it was revealed that one of the state forensic investigators who worked his case, was corrupt. Duane Deaver, who worked with the State Bureau of Investigation, which is North Carolina's state investigative agency, was found to have tampered with evidence in thirty-four cases.

One of those cases was Michael Peterson's.

As the arguments for a new trial began piling up in Michael Peterson's favor, an alternate theory concerning how Kathleen died, also surfaced.

The culprit was a killer owl.

As strange as this may sound, there is actually forensic evidence to support the claim. Owl feathers were mysteriously found on Kathleen's body on the night of her death, but were disregarded at the time as something she picked up when she was outside. Peterson's lawyers located raptor experts who stated that owls frequently prey on animals larger than themselves, and attacks on humans are actually more common than one might think. Owl experts have also examined the autopsy reports and stated that her head injuries are consistent with scratches from an owl's talons.

After examining the new evidence and arguments put forth by Peterson's lawyers, an appellate judge agreed to order a new trial for the convicted wife killer.

On December 16, 2011, Michael Peterson was freed on \$300,000 bail.

The judge's decision led to mixed reactions in the now divided, blended

family Peterson belonged to.

"I have waited over eight years, 2,988 days as a matter of fact, and I counted for an opportunity to have a retrial. I want to thank Judge Hudson for giving me that opportunity so that I can vindicate myself and prove my innocence in a fair trial this time," said Michael Peterson in a press conference shortly after he was released from the Durham County jail on bail. "I want to thank all the people who've supported me from all over the world. It's impossible for me to express my gratitude. What I want to do now though is to spend some time with, you know, my family and with my children. And certainly, at a later time, I'd be happy to talk with everybody and share more. Thank you very, very much."

Michael's son Clayton spoke for his brother and two adopted sisters.

"We know he is innocent and we know that the verdict will be different and justice will be served."

But not everyone in the formerly happy family agreed with the recent legal developments.

"Ten years I've been without my sister. Ten years her daughter hasn't had her," said Kathleen's sister, Candance Zamperini. "And 10 years the rest of us have been alive and had our freedom, but not Kathleen."

A new trial date has yet to be set, and some legal pundits believe this to be a sign the case will never be retried. If Michael Peterson is retried for his wife's murder, it will be closely monitored by the media, especially when his attorneys try to point the finger at a killer owl as the true culprit.

Chapter 5: The Murder of Sian Blake and Her Family

The plot of a killer burying bodies in a garden has been used for decades in television shows such as *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, and the 2004 film *Secret Window*. In these fictional tales, the killer usually kills multiple people and buries them in his garden, which is never suspected by authorities. Then in a strange twist, the garden killer gets away with the crime. It makes for good fiction, but the reality is that cases of bodies being buried in gardens, are rare in the annals of crime history.

Over the years, there have been a number of cases where a killer tried to hide his deed in a garden, but the cases usually only involved one body, and the killer was quickly caught.

On the afternoon of January 5, 2016, police in London, England, made a truly horrifying discovery that could have come out of the mind of Alfred Hitchcock himself—the body of an adult female and two children were discovered buried in a garden.

The bodies were identified as forty-three-year-old former actress Sian Blake and her two sons, eight-year-old Zachary and four-year-old Anon.

The London police had a true-to-life horror story on their hands,

Sian Blake

Sian Blake was born in 1972 to a British-Jamaican family on the east end of London. Life was not always easy on the east end, but that part of the city proved to be an inspiration for the young Sian in her early career. Almost immediately, it was clear that Sian had a lot of personality and was very photogenic, so her parents entered her into modeling competitions. She eventually landed some small acting roles.

As the small parts continued to come in during her teenage years, Sian began to make appearances in British television and films.

Then came her big break.

In 1996, Blake was cast as Frankie Pierre in the hit British soap opera *East Enders*. Although Blake was grateful for the shot, she soon found it difficult to continue because of the character's personality. Frankie was a home wrecker with few morals, who had no remorse for the problems she created, which was far from the true personality of Blake. In fact, about the only thing she had in common with her on-camera character, was that they both grew up in the same general area in London.

Female fans of the show were particularly critical of the Frankie character, and some had a difficult time separating fantasy from reality.

"One woman wrote to me telling me that her marriage had almost been ruined when someone like Frankie went after her husband," Blake later told a reporter. *"It was a really vicious letter; she threatened to kill me and warned me to watch out. It was very frightening."*

Fortunately for Blake, the threats she received while on *East Enders* turned out to be more bluster than anything.

The true threat to her life would come years later from someone she trusted.

After a few months on *East Enders*, the character of Frankie Pierre was written out of the show, and Blake began picking up small acting parts. She eventually grew tired of acting and decided to change careers.

In the early 2000s, Blake became a sign language teacher and later met Arthur Kent-Simpson, who became the father of her two children.

In most ways, the two were polar opposites.

Friends and family all described Blake as warm, affectionate, and responsible. Although Blake was suffering from a terminal motor neuron disease, she lived each day to the fullest and always had a smile on her face.

On the other hand, few people had anything good to say about Arthur Kent-Simpson. The two met in the 1990s and were immediately smitten with each other. By the mid-2000s, after their first child was born, Blake was tired of what she perceived as Kent-Simpson's childish behavior. The two often kept separate addresses, but Kent-Simpson would always find his way back to Blake's home after a few months apart. When Blake and Kent-Simpson lived

together, she was the primary bread winner in the home. Kent-Simpson rarely worked, and when he did contribute financially, it was usually through the proceeds he made selling illicit drugs.

In late 2015, Blake indicated to those closest to her, that she was ready to permanently break from Kent-Simpson. She was going to move with her two sons back to live with her extended family.

Arthur Kent-Simpson did not want to lose his meal ticket.

The Disappearance

As Christmas 2015 approached, Sian Blake's family started to worry. The tight-knit family usually heard from Sian multiple times during the week, either by phone or in person. By Christmas, the last time anyone saw her was on December 13. When Sian's family members finally got hold of Kent-Simpson, he told them that she needed to leave town for time to sort things out.

The story seemed unbelievable to most of Blake's family. Because they were all extremely close, they believed she would not go on an extended trip without telling them. They also did not think she would have left so near the Holidays.

And she would not have taken her children without saying a word.

Then Sian's sister received a bizarre text message.

"I'm taking time to myself and my children without constant opinions from family and friends," the text read.

Blake's friends and family were confused by the text, because it was out of character in both tone and content for the mother. After numerous attempts to visit her home, to no avail, Sian's family called the police and related the story and their suspicions.

Since two underage children were involved, the police immediately went to Sian's home to investigate. They were baffled by what they found.

Most of Sian's and her two boys' clothing were gone, but the police also noticed that many personal effects were also missing. At first, it seemed to

confirm that she left with the two boys voluntarily, but the more the police looked it seemed “too perfect.”

The whole scene looked staged.

Eventually, their search led them to the garden in the backyard where the bodies of Sian and her two sons were recovered.

An autopsy, and the subsequent investigation, revealed that Sian and the boys were killed by repeated blows from an axe. A forensic examination of the home showed the murders took place inside, and the killer tried to clean up the mess and stage the scene to look as if Sian and her two boys had moved away.

The police put out an arrest warrant for Arthur Kent-Simpson, but he was nowhere to be found in London—or all of Britain for that matter.

The killer had vanished.

The police canvassed all of Kent-Simpson’s known hangouts and extensively questioned his associates, in order to locate the fugitive. His mother finally told police that he fled to his native Ghana where he planned to die. According to his mother, Kent-Simpson killed Sian and their sons because of her illness.

“For months we discussed her options because of her illness, and she told me if it got to a certain point she would like to die,” Kent-Simpson told his mother. *“And it got to that point.”*

When his mother asked why he also killed the children, he answered.

“Because the agreement without their parents there was no one qualified to raise them in the way they were accustomed to.”

Sian’s friends and family said the true motive was a combination of laziness and hubris. Blake supported his lifestyle, so when she threatened to leave, he would have to find another piggy bank. Kent-Simpson was also said to have an extremely large ego and could not ever live with seeing Blake and his children with another man.

Kent-Simpson was located in Ghana and contacted by the British authorities.

He agreed to return to the United Kingdom voluntarily, where he was arrested in Heathrow airport in February 2016.

The case against Kent-Simpson was open-and-shut, which is probably why he decided to forego a lengthy trial and instead pled guilty to the triple homicide.

In October 2016, Kent-Simpson was given a “whole life tariff,” which is the British equivalent of life without the possibility of parole. Very few offenders are given a whole life tariff in Britain, because it is reserved for only the most egregious offenders.

The court made its opinion public at sentencing.

“In my judgment this was indeed a case where each murder involved a substantial degree of premeditation or planning,” trial judge Justice Singh said during sentencing.

At the very least, that must be true of the murder of each of the two little boys; each of them killed after the defendant had already killed Sian Blake.”

Chapter 6: John Filip Nordlund's Swedish Massacre

The FBI defines “mass murder” as four or more people being killed in a single event, usually at a single location. Mass murders can be perpetrated by an individual or a group. Two of the most well-known cases of mass murder to take place in the United States within the last twenty years, were the Columbine High School massacre in 1999 and the 9-11 terrorist attacks.

Mass murders can take place in a variety of venues and for multifarious reasons. The most publicized mass murders are the ones that take place in public settings such as schools and work places, but the majority involves the perpetrator killing his or her entire family.

The media sometimes erroneously connects mass murders with sprees and serial murders. Spree killings often happen in a relatively short period, similar to mass murders, but involve the killer moving to more than one location. Serial killing, on the other hand, takes place over an extended period of time and involves at least one “cooling off” period between murders.

Many people point to Charles Whitman's 1966 shooting spree that claimed nineteen lives on the campus of the University of Texas in Austin, Texas, as the first modern example of mass murder— but mass murder, like serial murder, has been around since the dawn of humankind.

It is true that after Whitman's massacre in Austin, mass murders became more prevalent—not just in the United States but throughout the world— however it would be an error to state that Whitman was the first modern mass murderer. The ubiquitous modern media certainly plays a role in the public's increased awareness of the phenomenon of mass murder, which ultimately results in the global perception that mass murder is an entirely modern phenomenon.

Mass murders have been perpetrated by states and kingdoms throughout history against enemy combatants and civilians. The Thirty Years War (1618-1648) in the German-speaking kingdoms of Europe witnessed numerous massacres committed on civilian populations, and more recently, the Balkans

War of the 1990s became known for its many civilian massacres.

With that said, it is true that mass murders carried out by individuals were relatively rare, or at least not well-documented, before Whitman's 1966 massacre.

But they were not totally unheard of either.

Sweden in the year 1900 is probably the last place people would think the worst cases of pre-Whitman mass murder would take place. For hundreds of years, Sweden has ranked among the world's nations in highest standard of living, lowest crime rates, and overall wealth. The Nordic nation is known for its natural beauty and friendly citizens, not its violence.

John Filip Nordlund shattered Sweden's peaceful reputation, when he murdered five and wounded eight of its citizens, in an act of mass murder that was driven by greed. Generations later, Swedes still tell campfire tales about the lunatic who tried to kill all the passengers on a passenger ferry.

Struggles from the Beginning

John Filip Nordlund was born in 1875, in the town of Sater in central Sweden. There is no evidence that Nordlund was abused or neglected by his parents at an early age, but there are signs, that he and at least one of his siblings, suffered from learning disabilities.

Nordlund had two brothers. His oldest brother Joel was deaf and mute. Nordlund never picked on his brother, and in fact he stood up for him against bullies at school, but the young John Nordlund had his own problems.

Nordlund's friends and family members later said that they never remembered him laughing when he was a child, which is an early sign of autism. Nordlund would later display other signs of autism such as problems developing meaningful relationships, a lack of interpersonal skills, and problems keeping gainful employment.

Unfortunately for Nordlund and Sweden, autism was still decades away from being identified as a developmental disorder.

School proved to be extremely difficult for Nordlund . He did poorly in his coursework and he was bullied by classmates, due to his grades and his

inability to connect with others. Teachers, school officials, and even his parents, could not help Nordlund. At the age of ten, he ran away from home.

Nordlund was quickly caught the first time he left home, but the young boy enjoyed his independence and no doubt, the absence of tormentors. He continued to run away whenever he had the chance. Nordlund also began to notice that he was much bigger than the other boys his age, and he no longer needed to take their abuse.

When Nordlund hit puberty, he grew more, and soon dwarfed the kids in his class. Although he was no longer bullied by other kids, he grew tired of school and left home for good, at the age of twelve.

Today it is inconceivable to think of a twelve-year-old living on his own, but things were different in 1887. There were far fewer labor and child protection laws, even in a progressive country like Sweden. John Nordlund was also exceptionally big for his age. In fact, John was so big at the age of twelve, that most people thought he was a young adult.

Before he left home the final time, John learned that he could use his size to impose his will on other kids.

The bullied had become the bully!

Nordlund found work at a sawmill although his true vocation was crime.

As he became a young adult, John continued to use his size to intimidate others and to strong-arm people out of their money. Although John soon learned that he had an aptitude for violence, his criminal interests were wide and diverse. He landed in jail for the first time in 1891 for cattle rustling, and shortly after being released for that crime, he was sentenced to three years in prison for another theft.

Some people use their time in prison to reflect on how their lives went wrong and they make plans to change. They resolve to find legitimate employment once they are released, and they develop a plan that will keep them out of prison. Others use prison as a place to perfect their criminal skills and network with other criminals.

John Nordlund fell into the latter category.

While he was serving time for theft, Nordlund began to plot various crimes that would get him the “big score.” Most of the crimes were delusional and none of them involved an accomplice.

John Filip Nordlund was a criminal who worked alone.

In fact, not only did John Nordlund work alone in his criminal endeavors, he rarely got along with anyone other than his two brothers, who were both in prison and out on the streets. While he was in prison, John Nordlund did not play nice with the other inmates. He assaulted several of his fellow convicts and spent a considerable time in a segregation unit. The time in segregation allowed Nordlund to narrow down his list of potential big scores to a couple of prime candidates. Nordlund thought that if he were to end up in Stockholm with his brother, after he was released from prison, he could use the opportunity to case potential targets around the city.

When John Filip Nordlund walked out of prison in April 1900, he was violent, angry, and he had a chip on his shoulder the size of the Baltic Sea.

John Nordlund was going to make Sweden pay.

The Prins Carl Massacre

After Nordlund was released from prison, he went to live with his younger brother who was a civil servant in Stockholm. John Nordlund was only allowed to live with his brother as long as he had a legitimate job. He took to the streets of the capital city to find employment. By all accounts, he did attempt to find work, but was unsuccessful, due to the combination of his criminal record, lack of employment history, and lack of social skills. While his brother worked during the day, John spent most of his time daydreaming about his big score, and he began to focus on a most bizarre yet ambitious plan.

Sweden is a land full of water. The country is bordered on three sides by the Baltic Sea and within the boundaries of the nation are thousands of lakes, fjords, bays, and rivers. The city of Stockholm, which is spread out on fourteen different islands, sits between the Baltic Sea and Lake Mälaren. Sea travel has been an enduring part of Swedish history and culture, with ferry travel being more common than rail or automobile.

John Phillip Nordlund planned to rob one of the many passenger ferries that transported Swedes throughout the country.

Nordlund's plan brought him to the small town of Arboga, where he plotted to board the *Prins Carl* ferry bound for Stockholm across Lake Mälaren. Although his primary incentive was robbery, Nordlund planned to kill all the passengers and crew and burn the boat in order to eliminate witnesses and evidence.

With two knives and two revolvers in a bag, Nordlund boarded the *Prins Carl* on the evening of May 16 to launch his diabolical plan.

After Nordlund boarded the ferry, he took a seat in second class and patiently waited until the ship was far out on the lake.

He was not taking any risks.

When he thought the ship was past the point of no return, Nordlund calmly opened his bag, pulled out his weapons, and began to methodically shoot down any living soul that came across his path.

Nordlund stalked his victims, first by shooting them and when he ran out of bullets, he stabbed anyone he could find. As he shot and stabbed each victim, Nordlund took the time to rifle through their pockets for cash and other valuable he could find. When the frightened passengers realized that they were the potential victims of a mass murderer, they hid anywhere they could—under stairs, in closets, and some jumped into life boats.

When the smoke finally cleared, Nordlund had taken five lives and left eight more people seriously wounded. The ship's captain was among the dead.

Nordlund's initial plan was to steal the ferry's safe, which is where the fares were kept, but he never located it. Instead, he made off with the money taken from his victims. The total haul for Nordlund's big score was 800 Swedish kroners, which would be less than 100 American dollars.

After the massacre, Nordlund needed to escape the scene. Since he did not know how to pilot a ferry and the captain was dead, Nordlund dropped a life boat into the lake and escaped. Initially, the police thought the massacre was done by more than one perpetrator, because of the number of casualties and

the heavy weight of the life boats. They reasoned that one man alone could not lift such a heavy life boat into the water.

John Nordlund's size helped him escape from the *Prins Carl*, but it was also what led to his capture.

Survivors of the massacre were able to give the police an accurate description of the large Nordlund, which spread quickly via the newspapers throughout the small country. Time was running out for Nordlund and he knew it. Instead of traveling by boat, Nordlund tried to flee by train, but he was arrested on May 18 at a train station in Skogstorp.

The Chopping Block

After Nordlund was arrested, he waited in jail to stand trial for murder. A mob of angry locals nearly destroyed the jail in their efforts to dispense an extra-judicial execution of the mass murderer. At trial, Nordlund did not put up a defense and seemed resigned to his fate, although he did attempt to escape prison. Nordlund's attempted escape left one guard badly injured, and did not help his chances of later attaining freedom—the guards watched him much more closely after the attempt.

Nordlund was convicted of the murders and sentenced to die in what would be the penultimate execution in Swedish history.

The end of John Phillip Nordlund's life, or at least the manner in which he was executed, is one of the more interesting aspects of this case, and is partly the reason why he became so famous after his death. At the time, Sweden's method of execution was beheading, but it was not beheading by the guillotine like many countries practiced—condemned prisoners were beheaded “manually.” Manual beheading means the condemned was laid on a block and the executioner would then chop his head off with a cleaver type instrument. Nordlund's beheading was the third execution in Sweden that year, and the fifth by Sweden's sole executioner at the time, Albert Gustaf Dahlman.

Due to the combination of his grisly mass murder on the *Prins Carl*, and the dubious distinction of being the last person in Sweden executed by manual beheading, John Filip Nordlund became a Swedish boogeyman and the subject of folk songs and tales.

Swedish children were warned that if they were not good kids, John Filip Nordlund would get them while they slept.

Chapter 7: Suicide or Murder? The Death of Robert Dirscherl

Things are not always as they seem.

Sometimes a death appears to be a homicide, but is actually an accident or the result of natural causes. Car accidents and drownings are two of the most common accidental deaths, where aggrieved loved ones sometimes think that something nefarious was actually behind the death. Along the same lines, sometimes perfectly healthy, young people die suddenly of strokes, heart attacks, or other sudden illnesses. Perhaps it is a combination of the increasingly cynical world we live in and the desire by people to hang on to their loved ones, that leads people to sometimes believe that accidental and natural deaths are actually homicides.

And then there are murders that are declared accidents or death by natural causes.

The annals of crime history are filled with stories of killers who cover their murders with car accidents or make their homicides look like accidental drownings. Of course, there are several documented cases where murderers nearly got away with poisoning their victims by trying to make their crimes look like a natural illness or heart attack. You have probably seen more than one of these cases on true crime documentaries, such as *Forensic Files*, where the killer's plan is foiled.

But then there are a miniscule number of cases that seemingly defy classification. Some elements of the situation point toward accident, while other aspects seem to suggest a murder took place.

The death of Robert Dirscherl is one such case.

The morning of March 13, 1977, began as normal Sunday for Jinny Dirscherl and her fifty-four-year-old husband, Robert. The couple had finished breakfast at their Dunedin, Florida, home and they were preparing to go to church. Jinny was in the kitchen waiting for Robert, who was moving a bit slow due to recurring health problems, when she heard a loud bang. She

thought nothing of the sound; she thought it was a door that either Robert or their son Daniel, had slammed shut. After a few more minutes, seeing that they were going to be late, Jinny looked at the clock and decided to see what was holding up Robert.

When she opened the door to their bedroom, she nearly collapsed at the sight.

Robert was lying on the bed, dead, with a rifle at his side.

Unable to compose herself, due to the shock of what she found, Jinny screamed for her son, who called the police. When the police arrived, they looked around the house and found no signs of forced entry. There were also no valuables missing and no one in the Dirscherl family saw any intruders in the house that morning.

Based on the available evidence, the police ruled the death a suicide.

Although there was no evidence to the contrary, the Dirscherl family did not believe that Robert committed suicide. To them, it just did not make sense. According to the Dirscherls, Robert was not depressed and had never showed any signs of suicidal ideation in the past.

But without any other evidence, there was no reason to rule the death anything other than a suicide.

A Bizarre Turn

The death of Robert was difficult for his wife and children to deal with, but they eventually moved forward. Daniel, Guy—Robert and Jinny’s other son, and their daughter Kandace—began careers and families of their own, but their father’s mysterious death was never far from their thoughts.

Then in a bizarre twist, sixteen years to the day of Robert’s death, Guy Dirscherl received an anonymous letter postmarked from Tampa, Florida on March 13, 1997.

The eerie note stated:

“I have AIDS. I am dying. I must make my peace with the Lord. I killed your daddy 15 years ago. He found me in his bedroom. I had no choice. Please pray for me.”

Guy brought the letter to his family and then turned it over to Pinellas County Sheriff's Department.

Although the police were skeptical of the letter and maintained their stance that Robert committed suicide, they allowed the Dirscherl family to look over the original death report. The report concluded that Robert killed himself due to lingering health problems. The police report upset the Dirscherl family.

"The one interview that they probably weigh on most heavily is from a nurse who hadn't seen him in two years who gives a report about his health that is so far from the truth, it's ridiculous," said Guy Dirscherl about the police report. "She portrays him as a bedridden vegetable, where he was a happy, fairly healthy man, had a social life, he still traveled, and still was a productive salesman."

The Dirscherl family pressed the Pinellas County Sheriff's Department to reopen the case, but every request was rebuffed. At this point, the Dirscherls decided to take matters into their own hands and they began to pursue other avenues to get at the truth.

By the late 1990s, their campaign to reveal the truth of Robert's death utilized the burgeoning technology of the internet. A website was created where the known facts of the case were laid out, and a page with contact information was published so anyone with information could write, call, or send an email to members of the Dirscherl family.

The media campaign began to pay off, when producers from the American television show, *Unsolved Mysteries*, made a segment about Robert's mysterious death.

Then Jinny's sister met an interesting woman on a train.

The two women began a friendly conversation, and after she felt comfortable enough, Jinny's sister revealed the mysterious circumstances of her brother-in-law's death. The other woman disclosed that she was a psychic and she proceeded to relate details of the death that were never made public

"The things that were written by the young lady on the Amtrak train were startling in that, some of this information wasn't anywhere to be found. It was

just too real,” said Robert and Jinny’s daughter, Kandace, years later, about the mysterious woman her aunt met on the train. “It was as if this person was in the room.” Said Robert’s daughter

One final piece of the puzzle seemed to fall into place in the late 1990s, when a former neighbor of the Dirscherl’s died of AIDS. The man was a teenager at the time of Robert’s death, and he was well acquainted with both the Dirscherl family and the layout of the home.

The psychic who met Jinny’s sister on the train mentioned that the killer was known to the entire family.

Despite the media campaign and the new revelations surrounding the case, Robert Dirscherl’s death remains listed as a suicide.

Chapter 8: The Jokela School Shooting

In the last twenty years, the world has been shocked and horrified by a spate of school shootings that have left scores of young people dead. One of the most well-known of these shootings is the 1999 Columbine, Colorado, massacre that left fifteen people dead, including the two shooters. As difficult as the Columbine massacre was for most people to contemplate, there have been worse shootings in subsequent years. The massacre at Virginia Tech University in 2007, which resulted in the deaths of thirty-three students and faculty members, stands as the worst educational institution massacre in history and is a macabre reminder that death can strike at anytime, anywhere.

But school shootings are not an exclusively American phenomenon.

Some argue that American gun culture precipitated the rise in school shootings across the United States in the 2000s, but the reality is that schoolyard massacres have unfortunately taken place across the globe. The 2009 massacre at a high school in Winnenden, Germany, claimed sixteen lives, one more than Columbine, and several more school shootings have happened in other countries known for low crime and tight gun control.

Unfortunately, the phenomenon of school shootings appears to transcend laws, borders, and cultures—it is a grim reality of life that humans everywhere share.

On November 7, 2007, the horrible reality of school shootings came to an otherwise sleepy suburb of Helsinki, Finland, named Jokela.

When news of the Jokela schoolyard massacre spread across Scandinavia, across the rest of Europe, and throughout the world, people were perplexed that such an event could happen in Finland. The knee-jerk reaction by many blamed Finland's gun laws, which some saw as too lax. An examination of Finnish gun laws reveals Finland is more relaxed than some European nations such as the United Kingdom, but is significantly more restrictive than Switzerland's laws, which are closer to those of the United States.

Finnish lawmakers conducted an investigation in order to determine how a school shooting could happen in their Nordic nation, known more for saunas,

hockey, geo-political neutrality, and low crime rates.

But mass murder is something that can rarely be predicted, and it is an act that only needs one person to carry out successfully.

Pekka-Eric Auvinen

Pekka-Eric Auvinen was born in 1989, to a middle-class Finnish family. Like many families in modern industrialized countries, the Auvinens worked long hours in order to maintain their suburban lifestyle. They bought Pekka-Eric new clothing and the latest tech gadgets like his friends had.

But Pekka-Eric had few friends.

From an early age, Pekka-Eric did not get along well with other kids his age. He was often teased and bullied, and by the time he entered high school, Pekka-Eric was no longer interested in making friends. For their part, the Auvinens noticed that their son had problems, and they tried to get him help.

The Auvinens brought Pekka-Eric to several child psychiatrists, and he was prescribed antidepressants to alleviate his situation. When the antidepressants did not work, the Auvinens considered a more drastic measure by having Pekka-Eric committed to a mental health hospital. Their plan was never carried out.

While Pekka-Eric wandered through his adolescence in a cloud of malaise, he began to find answers to his problems in politics. According to Auvinen's friends and family, the teenager was a voracious reader who was particularly interested in extreme ideas on the political spectrum. Auvinen immersed himself in the writings of Karl Marx, but also found *Mein Kampf* equally satisfying.

But to those who knew Pekka-Eric Auvinen, it was less the theoretical ideas of communism and fascism that the young man was drawn to, but more the practical results of those philosophies. It was not so much the philosophy of Marx from which Auvinen drew inspiration, but more the actions of Lenin and Stalin. The young man saw himself and the world in Nietzschean terms, and he aimed to make everyone else understand, one way or another.

In the months leading up to the Jokela massacre, Pekka-Eric created a YouTube

account where he graphically demonstrated his *weltanschauung* for the world to see. Images of warfare, genocide, and violent crime were the most common clips he uploaded to his account. He added his comments, noting his approval of, and desire to perpetrate acts of mass violence.

By early 2007, Pekka-Eric Auvinen was quickly sliding down the rabbit hole. As Auvinen watched violent videos and read about his favorite dictators and mass murderers, he began to formulate a plan to take his place alongside the most notorious killers in modern history. First he picked out a target, which was easy—his high school. He intended to make the students and teachers at his high school feel the pain and misery that he had endured for most of his life. Carrying out his plan would be difficult.

As stated above, gun ownership is more restrictive in Finland than it is in the United States; however private gun ownership is not banned altogether. In order to legally possess a gun in Finland, one must be at least eighteen years of age, have no criminal record, and must be a member of a shooting club. In August 2007, Auvinen was eighteen, he had no criminal record, but he needed to join a shooting club. Guns that are considered “high risk” in Finland, such as high powered rifles and pistols, are only allowed if they are kept at a shooting club. About three weeks before the Jokela massacre, Auvinen attempted to purchase a nine-millimeter pistol, but he was denied the purchase by the police, because it was a “high risk” weapon.

Later, Auvinen was able to successfully purchase and bring home a twenty-two-caliber pistol and 500 rounds of ammunition.

Pekka-Eric Auvinen was ready to carry out his violent revenge fantasy, Columbine style.

The Shootings

On the morning of November 7, 2007, Pekka-Eric Auvinen woke up late, had a light breakfast, packed his gun and ammunition into his backpack, and made his way to school. Although he missed his first class, he was determined to get to the school by lunchtime, so he could inflict mass casualties.

The carnage at Jokela High School began around 11:42 a.m. when Auvinen caught his first hapless victim walking down an empty hallway. Although the

kid was not one of Auvinen's former bullies, Pekka-Eric pointed the pistol to his head at point--blank range and pulled the trigger, killing him instantly.

Auvinen made his way further down the hallway until he came across other students standing outside of a bathroom. He opened fire on the students, killing two of them.

The crazed shooter noticed the school's nurse trying to help a student, so he chased her down and fired several rounds into her body. The nurse died in the hallway.

Less than five minutes into the massacre, an alert was issued on the school's public announcement system for all students and staff to barricade themselves into their classrooms.

Frustrated that all of his potential victims on the first floor were barricaded in class rooms, Auvinen began firing into the doors of the rooms and eventually made his way to the second floor. He immediately encountered more students on the second floor and fired at them, killing one who was not fast enough to escape his wrath.

With the school on complete lockdown, Auvinen began pouring gasoline and oil on the locked doors and he attempted to light them on fire, but he was unsuccessful. He made his way into a barricaded classroom, but instead of shooting more students, he exhorted the kids to join him in his "revolution." When none of the students joined Auvinen, he left the building, possibly to flee, but he was confronted by teacher Helena Kalmi, who was also the person that made the loudspeaker announcement for students and staff to barricade themselves in their rooms.

Kalmi was safe and could have either have stayed barricaded in her room, or left the school once she was outside, but the teacher instead attempted to save others, including Auvinen, by trying to convince the troubled young man to give up.

For her trouble, Auvinen shot Kalmi seven times, leaving her dead in the school's parking lot.

There were students outside who witnessed him kill Kalmi, but instead of

shooting them, Auvinen went back inside the school and waited for the police. When the police showed up, Auvinen fired a few shots at them, but missed. He then shot himself in the head and died later at the hospital.

The final body count of Pekka-Eric Auvinen's mass murder spree totaled nine dead, and thirteen wounded, in less than half-an-hour. The normally peaceful Nordic nation was rocked by the events of November 7, 2007. Authorities were on edge afterwards, searching for more potential school shooters.

But as noted above in this chapter, it is virtually impossible to predict when the next mass murder event will take place. The unpredictable nature of mass murder was demonstrated less than a year later, when a man went on a shooting rampage at a university in Western Finland that left eleven people dead, including the shooter.

No matter how much a police force or government may prepare, it is nearly impossible to prevent mass murder.

Chapter 9: Elifasi Msomi, the Serial Killer Witch Doctor

Throughout the history of the world, religion has played an important role in a country's development. The pyramids of Egypt, the cathedrals of Europe, and the Shinto shrines in Japan were all the result of religion and humanity's desire to be closer to God.

Religion has truly inspired societies to do great things, and it has also roused the imaginations of individuals to create great works of art and literature. The Sistine Chapel and *Paradise Lost* are two excellent examples.

Even today, in the cynical and secular world in which we live, most people still believe in some type of God and hold a set of morals that can be classified as religious. Religion gives people comfort during periods of uncertainty in life, such as the death of a loved one or the loss of a job. Religion has also inspired countless people from around the world, during different periods in history, to extend helping hands to others who are less fortunate.

On the other hand, religion has been used by people throughout history as a source of power to do harm to others.

History chapters are filled with people who used religion to attain their selfish ends for power and wealth. More recently, there are people who claimed to gain power from their religion in order to kill others for pleasure.

Richard Ramirez, the infamous serial killer known as the "Night Stalker," terrorized the people of California during the 1980s in a prolonged spree that left fourteen dead. After he was caught, Ramirez claimed in numerous interviews, that he eluded capture for so long because Satan gave him the power to do so. Others have also claimed to have murdered in the name of a dark deity.

Decades before the Night Stalker killed for Satan, Elifasi Msomi claimed that a demon drove him to leave a string of bodies across the Natal province of South Africa.

A Failed Witch Doctor

South Africa during the 1950s was a much different place than it is today. The white minority ruled the country under the system known as apartheid, which segregated various racial groups into different districts. Blacks were relegated to townships outside the major cities. The majority of whites remained in the cities. In an effort to move the black majority further away from the whites, the government began a policy in the late 1940s, that gave semi-autonomy to “black homelands” that were within the borders of the Republic of South Africa. KwaZulu was a homeland created for members of the Zulu tribe located in the southeastern part of South Africa in the Natal province.

Elifasi Msomi was born in the KwaZulu Homeland sometime during the early twentieth century.

Due to lack of records, not much is known about the early life of Msomi, adding to the mystique of the man and his reign of terror. It is known that Msomi was born in the Natal province, and he later spent most of his life in the KwaZulu Homeland.

It is not known if Msomi had any formal education, although psychologists later claimed that he was fairly intelligent.

Msomi showed an early interest in Zulu culture, particularly shamanic traditions. When he became an adult, he aspired to become a *sangoma*, which is a Zulu shaman or witch doctor. Contrary to many Western perceptions, a lot of training and knowledge is required to become a Zulu sangoma.

Traditional sangomas in South Africa are responsible for a number of duties, including the following: divination, herbal medicinal practice, the transmission of tribal history, and concocting spells to ward off evil spirits known in Zulu as *tokoloshes*. The process by which one becomes a sangoma is complicated. One is first called to be a sangoma through a variety of supernatural signs, and if those signs are accepted by established sangomas, the individual will become an initiate. After training under established sangomas for a number of months or years, which involves isolation from one’s family and abstinence from sex, the initiate is welcomed into the community of sangomas in an elaborate ritual that involves drinking goat’s

blood.

Most sangomas follow similar rituals and beliefs, although there is not one set or codified belief system.

Some sangomas choose to follow a dark path that involves calling tokoloshes to do their bidding of ritual murder.

Perhaps the sangomas that Msomi trained under knew their student was destined to follow the dark path, because he failed the initiation and was shunned by the sangomas in his community.

Shortly after his failed initiation, Msomi claims he was possessed by a tokoloshe.

Msomi later told police and prosecutors that the tokoloshe directed him to begin murdering people in August of 1953. His first victim was a young girl he raped and stabbed to death in front of his own girlfriend. Msomi told his girlfriend that the tokoloshe made him kill the girl, and if she wanted to live, she would keep her mouth shut. Before the couple left the crime scene, Msomi drained the girl's body of some of her blood and placed it in a bottle. He told his girlfriend that the blood would be used later for *muti*—traditional African shamanic medicine.

But Msomi's muti frightened his girlfriend. As soon as she had the chance, she went to the police.

The Power of a Tokoloshe?

When the police learned of Msomi's bestial homicide, they quickly arrested him. They put him in jail where he would await trial and most likely be executed for his rape and murder crime.

But the police did not know that their perpetrator was possessed by a Zulu demon.

Somehow, in the middle of the night, Msomi escaped from jail and returned to KwaZulu to kill again. He later testified in court that the tokoloshe gave him the power to leap like a leopard and run like a gazelle.

The tokoloshe also told Msomi to keep killing for more muti.

While on the run, Msomi lived in the shadows and crept around the villages of KwaZulu hunting for victims. Instead of going after teenagers like he did before, Msomi focused his murderous impulses on both male and female children. He was not killing for fun or sexual gratification, but for more blood for muti. According to sangomas who follow the dark side, the body parts of children are believed to make the best muti because they are innocent and pure. Their bodies are uncorrupted from sex, drugs, and alcohol; they are therefore capable of producing better medicine.

Msomi managed to kill five children before he was caught.

The case began to gain attention in the South African media, but it really took hold when he escaped from jail, yet again.

Once more, the tokoloshe showed Msomi the way out of the jail by opening the locked doors for him, or so he later said.

Following his second escape, Msomi, with the help of his tokoloshe, took the lives of nine more victims in one month during 1955. Authorities knew the murders were the work of Msomi, because they all showed signs of ritualistic behavior, such as the draining of blood. Although Msomi had plenty of muti, his luck eventually ran out.

Or maybe his tokoloshe abandoned him.

Not long after his month-long murderous rampage, Msomi was arrested for theft. The police did not immediately associate him to the nine murders or know his identity, but after linking items found on him to his victims and finding a bottle of blood among his property, the cops quickly determined they had caught Elifasi Msomi once more.

After his last arrest, the police kept a closer guard on Msomi and were finally able to convict him of murder and sentence him to death by hanging.

During his trial, Msomi made claims that he was possessed by a tokoloshe, which helped him escape twice and evade capture. He said that before his last arrest the tokoloshe left his body.

On February 10, 1956, Elifasi Msomi was executed by the hangman's noose in Pretoria's Central Prison. A number of Zulu chiefs and sangomas were

permitted to watch the execution to ensure that the tokolshe was gone.

Mainstream practitioners of shamanic Zulu religion were happy to see Msomi executed, because his killing spree perpetrated negative perceptions of their religion. There is evidence that some walk a similar dark path.

A decapitated child, who was later determined to be the victim of a muti ritual, was discovered on the banks of the Thames River in London in 2001. The case brought to light other similar cases in Africa that remain unsolved.

The next Elifasi Msomi may already be walking among us.

Chapter 10: The Amityville Mass Murder

This book has examined a few of cases that would fall into the category of “mass murder.” Fortunately, mass murders are not common, but unfortunately, they are nearly impossible to predict, and therefore, there is little one can do to prepare for them. As mentioned previously, public mass murders such as school shootings get the most media attention, but they are not the most common form of mass murder.

The most common form of a mass murder is the “family annihilation.”

In many ways, family annihilators are scarier than public mass murderers. The murderers kill the ones closest to them, often without any warning. Family annihilators come from several different backgrounds and have included both men and women in all age groups.

Perhaps the most famous of all family annihilators was John List, who in 1971 shot to death his wife, mother, and three children. Afterwards, he went on the run for nearly thirty years before being caught. Investigators believe that List killed his family for financial reasons—he was in debt and unable to continue the lifestyle to which he and his large family were accustomed.

A well-known teenage family annihilator was sixteen-year-old David Brom, who axed to death his parents and two siblings as they slept in their Rochester, Minnesota, home in 1988. The motives for Brom’s killings remain unclear.

There have also been a number of female family annihilators.

The most famous female family annihilator in recent history is Andrea Yates. Yates was a Texas mother who drowned her five children to death in 2001, while her husband was at work. At her trial, Yates’s lawyers claimed that the murders were the result of postpartum depression.

All of these mass murders were committed for different reasons, yet they all had the same result—a family annihilated by a trusted family member. Most of these cases have been profiled on true crime documentaries, and some have made their way into pop culture. The most frightening and enduring of

family annihilations took place on November 13, 1974, at 112 Ocean Drive in Amityville, New York.

If you are forty or older, you know the time and place that refers to the mass murder that inspired *The Amityville Horror* book and movie franchise. An examination of the actual events reveals that the true story was just as scary as any movie.

When the police arrived at 112 Ocean Drive, after a distressed call from twenty-three-year-old Ronald DeFeo Jr, they were horrified to find six members of the DeFeo family dead from gunshot wounds. It did not take the police long to learn that the killer was the lone surviving member of the DeFeo household.

But the discovery of the bodies was only the beginning of this bizarre murder case.

Ronald “Butch” DeFeo Junior

Ronald DeFeo Jr was born in the borough of Brooklyn, New York, in 1951 to Ronald and Louise DeFeo. Ronald Senior worked as a salesman at Louise’s father’s car dealership in the city and Louise was a homemaker for the growing family. Ronald Senior worked hard for his father-in-law and eventually moved the family to the Long Island middle class suburb of Amityville in 1965. Because the Dutch colonial home at 112 Ocean Drive needed some work, the DeFeos got a good deal on what they thought was their dream home.

Ronald Junior, who friends and family knew as “Butch,” was the oldest of the DeFeo children. In 1974, his siblings included eighteen-year-old Dawn, thirteen-year-old Allison, twelve-year-old Marc, and nine-year-old John Mathew.

Ronald Senior was a strict father, and he expected his name-sakes to follow his rules and their Italian-American traditions. Butch was expected to excel in school and set a good example for his younger brothers and sisters.

Butch DeFeo usually fell short of his father’s expectations.

High school proved to be difficult for Butch. He did not do well in his classes

and was constantly picked on by the other kids for being overweight. As an outlet for his feelings of anger and dispossession, Butch started hanging with the wrong crowd and using alcohol and drugs. Like with many people in his situation, Butch started by drinking on the weekends and smoking marijuana, but by the time he graduated from high school, he was drinking daily and had become a regular user of hard drugs, such as heroin and cocaine.

Butch's family life was not much better.

There was a clear generation gap between Butch and his domineering father, and the more Butch began to indulge in drugs and alcohol, the more the two grew further apart. Ronald Senior did not know where his son was coming from and quite frankly did not care. He expected his son to work and be a responsible citizen like him.

But how respectable was the DeFeo family?

The deal that Ronald Senior got on the home at 112 Ocean drive was actually a gift from his father-in-law, Michael S. Brigante, who was a high-ranking member of the New York Mafia. The crime boss was also the owner of a car dealership where Ronald Senior, and later Butch, worked.

But the criminal connections were not just on the maternal side of the DeFeo family. One of Ronald Senior's uncles, Peter DeFeo, was a high-ranking member in the Genovese crime family.

Although there is no evidence that Ronald Senior ever directly participated in any criminal activity, his job and the home he and his family lived in, were paid for through crime. By the time Butch graduated from high school, he was well aware of his extended family's underworld connections.

After high school, Butch DeFeo channeled his family's mafia mindset to create a new personality, using violence and crime to get his way.

Coming Into His Own

As Butch moved past adolescence and into early adulthood, he lost weight and grew tall. He learned that the best way to deal with bullies was to give them a taste of their own medicine. Butch became known around Long Island, not only for his drug abuse, but also for his violent temper. If someone

got in his way, including friends and family, he would not hesitate to use physical force. Ronald Junior no longer took abuse from anyone, including his father.

Ronald Senior was not only an overbearing father; friends and family of the DeFeo family also said that he was physically abusive. If members of the DeFeo family got out of line, the large-framed Ronald Senior was quick to correct them with some harsh words and if that did not work, he was not above slapping or hitting the offender. Since Butch was the oldest of the DeFeo children, and somewhat of a letdown to his parents, he was usually the recipient of Ronald Senior's abuse.

But that began to change around 1970.

Butch began to talk back to his father and if Ronald Senior hit him, he was not afraid to hit his father back. The familial situation in the DeFeo home continued to deteriorate throughout the early 1970s, leaving Ronald Senior and Louise with few options. They feared that Butch's bad behavior would infect the other children, especially Dawn, but they also did not want to drive him away completely.

Since the DeFeos were a traditional family, counseling was not an option. Instead, Ronald Senior and Louise decided to placate Butch by giving him money and material possessions. Ronald Senior and Louise also bought Butch a speed boat.

Besides giving him a weekly allowance, Ronald Senior hired Butch to work at the car dealership in Brooklyn, but Butch was rarely there. When he was, he was usually high or hung over. For his part, Butch used the earnings from his salary at the car dealership and his allowance, to support his growing drug habit. He was known to buy his friends drinks at bars around Long Island, and he would sometimes invite them along for expensive drinking binges in Manhattan. When he was not too drunk, he would drive to Harlem or the Bronx to score heroin, which he would shoot up and remain high on for weeks straight.

Butch's drug addiction and lifestyle became so expensive, that he organized his own crew of thieves to steal and resell boat motors around Long Island.

When New Year 1974 came, Butch DeFeo was clearly out of control.

Although booze and drugs were Butch's primary hobby, he also had a deep interest in firearms. He began to collect guns after he graduated from high school; but as most gun owners will tell you, booze and guns do not mix well.

Butch usually kept a gun near him and he was almost always high and/or drunk by the middle of 1974. In one incident, one of Butch's friends made a joke that Butch went the wrong way, so DeFeo pulled a gun on him and made him apologize. In an even more ominous and foretelling event, Butch pointed a shotgun at Ronald Senior and pulled the trigger, but the gun was empty.

By the middle of 1974, Butch was spending very little time at the DeFeo home. He later claimed that he married a woman in New Jersey and had a child with her during this time, but there are no records of the union. Butch's friends later said that he spent most of the time crashing at various people's homes or passing out in motel rooms.

There were definitely multiple warning signs that Butch was capable of, and likely to commit a horrendous crime, but his parents continued to ignore them. Butch's penchant for drug use and violent behavior continued to grow, until he crossed the line by stealing from the Brigante family.

Needing more money for drugs, Butch and a friend hatched a plot to rob the Brigante car dealership in Brooklyn. While Butch was working, his friend came into the building armed, and robbed the business of \$20,000. It was an extremely bold move to rob a known mafia-backed business. The Brigante and DeFeo families knew that Butch was involved, so they did nothing.

Like his mafioso family members, Butch DeFeo must have thought he was untouchable—untouchable enough to commit murder.

The Murders

The exact details concerning how Butch DeFeo murdered his family remain obscure. Although he confessed to his crime, there are still unanswered questions. Butch changed his story numerous times. Based on the combination of DeFeo's confession and an examination of the available forensic evidence, the police were able to reconstruct a fairly accurate chronology of what happened.

Sometime in the early morning hours of November 13, Butch DeFeo loaded his thirty-five-caliber Marlin rifle and slowly crept up the stairs of the house at 112 Ocean Drive. He first entered his parents' bedroom and shot them in their heads. He then shot his brothers and sisters. Investigators believe that Louise and Allison were awake when he killed them. The members of the DeFeo family were killed with cold-blooded precision. There was no relishing of his kills—at least not immediately after the murders.

After killing his family, Butch set to work to clean up the crime scene.

DeFeo knew that disposing of six bodies would do no good, so he tried to distance himself from the scene. First, he took a shower to wash his family's blood off his body. Next, he picked up all the bullet casings from the house, which was one of the last things DeFeo needed to worry about, if he planned to evade justice. After a few hours of cleanup, the sun began to rise and it was time for the DeFeo men to go to work.

Only one of the DeFeo men would show up for work on this day.

After extensive cleanup, Butch drove to work at the Brooklyn car dealership to establish an alibi. On the way to work he threw his bloody clothes and gun in a storm drain. While at work, he made sure to call the house more than once in front of his co-workers, in order to further solidify his alibi. He told his coworkers he had spent the night at a girlfriend's house, and he had not been to the family home in Amityville for several days. He acted visibly perturbed when no one answered his calls.

After he got done with work, he drove to one of his favorite Long Island watering holes, "Henry's Bar," and proclaimed to the bar patrons, *"You got to help me! I think my mother and father are shot!"*

A few of his friends from the bar drove with Butch back to the DeFeo house where they found the carnage.

Because the city of Amityville had a low crime rate, and because most mass murders of families turn out to be perpetrated by a family member, Butch immediately became a suspect. The detectives played the classic "good cop, bad cop" routine by listening to his story initially before coming at him hard. DeFeo told the detectives that he thought the murders were part of a mob hit

related to his mother's and father's connections to the *Cosa Nostra*.

But the detectives were not fooled. Mob hits rarely involve family members of intended targets and never to the extent that took place at 112 Ocean Drive.

As the hours went by, the interview gradually turned into an interrogation, and Ronald DeFeo Junior eventually admitted to murdering his entire family.

"Once I started, I just couldn't stop," said DeFeo to the detectives. *"It went so fast."*

After DeFeo admitted to the murders, it seemed that his trial would be an open-and-shut case.

The Trial and Aftermath

Ronald DeFeo Junior's defense team had a tough road in front of them. Their client stood accused of being the worst family annihilator in modern American history, and there seemed to be no doubt that he did it. The confession was the biggest piece of evidence against DeFeo, but there were also circumstantial and forensic evidence that firmly pointed to Butch as the culprit.

The defense team concluded that Butch had committed the grisly murders, but they saw a possibility of acquittal when they considered his motive. Although Butch stood to gain from a life insurance policy on his father's life, money was never a concern before the murders, because his parents gave him whatever he wanted. And why would he kill the rest of the family?

The only explanation could be insanity.

DeFeo's lawyers mounted a spirited insanity defense, wherein they claimed their client was driven to mass murder by voices he heard. The prosecution countered that Ronald DeFeo Junior may have suffered from psychological problems, but they were largely the result of his heavy drug and alcohol use, and he knew the difference between right and wrong when he annihilated his family.

The jury agreed and convicted Ronald DeFeo Junior of six counts of second-degree murder on November 21, 1975, just over a year after he committed the

murders. He was sentenced to six concurrent sentences of twenty-five years to life, which means that he may be released on parole someday.

But the good citizens of Amityville need not worry. There is virtually no chance that will happen.

The magnitude of the murders at 112 Ocean Drive has led to many legends and speculation surrounding the case. Many people believe, due to the quickness of the murders—the police believe they all took place within a fifteen-minute span—and the fact that there was no struggle by the victims, that there must have been more than one killer involved. Investigators involved in the case dispute this theory and point out that ballistics tests proved that only one gun was used to kill all six people.

Speculation has also been fueled by numerous interviews DeFeo has given over the years from prison.

In one interview, Butch claimed that Dawn killed Ronald Senior and the mother killed the other children before turning the gun on herself. In another interview, Butch said that Dawn and an unknown male accomplice killed the family and that when he came home to the carnage, he killed Dawn out of anger.

In still yet another version of the murders, recorded in the book *The Night the DeFeos Died*, by Ric Osuna, Butch claimed that he, Dawn, and two other people, committed all the murders.

Surviving detectives and prosecutors who worked on the case stated that DeFeo's changing stories are indicative of the man's manipulative personality, and should be discounted. The chances of DeFeo winning a new trial are about as good as him making parole—Ronald DeFeo Junior will die in prison.

Of course, one cannot discuss the murders at 112 Ocean Drive without mentioning the impact it had on pop culture. After the massacre of the DeFeo family in 1974, the house sat empty for nearly two years until the Lutz family bought it at a bargain price in 1976. Less than a month later, the Lutz family moved out, claiming the house was haunted. The experiences of the Lutzes were turned into a book by Jay Anson titled *The Amityville Horror*. Although

the book was said by critics to be a hoax, and later, residents of the house reported no paranormal activity, it spawned a movie by the same name and several sequels.

Hordes of gawkers routinely visited the house during the first few years after the massacre.

Today, the house at 112 Ocean Drive has been remodeled and is unrecognizable. Although recent television shows about the paranormal, and some newer movies that use part of the legend for their plots, have renewed interest in the house;, hordes of gawkers and scores of Halloween pranksters have not been seen there since the early 1980s.

Chapter 11: The Airtight Bridge Murder

The world is full of creepy places. One does not have to peruse cable television very long, to find an assortment of television shows where people investigate supposed paranormal activity emanating from a specific location. Usually, the location tends to be a house. There is probably a legendary “haunted house” nearby where you live and if not, you have no doubt heard a tale about a haunted house sometime during your life.

But there are other places that produce a creepy feeling for all those who visit.

Mental hospitals, both currently operating and decommissioned, seem to give people feelings of unease when driving by. Cemeteries too, for obvious reasons, send off a creepy vibe to the living. You may have played the game of holding your breath when going past a cemetery when you were a child.

But have you ever heard of a creepy bridge?

A bridge in rural Central Illinois fits this description for a number of reasons. The isolated location gives it a sense of stillness, which is how it received its name from the local denizens—the “Airtight Bridge.” On its own merits, the Airtight Bridge was certainly creepy enough to be included in any survey of scary places, but the bridge was also the location of a murder mystery that, as of the writing of this book, remains unsolved.

A Quiet Locale

A cursory glance at the Airtight Bridge reveals nothing of interest. The steel truss bridge, with a wooden deck and concrete piers, was constructed just over 100 years ago, in 1914. The bridge spans the small Embarras River in Coles County, Illinois, in the farming belt of the east central part of the state. Overall, the area is known for being quiet, but the bridge is known for being particularly so.

Visitors who cross the creepy bridge quickly notice that it is unnaturally silent, even though the bridge is extremely old and its deck is comprised of wooden planks. Because of the bridge’s unnatural stillness, it earned the moniker the Airtight Bridge.

The bridge's frightening reputation has not scared people away from it. Throughout the past 100 years, hundreds of high school kids and students from nearby Eastern Illinois University, have used the Airtight Bridge as a hookup spot and party location, as evidenced by the empty beer cans strewn about its base on any given day.

It was a discovery by two people near the Airtight Bridge in 1980, that added to the bridge's reputation of a creepy place, and began a murder mystery that continues to the present.

The Body

Although the Airtight Bridge is known for its eerie silence, the area around it can be pretty active, especially in the fall. Besides high school and college kids using the area around the bridge as a party spot, local hunters are also a common sight.

The fields, river bottoms, and ditches of Central Illinois come alive from September through November with hunters looking to bag small game, usually pheasants or deer. On the morning of October 19, 1980, two deer hunters wandered to the river bottom near the Airtight Bridge, on the trail of a buck. When they got to the bridge, they were horrified to find the body of a woman instead of a buck.

The two hunters immediately called the Coles County Sheriff's Department. When the deputy sheriffs arrived, they were unable to process the scene.

"I could tell from when I got there that [the body] was missing its head and feet," said Darrell Cox, who was a deputy sheriff at the time. "I remember when I first saw it standing on the bridge, it didn't look like a person."

After the body was sent to the county medical examiner, it was determined that the person was a female, and more than likely, a homicide victim. An accidental drowning would not result in the decapitation of the body, especially in a body of water like the Embarras River, where there is no boating activity.

But computer and forensic technology was limited in 1980, and the Coles County Sheriff's Department had a difficult time identifying the Airtight Body. They put out a report via telex to other law enforcement agencies in

the region, but none responded.

Local residents initially found the reports frightening, but when they learned that the body was not one of their own, they took the matter in stride. The discovery of the body added more mystery to the already strange Airtight Bridge, but most locals moved on with their lives.

As the years went by, it seemed as though the mystery of the body discovered at the Airtight Bridge would never be solved.

By the early 1990s, advances in forensic and computer science, such as the internet and DNA profiling, meant that identifying the Airtight Jane Doe had become a reality. Although the CODIS DNA database would still not be a reality for a few more years, if the Coles County investigators could receive a good tip, there was the possibility of matching Jane Doe's DNA sample.

In 1992, a woman named Virginia learned that her estranged sister had been missing since 1980. Virginia filed a missing person report that eventually caught the eye of a detective in Illinois, who matched the missing woman identified as Diana Small to the Airtight Jane Doe.

Although DNA profiling was still fairly new, and was time consuming and expensive in 1992, technicians were able to match Virginia's DNA to the Airtight Jane Doe. In this way, they confirmed the body was Diana Small's. It turned out that Diana Small was a wife and mother, which perplexed authorities when they wondered why she was never reported missing.

In 1980, Diana was living with her family less than 100 miles away in the city of Bradley. When she disappeared, her husband never reported her missing because he said that she often left without telling him. Diana's mother and sister, Virginia, also left Illinois around that time to become part of a strict religious community in the Western United States. After joining the community, the two women cut off contact with all of their family members. It was not until Virginia left the religious community that she attempted to contact her estranged, and unbeknownst to her at the time, dead sister.

The police know that they have a murder on their hands, but no arrests have been made, and the case currently remains open.

Chapter 12: The Kenneth Bill Murder Case

Personal relationships can be difficult, and for many people, letting go of one can seem like death. Despite the difficulty involved with ending an intense physical relationship, most people eventually move on with their lives.

But some people cannot let go.

Some people's identities are wrapped up in a relationship, and others are co-dependent and need to be in a relationship for their lives to be validated. After these people experience breakups, they sometimes stalk their exes with constant phone calls, while others resort to more extreme measures.

The most obsessed of them will try to sabotage their former lovers' relationships, and the most extreme, may resort to violence.

The Kenneth Bill murder case is an example of the latter, but it is the details of the case that make it more than just another spurned lover turned to violence story. All of the people involved in the case were elderly, which is statistically rare for crimes of passion. Also, the killer tried to bargain with his former lover and her current husband with a most indecent proposal.

The Affair

The early 1970s was a period of transition in the United Kingdom. British society was just emerging from the “counterculture” movement that gripped most western nations in the 1960s. The U.K. was entering into a period that was known for unemployment and labor strikes. It was during this period of economic uncertainty that two British twenty-something's—Ken Bill and Carol Hay—met and embarked on a strong physical relationship that would be extinguished, and then rekindled, after nearly forty years.

Ken Bill and Carol Hay seemed to have a lot of the same interests in the early 1970s. They both liked to party and were deeply attracted to each other. But like most relationships that are built primarily on physical attraction, the relationship began to wane and came to an end after five years.

Ken Bill and Carol Hay went their separate ways and started new lives.

Kenneth Bill eventually met another woman, got married, and started a family. He stayed in Yorkshire where he had grown up, and to friends and family, he seemed happy.

Carol also met another man. Not long after breaking up with Kenneth Bill, Carol met and married John Hay, who was a police officer in Yorkshire. John and Carol had two children together, and eventually those children married and gave the Hays grandchildren.

Although Kenneth Bill and Carol Hay appeared happy with their families, to some people the “grass is always greener on the other side.”

In October 2011, Ken Bill decided to look up his old flame Carol, for whom he still held a torch. After a brief phone conversation, Ken and Carol decided to meet, and shortly thereafter, they rekindled their intense physical relationship.

Kenneth Bill invested himself totally into the affair, and even proposed leaving his wife for Carol, but she had second thoughts about the relationship. She told Ken that she did not want to leave her husband. Ken replied that would be all right as long as he could “share” her with John Hay. He even wrote the following letter that he gave to Carol to give to her husband:

“John,

I am writing this not to tell you that Carol and I have been seeing each other since last October and she was going to move into a bungalow with me after Christmas. I am writing to ask you to tell her that you won't mind if she sees me occasionally. . . I hope you will be able to let her carry on seeing me occasionally as I am sure this will give her the best of both worlds. I want her to be happy and I am sure you do too, she deserves it don't you think? If you decide that you don't want her to see me again, please don't mention this letter to her, just look after her and keep her safe.”

K”

Carol was flabbergasted by the content of the letter which led to her breaking off the affair with Bill shortly thereafter. She never showed her husband the

letter, but it was revealed months later during the police investigation.

Carol's decision to end her affair with Kenneth Bill set into motion a process that left one man dead, and another man spending the remainder of his life in prison.

The Ploy

Using the name Eric Johnson, Kenneth Bill called John Hay to arrange a business meeting on March 13, 2012.

John Hay was not suspicious of the caller who wanted to meet him in a vacant industrial building in West Yorkshire. The subsequent court proceedings show that John Hay never told his wife about the meeting.

Carol Hay could have alerted her husband to his impending meeting with doom.

When John Hay arrived at the vacant building, he never had time to think something was wrong.

Kenneth Bill ambushed his romantic rival and beat him to death with a club. The first part of Kenneth Bill's well-laid out homicide went well—there were no witnesses who saw him do the deed. He now had to carry out the next part of his plan, which he thought would draw attention away from himself.

Bill taped Hay's arms and legs, wrapped the body in plastic, and put it into the trunk of his car. Before he could dispose of John's body, though, he had to take Hays' car away from the scene of the murder. He drove the car a short way to a bridge over a river. He left the car with the driver's side door open to give the impression of a suicide. Bill then walked back to the scene of the crime and got into his own car.

He needed to get rid of John Hay's body.

Kenneth Bill drove to a rural area of West Yorkshire, built a bonfire, and put John Hay's corpse in the middle of the pyre. After tending to the fire for several hours, John Hay's body was reduced to bone chips and a pile of ashes.

Kenneth Bill believed he had committed the perfect crime.

Every law enforcement officer and probably every criminal as well, will tell you that there is no such thing as a perfect crime. True, there are plenty of unsolved murders, and there are plenty of people who get away with murder, but no matter how hard a killer may try, there is always a loose end somewhere.

In Kenneth Bill's case, he had too many connections to his victim.

When the police told Carol Hay that they had found her husband's car parked on a bridge, she immediately suspected foul play at the hands of her spurned paramour. Kenneth Bill apparently believed that Carol Hay would keep her mouth shut about their affair, but instead, she relayed her suspicions to the West Yorkshire Police, who then called Bill in for questioning.

Almost immediately, the police knew they had their man. After catching Bill in numerous lies, such as not knowing Carol or Jay, the West Yorkshire detectives finally got the killer to confess.

Bill pled guilty to murder and in September 2012, he was sentenced to twenty-two years in prison, which was essentially be a life sentence for the sixty-three-year old.

The Hay family was glad that Jay's killer was caught and given a lengthy prison sentence, but upset that they never recovered Jay's body, which the judge pointed out at sentencing.

"You were so keen to indulge your own emotions that you carried out this wicked murder. Not only did you murder him but by disposing of his body in the cold-hearted way you did, you have robbed his family of the chance of giving him a decent burial," noted the judge as he passed sentence on Bill.

Conclusion

The litany of crimes examined in this anthology is truly terrible, but includes events one can learn from. If anyone should take a lesson from these stories, it is to be aware at all times because crime can strike at any moment.

The unpredictable nature of mass murder is enough to make any person shudder at the thought of what one would do if caught in the middle of one. You would like to think that you would make it to safety, but a hesitation of one second could mean the end of your life.

Unfortunately, mass murders will continue to take place well into the foreseeable future.

Yes, crime will continue, and there will no doubt be more bizarre crimes committed like the ones profiled in this book.

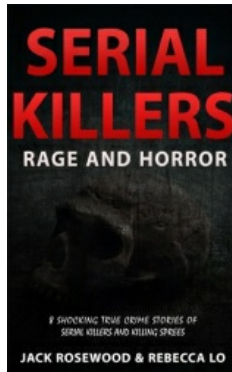
High-profile crimes will also continue to draw headlines, and perhaps some of the questions asked about the high-profile cases examined in this book, will finally be answered.

Most importantly, one must always remember to peel away the top layer when dealing with important crime cases, because what lies beneath, is usually more important. The underlying reality proves that sometimes things are not always as they seem, but if one looks hard enough, the totality can be revealed.



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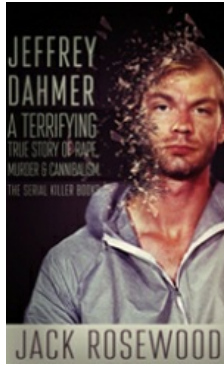
From rampage killers to hunters that seek out human prey in the shadows of the night, this serial killer anthology is a collection of horror stories. Collectively these men were responsible for hundreds of deaths, and they all belong in the realm of the worst serial killers to date. Delve into eight different cases and explore the heinous deeds committed, the background of each killer, and the apparent motives for their crimes.

There are those who went on deadly rampages, such as Cho Seung-Hui and George Hennard; men who decided to inflict as much terror in one day as they possibly could. Famous serial killers are included, such as the Hillside Stranglers, Kenneth Bianchi and Angelo Buono, and the Beast of the Ukraine, Anatoly Onoprienko. There are also lesser known murderers such as Fritz Haarmann and Ronald Dominique, who preyed on young men for their own deviant pleasures.

Each of these true murder stories will leave you with a sense of horror and perhaps a little fear. David Parker Ray's surviving victims still live in fear today, and this notorious true crime story is one of the most sadistic and disturbing. With tales of torture, mind control and violence, very few survived their time in Ray's toy box.

The true crime stories in this book have been selected because of the horrendous nature of their actions and the sheer volume of victims they slaughtered. Innocent people, going about their daily business or asleep in their beds, all make up these serial killers true crime stories.

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Few serial killers in history have garnered as much attention as Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer. Although Dahmer killed seventeen young men and boys, it was not so much the number of people he killed that makes him stand out among famous serial killers, but more so the acts of depravity that he committed on the corpses of his victims. In this true crime story you will read how Dahmer transitioned from a loner to serial killer, committing numerous unnatural acts along the way such as necrophilia and cannibalism. Following in the macabre tradition of another infamous Wisconsin serial killer—Ed Gein—Jeffrey Dahmer terrorized Milwaukee for most of the 1980s until he was finally captured in 1991.

Perhaps one of the most frightening aspects of Jeffrey Dahmer's serial killer career was how easy he was able to lure his victims into his trap. Dahmer possessed above average intellect, was conventionally good looking, and usually had a calm demeanor that could disarm even the most paranoid of people. Because of these traits, Dahmer was able to evade justice numerous times, which allowed him to keep killing. Truly, Dahmer was able to fool his family, the police, his neighbors, and even the judicial system into believing that he was not a threat; but during the entire time his kill count increased and the body parts of his victims began to pile up around his apartment.

Open the pages of this book to read a story that is among the most disturbing of all true crime serial killers. You will follow the course of Dahmer's life from an alcoholic outcast in high school to a vicious predator who stalked the streets of Milwaukee. Finally, you will read about Dahmer's trial, his jail house murder, and the impact that his many crimes had on Milwaukee.

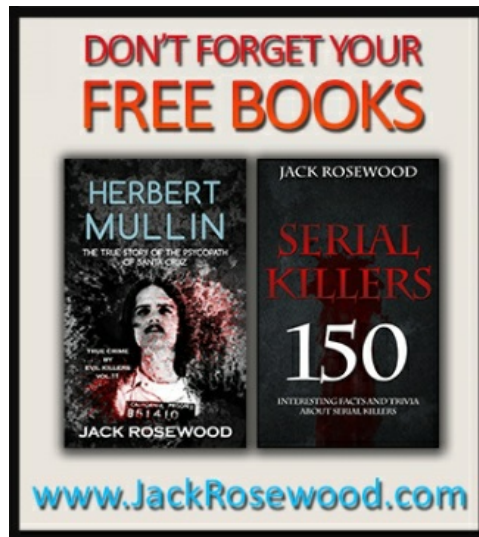
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