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A 7-year-old girl is killed in a Nevada casino. A once-promising Long Beach teenager is accused of her murder. All part of . . .

The Fractured Life of Jeremy

By NORA ZAMICHOW, Times Staff Writer

It was supposed to be a brief stop at the Primadonna casino, 43 miles south of Las Vegas, but one poker game led to another. By 3 a.m. May 25, 1997, Jeremy Strohmeyer and David Cash were tired of hanging around the arcade, waiting for David's dad.

Bored, the two 18-year-olds decided to urinate on some coin-operated games. David chose Big Bertha, whose polka-dot dress flared when players hurled balls into her gaping red mouth. Jeremy selected a helicopter game. Then a wall socket. He and David laughed. Jeremy, wearing baggy shorts and a backward UCLA Bruins baseball cap, struck up a conversation with a 16-year-old girl. He showed off the phony ID he had used to buy a whiskey Coke and beer. He stuck out his tongue, pierced by a steel rod. He pulled up his oversized navy blue T-shirt so she could see his nipple rings.

Creepy guy, thought the girl. Nice body, Jeremy thought. She avoided giving him her beeper number and lied about where she lived. As the two chatted, a wadded-up wet paper towel hit Jeremy. Nearby, a 7-year-old girl named Sherrice Iverson was playing with a little boy. They pelted each other with paper wads. Jeremy picked up the fallen missile and tossed it at Sherrice. He chased her, and she sprinted away, her blue sailor dress swinging and her black cowboy boots padding along the carpet.

For the next 11 minutes, they dodged around the arcade, loping up one aisle and down the next, amid the din of galactic wars, race cars and battling superheroes. A tall blond teenager from a wealthy Long Beach family playing tag with a small black girl from South-Central, whose dad was on disability. She weighed 46 pounds and stood just under 4 feet. He was nearly 2 feet taller and outweighed her by 100 pounds.

Sherrice darted into the ladies restroom at 3:47 a.m. Her 14-year-old half brother, Harold, was talking with the teenage girl. Jeremy went to the water fountain. He swallowed, inhaled deeply on his Marlboro and followed the little girl into the restroom.

Acting Out in Singapore, Living a Divided Life in Long Beach

Like students elsewhere, kids at Woodrow Wilson High School divide themselves into cliques. There are dorks, surfers, jocks and druggies. Jeremy Strohmeyer entered Wilson in 1996, midway through 11th grade. He had returned to Long Beach after a year in Singapore, where his mother had worked for a computer company. He was initially considered a dork.

He maintained a 3.5 grade point average without studying hard, took Advanced Placement classes and hoped to attend West Point or the Air Force Academy. He had built his own computer as a sophomore and wrote poetry. He had a passion for flying, a hobby he shared with his father, and talked of being a pilot.

Jeremy's family was well-to-do, which was unusual for Wilson High. His parents' income was in the six figures. They took cruises and traveled. A maid cleaned the house. They owned a single-engine, four-seater airplane and four cars, including two BMWs and a 1980 Jaguar. When Jeremy's older sister, Heather, was into show riding, they joked about being "horse poor."

Jeremy wore an expression that ricocheted from irreverent to ingenuous. He was self-conscious about his short brown-blond hair, which tended to stick up. When he concentrated, he'd furrow his brow and suck in his lower lip. It gave him an air of fierce intensity.

"Of the 4,000 or 5,000 kids I've taught," says John Crutchfield, Jeremy's favorite teacher, "he was in the top 1% in terms of just being a good kid."

Although Jeremy had begun to act out in Singapore—he started drinking and mouthing off—Winnie and John Strohmeyer thought of him as sensitive, kind, funny. He was the type of son who presented his mother a rhinestone necklace on Mother's Day, and charmed a neighbor into giving an old German piano to his family. Everyone could envision him as a lawyer, a doctor, an astronaut, a politician.

But in his year and a half at Wilson High, Jeremy began to live a sharply divided life. He harbored secrets. Things he didn't tell his friends, like being adopted. Things he hid from his parents, like his increasing use of tweak, or amphetamines. And things he kept almost entirely to himself, like his collection of child pornography and his desire to dress his girlfriend as a schoolgirl in a uniform and pigtails.

Jeremy compartmentalized with such finesse that those who knew one side scarcely fathomed the other. By 12th grade, his friends thought Jeremy was going through "senioritis." His parents assumed it was adolescent rebellion.

Sure, his classmates viewed him as a hard partyer who occasionally drank too much. So what? Lots of kids do. Yes, he had a violent temper that could sweep him along like a child in a flood channel. Like when he'd had too much tequila and spit in the face of one of the school's jocks. Or when he uncorked a stream of profanities after a hostess asked him to leave a party.

"I think you are going to find," Crutchfield says, "that Jeremy is two different people. There's some physical resemblance between the two."

'We Were Normal High School Kids,' a Friend Recalls

At Wilson, Jeremy immediately hit it off with Crutchfield, whom he called Crutch. The former lawyer taught a career guidance course. He was enthusiastic and honest, a grown-up whom any parent would want their kid to stick to like a barnacle. Crutch and Jeremy understood each other. After all, Crutch had been a rebel as a youth—and, many would say, he still was. Who else would trade a lucrative law practice for a big city high school, more than halving his income?

Jeremy sat in the front row of Crutch's class, pressing for details, challenging statements. He dropped in at lunch, talking about Steinbeck, bagging on Crutch for his taste in bestsellers and "dinosaur rock," stuff from the '60s. Although he knew little about volleyball, Jeremy went out for junior varsity because Crutch was the coach.

Jeremy was hardly the team's best, but he played with heart. If a ball was about to land 10 feet from the nearest player, Jeremy would be the one who would dive for it. He'd be first to show up for practice, sweeping the gym floor, and last to leave, entertaining Crutch with imitations of comedian Adam Sandler.

One of Jeremy's first friends at Wilson was Justin Ware, a sophomore who was a starter on the team. Popular and easygoing, Justin fit with the surfer and jock crowd. "We were normal high school kids," Justin says. "We'd go to parties, go surfin', go on double dates—the basic stuff."

They'd spin plans the way friends do. They intended to water ski, travel to Mexico, kick back and go fishing. One of their rituals was to visit the Borders bookstore where Justin's mother, Earlynn, worked. To her surprise, Jeremy would hang out and talk about politics, books, the news. Jeremy, who referred to Johnnie Cochran as a member of "The Scheme Team," raged at the O.J. Simpson verdict. How could society allow a murderer to walk free, he asked.

But Justin's father distrusted the teenager. Something about Jeremy set him on edge. "Like when you go across a river and there's a stone out there you have to step on and you're just not sure about it," John Ware says. "I just had an uncertain feeling about Jeremy, but I didn't know what it was."

Shortly after Ware's son became friends with Jeremy, Justin blew off his 11 p.m. curfew. He came home drunk, prying the screen off his bedroom window in an attempt to enter the house undetected. Earlynn and John stood in Justin's room as he and his buddies tumbled in.

"Did you guys have a good time?" Earlynn asked. "Pack up your stuff. You're going home."

Noticing a Pepsi can with ashes on top, she demanded: "Which one of you broncos is smoking?"

It was Jeremy.

Although the other boys were sloppy drunk, Jeremy seemed relatively sober. Experienced drinker, John thought.

Other things cropped up. One month Jeremy chalked up $80 on the Wares' phone bill calling girls he had met on the Internet. Another time, John overheard Jeremy bragging about his sexual exploits in Singapore, where young girls would do just about anything for a pack of cigarettes. Here, everybody was so uptight.

Youthful bluster, figured Earlynn. John wondered.

Drinking and Partying and Falling for a Girl

In June, after the school year was over, a police officer spotted Jeremy behind the wheel of a swerving black Volkswagen square-back. He was arrested for drunk driving.

As his mother drove him home from the police station, Jeremy flew into a rage. He started pounding the car windows. His mother was so scared he was going to hit her, he told friends, she demanded he get out of the car. He slept on the beach.

Jeremy's driver's license was yanked. He was ordered to attend counseling and to perform 80 hours of community service. The DUI made it unlikely that he'd be accepted by a military academy, even with SAT scores of 1360.

It couldn't have happened at a worse time. Jeremy had met Agnes Oak Lee, a 17-year-old from Cerritos who was going off to college in Santa Barbara in the fall. They talked between downing shots of Crown Royale at a party. Before the night was over, Jeremy was smitten.

Jeremy looked back on that first evening in a letter to Agnes: ". . . I realized my respect for you along with my desires to kiss you, hold you, and take care of you were not just some small, insignificant feelings. They were actually bound together inside of me. Bound in my aching heart. After thinking hard about it, I decided that I must love you."

But how could he court the woman of his dreams without a driver's license?

Jeremy's arrest stunned his parents. "As best I can figure, we didn't see him coming home drunk," says Winnie. "The DUI was quite a surprise. We couldn't tell when he'd been drinking. Or I suppose we would have been taking preventive measures."

The incident was a reminder of troubles they'd had with Jeremy in Singapore. A month after the family's arrival, they would occasionally smell alcohol on him.

"From a child who never drank, he was coming home with alcohol on his breath," says John. "I'd say, 'What's this? What's this?' "

They worried that Jeremy was having a difficult time making friends. They didn't realize that he had fallen in with a bunch of expatriate kids who gathered at bars and drank heavily. An executive for the hightech firm Western Digital, Winnie worked long hours that sometimes spilled into weekends. Every three weeks or so, she would be gone for 10-day stretches.

"I tried to be like Mr. Mom," says John, who had left his real estate job in the States to be with the family. "Curfew was at 11. That was how I grew up. We had accountability for both our children. But it was harder to maintain in Singapore."

When Winnie's assignment was extended, the Strohmeyers tried to enroll Jeremy for one more semester in the Singapore American School. To their shock, the school turned them down. If Jeremy hadn't already planned to leave, the administration informed them, it would have expelled him: He had shown up stoned on the final day of classes.

John didn't believe them. He had taken Jeremy to school and picked him up. "Nothing was happening that day," he says. "They were all just turning in their books. There had been a big party the night before. He'd gone to that. His eyes were red from swimming and the chlorine in the pool. He said to me the night before, 'Dad, don't forget to wake me for school.' If he was drunk or stoned, would he have said that?"

With Jeremy's return to Long Beach, the Strohmeyers hoped that his drinking was behind him. They worried instead about his attitude. In Singapore, their well-mannered boy had become disrespectful, particularly to his mother.

"He wasn't listening to me at all," Winnie says. "He was more and more challenging me—like, how did I know anything? He was being obstinate, and there was a lot of back talk. Jeremy was getting more isolated and remote."

She and John reassured themselves. Singapore was difficult for the whole family, not the adventure they had hoped. Jeremy's behavior was the normal stuff of adolescent rebellion. They had turned against their own parents as kids too. Was this so different?

A Doting Father and a Run of Misfortune in Sherrice's Family

By 3:30 a.m. Sunday, May 25, Sherrice Marshay Renee Iverson was restless and tired. Security guards twice had escorted the 7-year-old to her father, Leroy, that night, including once after she and Harold had walked to Buffalo Bill's casino, across the street from the Primadonna.

Leroy got mad at Harold. Next to the slot machines, he made a fist and yelled at him three times, "I oughta kill you," a security guard would remember later. After that, Sherrice and her half brother stayed downstairs at the Primadonna's arcade.

She had fallen asleep sitting in the driver's seat of Final Lap, a race car game. Shy and pretty, Sherrice had been to the Primadonna many times. Leroy had what his brother-in-law called "gamblin' fever."

A 58-year-old retired tour bus driver, Leroy was not in good health. He walked with a cane and suffered from asthma and high blood pressure. His emphysema necessitated periodic doses of oxygen, and his diabetes required insulin injections.

Leroy forbade Sherrice to play outside their apartment. It was too dangerous, he said. Not like the rural Louisiana of his childhood. To him, the Primadonna was attractive, with its white ersatz Victorian architecture and its immaculately tended courtyard, where droopy pansies were replaced by fresh ones. Surely, here he could drop the reins and let his kids roam. Here was a place where a shambling man, even if he had dirt under his overgrown nails and only one front tooth, faced the same odds as anyone else.

Sherrice's mother, Yolanda Renee Manuel, didn't come on this trip. She and Leroy had fought two weeks earlier, and she had moved in with her sister. Yolanda had met Leroy when he was 45, a single father with a baby son, and she was a 15-year-old high school student. At 16, she moved in with him. When she became pregnant, she dropped out of school.

The 30-year age difference, which initially drew them together, flung them apart as she grew older. He kept his food in one refrigerator; she used another. She slept in the bedroom of their apartment, cuddling Sherrice; Leroy slept in the living room. Once, she smashed the windows of his truck and he took her to court, testifying that she was an alcoholic.

Leroy had a run of misfortune when it came to his children. Two-month-old Leron died of sudden infant death syndrome in 1986. Born prematurely, Johnta died from respiratory failure in 1988. Jonathan, 17 months old, died from a swelling of the brain due to acute meningitis.

County social workers had been repeatedly called to Leroy's home to investigate allegations of abuse—claims that were never substantiated. During a 10-month period after Jonathan's death, social workers visited the household 58 times as part of a program designed to keep families intact and to better their parenting skills.

Leroy doted on Sherrice. He dropped her off at school in the morning and picked her up at 2:30, arriving 20 minutes early so she never waited. No other second-grader at 75th Street Elementary School had a daddy who did that.

Sherrice's teachers thought of her as affectionate and trusting. Her hair was neatly braided. Her clothes looked freshly ironed. She struggled with reading, was scared of the dark, adored "The Little Mermaid," loved the color purple and liked to jump rope. She wanted to be a nurse or a policewoman or a model or a dancer.

Leroy didn't trust baby-sitters. So when he went gambling just across the Nevada border, he always took Sherrice and Harold. It had become a family ritual. On this Memorial Day weekend, they scrambled into his '91 white Dodge van and left Los Angeles at 8 p.m. to avoid traffic. Wearing a white "Jesus Loves Me" T-shirt, Leroy pulled into the Primadonna parking lot around midnight. Leroy told Harold he was in charge of Sherrice and gave each $5 to play arcade games. Leroy then headed for the slot machines.

One Biological Parent in Prison, the Other in a Mental Hospital

When Winnie and John Strohmeyer describe how they met, they piece together their romance with the crispness of 28 years of marriage.

John, 54, now a general manager for a manufacturing firm, wears dress or plaid shirts. He'll put his silver-rimmed glasses on a table and forget where they are.

A former human resources director, Winnie, also 54, now works part time as a consultant. Her blond hair rests neatly above her shoulders, the front strands fastened in a barrette at the back of her head.

If it's possible to fall in love with a place, Winnie did just that when she came to Southern California from Chicago for a wedding in the mid-'60s. She slapped a daisy sticker on the back of her blue Volkswagen Bug and got a job as a social worker for the Catholic Youth Organization.

John, who grew up in New Jersey, left the Air Force in 1966 and moved to California, vowing that he had shoveled his last snow. On his first Christmas, he walked down the beach in Santa Monica, ate an apple and congratulated himself for his wisdom in relocating.

He worked at Continental Airlines and lived in Manhattan Beach. One afternoon Winnie, who lived across the street, asked him to help carry boxes. Nice-looking fellow, she thought.

John invited her to dinner. The following weekend, they went to the beach. "I love you," John told her. "I'm going to wind up marrying you."

God, Winnie thought, guys and their pickup lines.

They dated for a year and a half before marrying in 1970. They were 26. Their plan was to adopt one baby and conceive another. The paperwork, though, stretched on. After six years, Winnie gave birth to Heather.

When, in 1980, an adoption counselor approached them with photos of a blue-eyed baby, they were captivated. His name was Gerald Paul. He was 18 months old. The foster parents, who called the toddler Ger Bear, wanted to adopt, but social workers considered them too old.

Winnie and John renamed the boy Jeremy Joseph. This way they could still call him Ger.

They stayed in touch with the foster parents, visiting every Thanksgiving. When they told 4-year-old Jeremy he was adopted, they couched the news in loving terms, explaining that he was lucky because he had a mom and a dad and foster parents who all adored him. Sometimes Jeremy would talk about wanting to find his birth mother, because he figured she must be lonely. Wouldn't it be nice, he'd ask, to take her on vacation with us?

At the time, the Strohmeyers knew nothing about their son's biological parents. "I didn't care what his background was," says John. Only recently did Winnie and John discover that Jeremy has two other siblings, both adopted: an older half brother and a younger full brother, who suffers from behavioral problems.

Jeremy's biological father is serving a 32-month sentence for possession with intent to sell marijuana. For most of the past 10 years, Jeremy's attorneys would later learn, he has been in California prisons for drug-related crimes.

Jeremy's birth mother was from an upper-class family. She had a drug problem. At the time of Jeremy's birth, she was in her teens, confined to a psychiatric ward at the county hospital, having been declared unable to care for herself.

Diagnosed as a schizophrenic, she has been committed to a California state hospital for 11 years. In the course of her life, she has been committed 70 times, according to court records. She has also been diagnosed as having obsessive-compulsive disorder and possibly dipsomania, a form of alcohol dependence.

'Something, Like, Went Haywire or Something, I Don't Know'

Fifteen seconds after Sherrice ran into the ladies restroom, Jeremy strolled in behind her. Curious, his friend David followed.

He saw Jeremy near the door and Sherrice at the opposite end of the room. They had paper towels in their hands. As Jeremy walked toward Sherrice, she grazed his arm with the yellow WET FLOOR sign. ". . . Something, like, went haywire or something, I don't know," Jeremy would later tell Las Vegas police. "It's, like, like when she swung that thing at me, like, I don't know, like, I suddenly, like, reacted."

Jeremy picked up Sherrice with his left arm between her legs and right hand over her mouth. He carried her into the handicapped stall. He locked the door.

David watched. He would admit later that he had a "small degree" of concern. He walked to the adjacent stall, boosted himself up onto the toilet seat and tried to get Jeremy's attention. Sherrice was struggling. As Jeremy clutched the squirming girl, he repeatedly told her, "Shut up or I'll kill you," according to David.

"I was telling him to let go," David would later tell a grand jury, "trying to get him to come out of the restroom. I knew at that point that the little game that they were playing kind of crossed the line.

"I was tapping on his forehead. At one point, I accidentally knocked off his hat. He looked up at me, kind of in a stare, you know, like he didn't care what I was saying."

David walked out of the restroom and left the arcade. "I didn't know what to expect—something bad," he told the grand jury. "I probably feared the worst." He sat on a concrete bench in the courtyard. He had been in the restroom two minutes.

'I Am Alone and Cold in This World of Darkness,' He Wrote

After Jeremy turned 18 on Oct. 11, 1996, early in his senior year, it was as if nobody could tell him what to do. Not his parents, not his friends. Not even Crutch. It was like watching a car speed down an icy road.

He was doing tweak. He was drinking. At a party in a house being taken over by a bank, Jeremy and a friend started to throw marshmallows in the halls. Then they tossed books. Soon they were hurling bottles, kicking holes in the walls. Their destructiveness spread, and most everyone joined in.

At another party, Jeremy sneaked a kitten into his pocket from his host's home. When they drove away, he tossed it out the car window.

He fought with Winnie and John. His mother was a "bitch," his father a "real asshole." They discovered a bottle of Jack Daniels in his room. He lied to them. He'd tell them he needed money for a motel because he was going snowboarding with friends, and then he would pocket the cash, spending the night in a van.

"It's like I can't even carry on an intellectual conversation with them, much less any conversation," he wrote Agnes. "They weary me. Why must this life be so meaningless?"

Jeremy spent hours on the computer in his room. Friends say he would log on to the Internet, using his password "kill." He visited pornography sites named Nasty, Hard Core Heaven, Erotic World and Cyber Porn. Through an e-mail network, he downloaded photos, stories and videos—more than 800 files—mostly child porn. The videos had titles such as "My Daughter at 5" and "Slamming at 6." Each depicted a man having sex with a child. He showed his friends photos of naked amputees, women with Perrier bottles in their vaginas.

He was oversleeping and often missed his first-period class, Advanced Placement English, or he'd doze off at his desk. He cut volleyball practices or showed up late. "It was: 'I don't care what anybody else thinks. I'm Jeremy and I'll do what I want,' " says Crutch. "He was becoming so desensitized and so self-centered."

After Agnes left for college, Jeremy's preoccupation with her increased. She was the only person who understood him, he declared. He was suffocating her, she said. She pulled away. He clung.

She had begun to see him as self-destructive. "He's known to throw things," she would later testify. "He will knock his head on doors. He'll hit his head. He'll bang on any surface. He tries to hurt himself and eventually hurt other people and get into fights over nothing when he's drunk or when he's agitated and extremely angry."

Agnes dropped out of college and told Jeremy she was moving with a man to Maryland. Later, when she joined the Army, she didn't give Jeremy her boot camp address.

He tracked her down and wrote her long love letters:

"Can any person ever feel as empty as I do? I am alone and cold in this world of darkness. Without you all of my senses are void abstracts. I cannot appreciate anything without you. Every night I try not to cry thinking how much I miss you."

"I love you and will always love you. I would die for you."

"I bet [your parents] ask you what you see in someone like me. A mere boy who does not even have his own life in order. Still in high school, doesn't even drive, and hangs out with druggies. He drinks and smokes and does drugs. What could he possibly offer you but pain?

"The thing is, they are partly right. Actually, they are mostly right. I do hang out with druggies, losers, and immature high school kids."

Jeremy's grades plummeted to a 2.1 average. He did not receive an ROTC scholarship. He postponed telling his parents, he wrote Agnes, because he didn't "want to hear any of their s---."

More and more, he hung out with David Cash, a senior who planned on becoming a nuclear engineer. Almost all of Jeremy's friends thought David was an arrogant nerd, but for Jeremy he was an ideal companion: David looked up to him. David laughed at his jokes, didn't judge him or poke fun at his crush on Agnes—and he had access to his mother's 1988 red convertible.

In February, Crutch took Jeremy aside. He suspected that Jeremy was using drugs but only mentioned his erratic attendance. Jeremy scarcely made eye contact. "I'm sorry, coach, " he said. "I know I let the team down."

By March, Agnes had returned from the East Coast. One afternoon, Jeremy's mother walked in on the two having sex. She ordered the young woman to leave. Winnie believed that they wanted to be discovered. Jeremy knew what time she came home.

"There is to be no more Agnes in this house," Winnie told Jeremy.

"If I can't have Agnes in my life, I can't live here," he responded.

"That's a choice you'll have to make."

Jeremy stormed off to his friend Justin's house, asking Earlynn if he could stay with them for a while, explaining that he had gotten caught having sex.

Graduate from high school, get a job, get an apartment, get a life, Earlynn responded. The rules have always been the same, Jeremy. The only thing that's changed is you're 18, and you don't think they apply anymore.

If I'm old enough to vote, he asked, why can't I choose my own sexual partners?

'Everything We Did Pertained to Excitement,' a Friend Says

Jeremy moved into the studio apartment of Jeremy Phillips, a friend who had graduated from Wilson the previous year. Phillips had met Jeremy at a party at Jeremy's house when his parents were away. That night, Phillips drank tequila, passed out and woke up with a vague memory of urinating on Jeremy's father's file cabinet. Jeremy cleaned it up. He wasn't angry. Cool dude, Phillips thought.

"Everything we did pertained to excitement, what kind of thrill could we get," says Phillips.

Jeremy, David and Phillips hung out a lot. They'd cruise Long Beach. Sometimes they'd harass prostitutes and transients, people who wouldn't call police, "lower forms of life," says Phillips.

Once, the three friends drove along Pacific Coast Highway, and Jeremy smashed an egg in a prostitute's face.

On another evening, Phillips brought his BB gun, and as they drove, he fired on a homeless man who had been hassling him. Jeremy was surprised, then he wanted a turn. "It was automatic that you let your friend try," Phillips says.

They aimed for the buttocks, never the head or eyes. "We wouldn't shoot women," says Phillips. "I had my limits anyway."

On about five evenings, Jeremy returned to Phillips' apartment and bragged that he had lured a prostitute to the car and grabbed her arm as the driver sped off. The prostitute was bumped and towed along the street until Jeremy let go. He called it "whore dragging."

When Crutch learned that Jeremy had moved out of his parents' house, he was shocked. He pulled Jeremy aside and accused him of doing drugs. If you want to stay on the team, live with your parents, he said. Jeremy denied any drug use, but he agreed to return home. Phillips was leaving town anyway, unable to keep up with the rent.

Jeremy's parents set several conditions: He would attend school and abide by curfew, and no friends could hang out at the house unless Winnie or John was there.

Crutch saw little improvement. In April, three weeks before the volleyball season ended, Jeremy quit the team.

Agnes was dodging his calls. She had washed out of the Army and was now home. She asked him to return her letters. When he finally reached her, the conversation made his heart sink: She didn't want to see him anymore.

Jeremy wouldn't give up. He pleaded. He offered to remake himself. "If you don't love me, will you give me the chance to earn your love?" he wrote. "My heart is in your hands to do with as you please."

He would stay up all night and clean his room or read or fiddle on the computer or write to Agnes. "It seems like I was awake all of spring break," he wrote her. By the end of vacation, he had popped so much tweak that he said he felt high even when he hadn't taken any.

He tried to see Agnes, but she avoided him. He'd wait for calls from her that never came. One day he went to Agnes' house, and her mother told him she was visiting her grandmother. Not believing her, he asked if he could see Agnes' room. She was not there.

That night, he couldn't sleep. "At about 2:30 [a.m.] I started seeing things out of the corner of my eyes," he wrote Agnes. "Things like moving shadows and what looked like little things scurrying across the floor. It was then that I decided it was time to go to sleep."

In his haze, Jeremy knelt by his bed and begged God to save his relationship with Agnes. He asked God to send a sign. When he turned out the light and lay on his bed, he began seeing demons.

"So, I was looking at the ceiling," he wrote Agnes, "and the last thing I saw before I went to sleep wasn't very promising. I saw what looked like a reflection of myself. Except the picture I saw was of me in a coffin."

Diagnosed as Suffering From Attention Deficit Disorder

David Cash was his best distraction. Jeremy drove with him to visit UC Berkeley, which David planned to attend in the fall. For the hell of it, they both got their tongues pierced. During the trip, David crashed his mother's Chevy. Upon returning, Jeremy got his nipples pierced. He didn't tell his parents, who were still angry about his tongue.

At the end of April, while his mother's car was repaired, David stayed with the Strohmeyers for three weeks. As a thank-you present for their hospitality, David and his father invited Jeremy to Las Vegas on Memorial Day weekend.

To Winnie and John, it was a relief to have Jeremy home. They had been firm with him. When he asked if they would pay for an apartment in Belmont Shore so he could live on his own and attend Cal State Long Beach in the fall, they refused. Sure, they paid for his sister's place, but she had earned it with good grades and hard work. Jeremy, they felt, needed their supervision.

Jeremy agreed to see a therapist. He was diagnosed as suffering from attention deficit disorder, a condition that interferes with a person's ability to focus. The therapist prescribed Dexedrine, an amphetamine.

One week before he went to Las Vegas, Jeremy started taking the prescribed medication.

On May 23, two days before the trip to the Primadonna, records show that he signed onto the Internet, using his moniker Flyboy1030. At 9:07 p.m. Flyboy1030 corresponded with a man who identified himself as an 18-year-old and referred to himself as Litlluvr.

"Do you like little girls?" Litlluvr asked.

"Very much so," Flyboy1030 answered.

"Cool, how young do you like em?"

"I've never had a chance to try anything but I fantasize all the time. I don't know. Probably about 5 or 6."

'I Only Remember Bits and Pieces of What Happened,' He Tells Police

Jeremy took off Sherrice's boots, pulled off her underwear. He molested her, he told the Las Vegas police in a taped statement. Alarmed by her screams, he squeezed her neck.

Startled at the sound of someone entering the restroom, Jeremy sat on Sherrice's stomach, placing her legs behind his, so anyone who looked would think he was using the toilet. He heard Sherrice gasp for air and felt her move. He placed his left hand over her mouth. He peeked through the crack in the door and saw two women.

When they left, Jeremy looked at Sherrice. Her breathing was labored. She was brain-dead, he figured. He could not, he explained in his statement, let her survive and be a vegetable for the rest of her life. Using both hands, he told police, he twisted her head like he'd seen in the movies. Sherrice, though, seemed to be still breathing. He snapped her neck harder.

He placed Sherrice's boots, pants and underwear in the toilet bowl. He lifted her up and put her legs in the toilet. He folded her arms over her legs.

"It seemed like a dream," Jeremy told the Long Beach police. "I only remember bits and pieces of what happened. What I see is death. I wanted to experience death. I never have. I've never been that close."

Using toilet paper, he wiped off the white foam and blood that had trickled onto his left hand from the girl's mouth. He threw the paper on the floor and walked out, closing the stall door behind him.

Hugging the wall, he left the women's restroom almost 24 minutes after he'd entered, according to surveillance cameras.

When David caught sight of Jeremy, he said: Dude, let's go. My dad is waiting for us.

As the two friends walked together, David asked what happened.

According to David, Jeremy looked directly at him. He answered, his voice calm.

"I killed her."

The Aftermath

Walking out of the casino, David and Jeremy stopped briefly to chat with a valet. Jeremy showed off his pierced tongue and nipples, David his tongue. David says he had time for one additional question. Was the little girl sexually aroused? he asked.

The boys piled into David's father's 1988 blue Chevy and drove north to Las Vegas. As soon as they reached the city, about 7 a.m. Sunday, David Cash Sr. went gambling. The teens slept in the car until noon.

That day and the next, they played nickel and quarter slot machines. David won $22.50. They drank beer. They rode the roller coaster at the New York New York casino. They cruised the Luxor and MGM Grand. Over and over, they discussed what had happened.

Conversations began, "Dude, can you believe this? Like, I mean, I can't believe it." David was sure the video cameras caught everything. Jeremy figured they weren't working. The more they talked, the more David was convinced they would be found out. They had showed off their pierced body parts; they had been conspicuous.

They made a pact that they would not tell anyone.

If caught, they would say they were just in the bathroom playing hide-and-seek, the little girl locked herself in a stall, and then David left, followed by Jeremy.

But how would they explain where Jeremy went? Well, he could have been in the men's room.

Maybe Jeremy could employ an insanity defense or cite his drinking as an excuse.

When they left Vegas on Monday night, Interstate 15 was jammed with Memorial Day weekend traffic. At Barstow, they pulled off to watch "The Lost World: Jurassic Park." David and his father dropped Jeremy at his home at 3:15 a.m.

The Los Angeles Times: Why would you ask if the little girl was aroused?

David Cash: "I don't know, it's just the way I think."

Did you ask why he killed her?

Cash: "I never asked him why. He never explained. I didn't see how there could be an explanation."

Were you appalled that a friend said he killed a little girl?

Cash: "I'm not going to get upset over somebody else's life. I just worry about myself first. I'm not going to lose sleep over somebody else's problems."

Why didn't you turn Jeremy over to the police?

Cash: "I didn't want to be the person who takes away his last day, his last night of freedom."

Do you still consider Jeremy a friend?

Cash: "Yeah. He didn't do anything to me."

'I Looked Up to Jeremy as Much as Anyone Else,' David Says

David and Jeremy met in computer class during their junior year at Wilson. A math and science whiz, David had a grade point average of 3.8. "I'm used to being considered a really smart guy," he says. The way David flaunted his brains turned off Jeremy's friends. He was conceited, weird, a hanger-on, they thought.

In party circles, Jeremy was cool, David was not. But he tried. David's brown hair stood up in individuated strands, thick with gel, and his sideburns stretched past his ears. He wore cheap beige Nike walking shoes, flimsy blue reflective sunglasses, baggy shorts and oversized button-down shirts.

Jeremy passed for 22 and cadged drinks with a phony ID. He flirted smoothly with girls. He made it look like fun to eat Chinese food with a steel rod embedded in his tongue.

Baby-faced and short, David almost always got carded. He would order a Coke at a fancy restaurant and then ask the waiter to serve it in a wine glass with a cocktail umbrella. Off-kilter slang—"poopy" or "groovy"—stumbled into his sentences. He used nickel-plated words like "conversate" without realizing they didn't exist. After some deliberation, David got his tongue pierced. It hurt. He drooled and lisped and couldn't eat.

Even though Jeremy used tweak, he declared that he never wanted to see his friend do dope. "If there was a discussion of marijuana," David says, "he'd say, 'I'd never let you do that. You're too smart.' He was pretty much caring towards me. I looked up to Jeremy as much as anyone else."

Alcohol, though, was another matter. Until David met Jeremy, he had never gotten smashed. They borrowed a video camera to film the event. David downed so many Samuel Adams beers that he lost count. Jeremy got so wasted on Jose Cuervo tequila that David and another friend had to hoist him up the steps to the Cashes' apartment.

Hearing the commotion, David's parents came out, saw the drunken trio and laughed. "They're cool with things like that," David says.

David's father worked as a loan officer and his mother as a supervisor at a medical clinic. They had split up when David was in eighth grade, but had gotten back together just before his senior year. Unlike the Strohmeyers, they struggled financially. They had recently moved to a small ground-floor apartment in a working-class La Palma neighborhood. David was the youngest of three brothers. The oldest had enrolled at UCLA at 15 but dropped out; the middle brother was a junior at UCLA.

Because of his parents' long separation and because of his good grades, David says, his folks weren't strict. "My dad," he says, "didn't feel he had the authority to tell me what to do."

David liked Jeremy's family. For a brief spell, he tutored Jeremy's sister, a college student, in calculus. The Strohmeyers were generous, really nice, he thought. When he and Jeremy drove up to visit Berkeley and wrecked David's mother's Chevy, the Strohmeyers paid their plane fare home.

One time Jeremy's mom, Winnie, overheard David cursing his mother on the Strohmeyers' phone. When David became particularly offensive, Winnie interrupted him. You have to stop, she said.

Long Beach police: Did you think about the safety of the little girl?

David Cash: "Um, I'm sure I thought, you know, what would happen to her, what is he going to do to her? Um, I mean she was being, you know, restrained against her will."

Didn't you think that was something you should go and report right away?

Cash: "Um, I probably should have, but I still, I didn't, you know, at that point, I couldn't fathom Jeremy, you know, giving physical harm."

That evening, did Jeremy make any mention in regard to her appearance or sexuality or anything about her?

Cash: "Well nothing serious. I mean, we always joke around. I mean, like, you know, 'Those little girls, you know, yummy this and that.' But it's always in a joking manner."

David Felt the Color Drain From His Face

David slept in, cutting his Tuesday classes. Around 5 p.m., he channel-surfed the TV. An image of him and Jeremy at the Primadonna suddenly appeared. It was a news broadcast of the surveillance video.

Suspect No. 1 clearly looked like Jeremy. Suspect No. 2, David thought, was harder to recognize. But who wouldn't figure it out? Both suspects, the newscaster said, were from Long Beach. Plenty of people knew he and Jeremy had gone to Vegas.

David felt the color drain from his face. It was like his heart stopped. His mother was only a few feet away by the dining table. He immediately changed channels.

He drove to the Strohmeyers. Jeremy's parents were sitting outside. David went into Jeremy's room. We're on the news, dude. Jeremy seemed stunned. Neither had figured the girl's death would make a splash in Long Beach.

They turned on the large-screen TV in the den. Suspect No. 1 has pierced nipples and a pierced tongue, the broadcaster announced. Suspect No. 2 has short brown hair and long sideburns.

"Oh my God, that's totally you, and, oh my God, that's me," David said. "People are definitely going to see this. Jeremy, they have you in the bathroom, out of the bathroom. I mean, Jeremy, you're screwed."

Then David realized the newscast said one or possibly two suspects, which meant police didn't know whether he participated in the killing. He was sure they were going to be arrested the next day. Probably at school.

Jeremy and David paged a classmate, James Trujillo, and arranged to meet at a Kinko's, where Jeremy wanted to photocopy materials for an anatomy class. "We needed someone to confide in," David says.

Standing in the parking lot, they told James about the Primadonna. Watch the news tonight, dude, and see if you think it looks like us. James thought Jeremy was making up the whole thing. He and David didn't seem scared or anxious. They weren't acting like people involved in a brutal killing.

Las Vegas police: What did you do after the meeting?

James Trujillo: "Uh, I just left and I really kinda really just, uh, didn't pay attention to it. I was like, oh, well, it's no big deal. I guess. Just because of, of the way Jeremy kinda is.

"He's the kinda person where, like, he's gonna do what he needs to get attention. And if he needs to take that, like, like far out into the maximum to have people pay attention to him, then he will do that.

"At no time did I really think, 'Oh, he's killed this person, and I need to do something.'"

That night, David phoned Jeremy Phillips, who had moved to Oregon in April. This was too big for David's parents. His mother would cry. His father, he was sure, would fly off the handle.

Are we on TV up there yet? David asked. He told Phillips what had happened at the Primadonna.

Turn Jeremy in, Phillips urged.

David said he couldn't.

The Los Angeles Times: Why do you think David ignored your advice?

Jeremy Phillips: "It's a man thing. If your friend does something really bad or really wrong, you're not going to go out and narc on them real quick."

Why didn't you call the police and turn Jeremy in?

Phillips: "Because I didn't want to get Dave in trouble. I was waiting for Dave to do it. For men, it's like a respect for your male friends. It's like almost an oath, a pact that you take when you become best friends with a guy.

"I've talked with a lot of guys about it—what they would do if their best friend killed somebody. Every guy I've asked has said they wouldn't say anything."

There Was No Question: It Was Jeremy on TV

At 9:45 p.m. Tuesday night, when Justin Ware got home from a game, his mother pounced. Jeremy is on TV, she said.

They watched the 10 o'clock news together on the black leather couch in the TV room. Earlynn was bewildered. Jeremy was one of Justin's best friends. Other kids said she was almost a second mother to Jeremy. Just weeks before, she had sat in their poolside Jacuzzi with Jeremy, and his nipples weren't pierced. She would have noticed. Was it possible Jeremy committed such an awful crime?

Justin froze. There was no question: It was Jeremy on TV. He had such a distinctive walk and way of wearing his hat. Justin needed to talk with him. So he lied. No, Jeremy's nipples aren't pierced. "Right, Mom, like my best friend is a murderer," he said, as he marched to his room to call Jeremy.

Jeremy denied everything.

Justin woke up at 5:30 a.m. to watch the news, hoping police had arrested someone else. When he drove to school, he spotted David and Jeremy in the red convertible. The *Times*, with pictures of the little girl and the suspects from the surveillance tapes, was spread on the front seat.

Is that you? Justin demanded.

Yeah, Jeremy said.

The Los Angeles Times: How did you react?

Justin Ware: "I was totally speechless. I was totally blank. He was totally normal the whole day. I mean, he was totally just, you know, like it was every other day. Go to school, joke around, show this guy in computer class that he had nipple rings, and he showed him his tongue.

"I was thinking to myself, 'How could he have done it? There has to be something wrong with him.'

"Right when he told me, I wanted to tell someone, because it felt like that would be the right thing to do, just to go out and tell my mom or my dad or someone. But I couldn't, because I didn't know what to do. I was just so scared."

In Justin's third-period history class, a girl remarked that the newspaper photo looked like Jeremy. After class, he found Jeremy.

"Dude, there's a girl in my class who thinks she knows who the murder suspect is. What are you going to do?"

Jeremy told him he wasn't going to do anything.

Another student had already confronted him.

After first period, Carmela Rhymer from his anatomy class had said she'd seen him on TV. He shushed her and said he'd talk to her later. When they spoke again after fourth period, he told her he had been in Nevada with David and that he had gotten drunk. Without making eye contact, Jeremy said he was innocent. He thought everybody was staring at him. To Carmela, he seemed paranoid.

Jeremy went with David to a Taco Bell for lunch. Jeremy referred to it as the Last Supper and ordered a burrito and a soft taco. David laughed. Couldn't he have picked a better joint for his last meal as a free man? Couldn't he at least have ordered the Burrito Supreme?

"Half, half the people at school were, like, giving me weird looks and stuff," Jeremy would say later. "Everybody recognized me."

David had assumed they'd be arrested at school. "On the video, that's me, that's him," David later said. "It's so obvious. I was, like, what's the wait?"

In fact, the Long Beach police had visited the school that morning after being summoned by an assistant principal. Two girls had come to the principal's office saying they recognized the suspects wanted for the murder of Sherrice Iverson.

The detectives set up surveillance on Jeremy's house in the afternoon. There would be no bust on campus.

After school, Jeremy flagged a ride home from Jordan Wheeler, a volleyball teammate. The two had been close since Jeremy had entered Wilson. They had hung out at Starbucks, discussed girlfriends, stayed up all night in Jeremy's room listening to music. Jeremy invited him into the house and turned on the TV. The surveillance video was being shown. Jordan hadn't seen it. Jeremy told him about strangling the girl, but didn't mention sexual molestation.

The Los Angeles Times: What was your reaction?

Jordan Wheeler: "I believed him. Someone doesn't make that stuff up. It wasn't like he was remorseful."

Did you consider calling the police?

Wheeler: "At the time, I was grounded. My parents had seen the video. I really didn't want to go to them and say, 'Oh, Mom, my best friend killed someone, so can I go to the police?'"

Later that afternoon, Jordan ran into David, who made it clear he didn't want word to spread. "Look, man, you know what you saw," said David, referring to the video. "Just be quiet."

It was too late.

In addition to the two girls who had gone to the principal's office, Carmela Rhymer had also called the police.

'I Panicked, Because, Uh, I Didn't Know What to Do'

Jeremy was ready to run. Shorts, socks, underwear and T-shirts were stuffed into his green backpack. A duffel bag, sleeping bag and pad were stationed by the front door. Sneakers and hiking boots were out.

"I panicked," he would later tell the Las Vegas police, "because, uh, I didn't know what to do. So I was thinking about taking off and getting rid of any evidence I might have, or what not. So I, uh, I burned, uh, the cap that I was wearing that night and, uh, the shorts that I was wearing that night."

At 3:30 p.m., Jeremy met Agnes at a Jamba Juice. He was nervous and agitated. She drove Jeremy to his home and went inside for ice water. When she got back into her car, he pushed his way inside, and they drove down the block to talk.

He had something to tell her. He had done something horrible. Agnes thought he was stalling so she would stay longer. He had strangled a young black girl in Las Vegas, he said.

Would she leave the country with him? Mexico. Singapore. Canada. Anywhere but California or Nevada.

Agnes thought it was a pathetic, sick joke. She didn't know about the killing, hadn't watched TV because her brother was studying for his finals.

"She didn't believe me," Jeremy said later. "She didn't want to believe me."

He had hoped she would help him escape. Go watch TV, he told her.

There was one difference from what he had told everyone else: David, he said, had raped the girl. When Agnes got home, she flipped on the TV and saw the footage from the surveillance video. It looked like Jeremy. The details matched his story.

Long Beach police: What did you do after seeing the news?

Agnes Lee: "I called Jeremy back at his house. I told him that if it was him, which I still did not believe, then he should leave the country 'cause I didn't want to know him. I didn't want to know who he was or what was going on, and that he should turn himself in to his parents and let them know. And he should also go talk to a priest at a church—that that's what I'd be doing.

"I truly felt compelled to turn him in because, royally speaking, I wasn't the type of person who would hold something like this in. So I thought if I would tell him that I felt compelled to turn him in, then he would finally confess and tell me he was joking all along.

"When he did not say he was joking and when he confirmed this is what he had done, then I told him he would be on his own, that I was not going to help him. I was sorry I couldn't be there for him. I told him it was time to end the conversation."

Agnes phoned her father at work. He called the police. A detective reached Agnes. Jeremy, she said, intended to flee.

"He does have a temper," she told detectives. "He gets violent, and that's when he's extremely unpredictable."

Jeremy Told David He Was Going to Make a Run for It

When Jeremy returned from talking to Agnes, Justin was waiting for him in his room. Winnie had let him in and gone with Jeremy's sister to South Coast Plaza.

As a broadcaster offered a description of the clothing worn by Suspect No. 1, Jeremy said the shorts and shirt had belonged to Justin, but he had burned them in the brick fireplace.

The phone rang—it was David. He had a message from his father instructing him to wait at home for him. His father, David was sure, had figured things out. David would have to go to the police.

Jeremy said he understood. "If that's what you have to do, that's what you have to do. That's fine," Jeremy would recall telling David. "You know, I'm not gonna be upset with my friend for that."

Jeremy told David he was going to make a run for it. “I just told him,” David later said, “ ‘Do whatever you’re going to do—but do it now.’ “

When Jeremy hung up, he explained to Justin he was going to take the silver BMW parked outside. Or could Justin drive him to the airport? Train station? Bus depot?

“There’s no way I’m going to do that,” Justin answered. “I love you as a friend, but there’s no way I can help you. You’re on your own. I’ve got to go.”

Justin went home and dressed for his aunt’s 60th birthday dinner. Ordinarily buoyant, he sat silent by his father at the Acapulco restaurant. As the waiter brought dinner, Justin’s pager rang. It was a 911 message from Jeremy, a signal to call back immediately. Justin excused himself.

“I need you to pick me up,” Jeremy said. “The cops are on the way.”

The Los Angeles Times: What went through your mind?

Justin Ware: “I wanted to tell my parents right away. But I just couldn’t tell them in front of all my relatives and my grandparents.

“I wanted to tell Winnie right then when I saw her [in the afternoon]. I was trying to think in my head, how should I tell her? Should I or not? I decided not to, because I didn’t know how to tell her. ‘Oh, your son just murdered a girl.’ How do you tell a mother that?

“I know right from wrong, and I knew I was doing something wrong. And I felt guilty. It was eating away at me. I wanted to tell someone, but I couldn’t, I couldn’t live with myself turning Jeremy in, even though I know that was the smart thing to do. I couldn’t bear doing that, because he was my best friend.

“It even hurt when I couldn’t pick him up, because I knew if I picked him up, I’d get in trouble and then I’d be trying to get him away from a crime which I knew he should be punished for. And I told him, ‘Jeremy, you shouldn’t get away with this. You should be punished for what you did.’ “

As Long Beach undercover police watched, Jeremy sat on the porch and smoked a cigarette. He was dressed in Levi’s, blue tennis shoes, a white tank top with a blue jacket and a black baseball cap. After 15 minutes, Jeremy disappeared into the house. His sister drove up in her BMW and dropped off their mother.

When Winnie walked in the front door, Jeremy slipped out the garden gate. He reached the street and started running. The police descended.

Inside the house, Winnie felt uneasy. Jeremy wasn’t home, but the front door was unlocked. The French doors were open onto the patio. Lights were on in Jeremy’s bedroom and the guest room. The house was filled with an acrid smell from the fireplace. She called out Jeremy’s name. It wasn’t like him to leave the house open.

She walked into his room and found a bottle that had contained Dexedrine, the amphetamine prescribed the week before for Jeremy’s attention deficit disorder. There had been about 40 pills that morning; she had counted them to see if Jeremy had taken his medication.

The bottle was now empty. Lying next to old letters from Agnes, Winnie found a note in Jeremy’s gawky script:

“I am so sorry.

“I just pray that this is enough to finish me off. Please Lord let me die.

“I’m sorry mom, I’m sorry dad, heather, all my friends and family.

“Forgive me for I have sinned. I’m sorry

“Please give these things to Agnes Lee. Tell her I will always love her”

‘Sticking Out the Sunroof . . . That Was Cool,” David Says

When David Cash Sr. came home from work, he asked his son if he had seen the photograph of the suspect wanted for murder at the Primadonna.

“Yeah, looks like Jeremy, Dad,” David said. “It is Jeremy.”

His father insisted they go to the police.

“I guess I was scared,” David would say later. “I figured even though I didn’t do anything, I could get into more trouble.”

The police took his mug shot. They interviewed him for nearly an hour. One cop was gruff, the other offered a doughnut. Just like “NYPD Blue,” David thought.

He gave a statement. It implicated Jeremy.

When David returned home, he worked on an art history project, cutting out magazine photographs of pierced female genitalia for a collage. He went to bed around 1:30 a.m.

Six hours later, he drove to school. “I was rarin’ to go,” he says. “I was kind of curious about how school would be. Damn, I wondered, who’s going to know?”

But during first period he was called out of class and sent home. His art history teacher refused his project, declaring it obscene.

That afternoon the principal called him. He wouldn’t be allowed back on campus for classes, graduation or the prom. His presence would be “highly disruptive and could jeopardize his safety and the safety of others.” The school would mail him his diploma and refund the $39 prom ticket.

David was furious. He was an impeccable student. He wasn’t a criminal. How dare they treat him this way? He was going to sue.

By the end of the week, reporters and camera crews were positioned outside his parents’ apartment complex. There was talk of a movie. For $1,500, David sold the video of him getting drunk with Jeremy to the television show “Extra.” He kept $500 and gave $1,000 to Jeremy Phillips, who had helped negotiate the deal and shot some of the video.

On prom night, as TV cameras rolled, he popped up through the sunroof of a white stretch limo and shouted, “I’m not going in! I’m not going in!” Phillips, who had hitched a ride from Oregon, was at his side.

“Sticking out the sunroof with all the cameras running—that was cool,” David says.

He and Phillips went to a restaurant that featured a belly dancer and then to a party at a friend’s house, where they watched David and the limo on TV.

After the Arrest, Jeremy’s Parents Received Death Threats

At Sherrice’s funeral on May 31, 1997, at Paradise Baptist Church, her father and mother sat apart. They have not spoken to each other since their daughter’s death.

Each has filed a wrongful-death lawsuit against Jeremy and the Primadonna Resort & Casino, now known as the Primm Valley Resort & Casino. Leroy has also sued for slander, saying he had been

defamed when a casino official told reporters that Leroy—shortly after learning of his daughter's death—asked for $100, a hotel room, a plane ticket, money for his daughter's funeral and a six-pack of beer.

The Primadonna has filed a cross-claim and third-party complaint against Leroy, David and Jeremy, alleging their actions contributed to Sherrice's death.

Yolanda has moved into her own apartment. She sometimes dreams about Sherrice. In one dream, Sherrice is lying on a closet shelf, wearing pajamas. She kisses her mother and says, "Hi, Mommy, I'm back."

In the fall of 1997, David entered UC Berkeley. If anything, he says, the case has made it easier for him to score with women.

David's parents have separated again. His mother has moved to Oklahoma. Winnie and John have not talked with the Cashes since the trip to the Primadonna.

In the days after Jeremy's arrest, Winnie and John received death threats. "What kind of parents are you to have raised a boy like that?" one caller asked Winnie.

Accused of the murder, kidnapping and sexual assault of Sherrice Marshay Renee Iverson, Jeremy has pleaded not guilty and faces a possible death sentence.

Jeremy remains in a Las Vegas jail, where he is held without bail. He has told Crutch that he looks forward to being out of prison by next summer. He has tried to obtain publications on how to forge a new identity.

His trial is scheduled to start in August.

Once the trial begins, David figures he'll again be a hot commodity and possibly negotiate a movie deal.

The Los Angeles Times: Are you angry at Jeremy?

David Cash: "No, he didn't do anything to me. I miss him as a friend. But there's not much you can do about it. You got to move on."

If you're not angry on your account, what about for your parents, for having dragged them into this?

Cash: "No, they're over it."

What about when you think of Sherrice?

Cash: "I don't think of it. I don't know her."

Do you feel bad for her?

Cash: "The situation sucks in general."

Do you feel worse for her or for Jeremy?

Cash: "Because I knew Jeremy, I feel worse for him. I know he had a lot going for him."