
No bad deed goes unpunished,
as we all will one day face what we've done.

But if we choose to focus our actions on good,
we may reduce the amount of karma that lingers on.

Karman

Karman

A NOVEL

*What goes around,
could come back...to kill you*

Karman – What goes around, could come back...to kill you
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Karman –What goes around, could come back to kill you.

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DEDICATION

Dedicating this novel to
all who've suffered from the various types of bullying.

Please do not internalize your emotional anxiety.
Ensure to report any mistreatment and seek counseling
early to reduce possible psychological trauma.

Karman

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Karman

A NOVEL

*What goes around,
could come back...to kill you*

BY N.J. PORTER

Karman

PART I

Karman

Chapter 1

An Early Morning Murder

The moon was full, the sky was partly cloudy, and the wind was calm. The traffic lights were blinking a combination of yellow and red; indicating traffic flow was extremely light. The streetlights were shining bright, casting a vibrant, orange glow throughout the city limits. This illuminous glow made the buildings resemble that of black silhouettes as they all faded into the background with only a few office lights still on. The downtown area of Annapolis appeared abandoned as there were no signs of human life anywhere. At the corner of one street, a marquee at United Bank displayed the weather at 65 degrees. It then blinked and displayed the time which read 4:37 am. Mysteriously, a moaning yawn within a chilling breeze suddenly began to maneuver between the buildings and through alley ways, as if it were seeking something...or someone.

This chilling moan turned left down one alleyway and suddenly came into contact with a man who seemed to have heard this haunting sound before. He appeared to have been running away from it as if his life was in danger. His body displayed features of torture and pain, moving frantically with signs of agony and complications. As he attempted to escape from this mysterious moan, he would fall

occasionally due to an injury to his right knee. In addition, his left eye was swollen shut and outlined in black. A distorted nose accompanied this swollen eye, showing proof that there was a fracture within the nasal cavity. Moreover, during this desperate attempt to flee, he tried numerous times to scream “help me!” but the blood oozing from his mouth caused him to choke on his words.

He continued moving swiftly between buildings, hyperventilating fustily as he tried to escape from this moan of terror. As he came around the left corner of a building and proceeded quickly down another back alley, he was then stopped abruptly by a line of floating glass which had elevated from the ground. These pieces of glass suspended ankle high and stretched horizontally the length of the alley. As it hovered mid-air, it slowly rotated counterclockwise. The inadequate lighting made it very difficult for the man to see the glass ahead. However, some glass fragments happened to twinkle off the reflection from a distance streetlight up ahead; but, with very little time to maneuver, the glass sliced through his ankles like cheese on a shredder; bringing instant, excruciating pain which caused this wounded man to fall bleakly to the ground. There was no doubt in his mind that the glass which formed before him was created by the force chasing behind him. Still showing persistence and strong will to live, however, he insisted on trying to escape.

He began to crawl away using just his arms as his ankles were now experiencing unbelievable pain. Occasionally he would have to stop moving because the glass within his ankles were slicing deeper as he dragged his legs across the ground. As he moved about on his stomach, the moaning yawn grew louder as it approached his left ear.

Unexpectedly, a voice within the moan whispered aloud, “It’s your turn to scream!”

Not sure how much further he would be able to go due to the insufferable pain he was experiencing, the man stopped crawling and decided to try and speak with this voice.

“What do you want from me?” he asked, while lying on his stomach.

But there was no response. At that moment, he quickly looked over to his left and then to his right to try and locate the individual for which this voice belonged. However, in his attempt to find this person, or thing, the source was still nowhere in sight.

The voice moved even closer to his ear and then it replied, “To diiiieeee!”

Though he was full of fear and uncertainty, he turned onto his back with hopes to at least see the face that accompanied this eerie voice. However, when he looked up, he only got a glimpse of a white pale face with dark black lips and red illuminated eyes. Then immediately, everything went black.

Chapter 2

The Morning News

“Good morning everyone, it’s Friday, 7am in the morning here in the city of Annapolis. Today’s forecast, we’re looking at another sunny day with temperatures reaching 78 degrees, with a 10% chance of rain. Yes, it’s gonna be a beautiful day, today,” announced the reporter on the radio, bringing Jackson Arquette to a deep yawn and full extended stretch.

“Come on, let’s get this day started! This goes double for all y’all still in bed, lazy bums. If I have to be up, then so should you,” the reporter continued, sarcastically.

After hearing the reporter’s comment, Arquette opened his eyes, looked over to his right, and stared at the radio on the nightstand with an appalling expression on his face. Next, he reached his right arm over and hit the snooze button with a certain amount of force, as if he had some prejudice toward the reporter. This action was so intense, it knocked the clock off the nightstand and hit the floor. Arquette gracefully sat-up and turned his body to the right, with his feet hanging toward the floor. He glanced at the floor to his right and saw the clock near the door. After realizing what he did to the clock, a smirk grew on his face. He then stood to his feet, took another long stretch, and then preceded slowly toward the bathroom directly across from the bed. He reached his right hand into the bathroom to flick the light switch to his left to turn on the light. Once inside, he grabbed the door with his right hand and

closed it behind him. Moments later, the sound of water from the shower engulfed the bathroom.

Fifteen minutes later, the sound of water suddenly come to a cease. Then, bathroom door opened and out stepped Arquette with a tan towel wrapped tightly around his waist. Steam permeated the inside of the bathroom like foggy mist reducing the visibility on the road. The scent of Irish Spring trailed from the bathroom into the bedroom as Arquette made his way over toward the bed.

“Haa!” he sighed, feeling fresh and clean.

He looked at his wife who was still asleep on the left side of the bed and decided to repeat the comment he heard from the weather reporter earlier.

“If I have to be up, then so should you,” he said humorously.

His wife, Linda, suddenly began to squirm slowly underneath the royal blue comforter. Unexpectedly, she slid her right arm out from underneath the comforter and extended it straight up in the air with her hand closed in a fist. Next, she extended her middle finger as a gesture of silently objecting his hilarity. After holding it in the air for a few seconds, she lowered her arm then rolled slightly to her right toward Arquette and smiled. As soon as she caught a whiff of Arquette’s body aroma, and saw him wearing only a towel, she grew more attracted to his body. That scent caused her to take a deep sniff.

After she exhaled, she then pointed her right arm toward him and said, “If you want me up, you have to help me,” using a seductive voice.

He walked closer to the bed then leaned forward in acceptance to her suggestion. On his face, however, was a smirk because he had doubts of whether she really wanted to get out of bed.

“Come on my beautiful, lazy wife, it’s time to get up,” he laughed, with his left knee propped on the bed and extending his left arm out toward her.

She sat up slightly and grabbed his left arm toward her, but then instantly pulled him down on top of her and whispered, “I’d like at least ten more minutes alone with my great smelling husband,” she giggled.

After nearly fifteen minutes of intimacy, Arquette and Linda just laid there holding one another. Linda was on the right of Arquette with her head against his left shoulder. She had her right arm lying across his stomach. He had his left arm around her head. Arquette opened his eyes and gazed towards the ceiling, pondering over various thoughts. When the thought of his mental health challenge arose, he decided to discuss his medication with his wife.

“I think I better order a refill on my meds, I’m almost out,” he mentioned slightly paranoid.

“Well, speaking of your meds, I’ve noticed you haven’t been eating when you take them,” she replied, expressing great concern. She then lifted her head slightly to look at Arquette.

“You get dress, and I’ll go downstairs to cook you some breakfast,” she continued with a compassionate voice.

Just then, they both got out of bed, Arquette going back into the bathroom for his meds, and Linda heading downstairs to the kitchen. As he stood in the bathroom and stared into the mirror, he suddenly began to reflect on his life, thinking about how blessed he was as an African American man reaching mid-age, nearing the end of his career, and having great family support. Though, he also felt cursed from the terrible images that his mind continues to reiterate which causes him insecurities for his family's safety. Moreover, he also experiences periods of depression because he believes that his retirement may be postponed. He opened the mirror with his right hand and then pulled out a small orange medication bottle. After twisting off the white cap, he poured two light blue, circle tablets into his left hand, closed the bottle, and then placed it back behind the mirror. After closing the mirror, he put both tablets into his mouth, cupped his right hand under the water, and then sipped the water to swallow the pills. Soon after, he stepped out of the bathroom and into the bedroom to get dressed.

Now fully dressed, wearing black pants, a moron shirt, and a dark moron tie, Arquette came downstairs and went into the kitchen. The kitchen had an aroma of scrambled eggs, grilled sausage, and sweet butter-milk pancakes. The 24' inch tv on the counter across from sink was on medium volume in the background. Linda was flipping the last pancake, getting ready to finalize and piece together her dish. She turned her head left toward the kitchen entrance as Arquette entered.

She then smiled and said to him modestly, “Have a seat, sir, your breakfast will be ready in a minute,” as she prepared his plate.

Arquette took a seat on the right side of the table and turned his head to the right, toward the tv. Linda grabbed a fork and knife from the drawer to her right, put them on the plate, and then walked over to Arquette. She then put the plate in front of him on the table.

Arquette took a deep sniff. “Aahh. This smells so good, baby. Thank you!” he said, expressing appreciation and grace.

He then started eating and watching tv. Linda went over to the dish rack for a cup. She picked up a glass then walked over to the refrigerator and opened it. With the glass in her left hand, she pulled out a carton of orange juice with her right hand and poured some into the glass. She then closed the refrigerator and walked over to the table. After placing the glass on the table to the left of Arquette, she leaned over him slightly with her left hand on her waist, staring downward at him.

On her face was this expression of concern regarding his sleepless nights, and so she decided to ask him about them.

“How you been sleeping? Are you still havin bad nightmares?” she asked, anxiously awaiting his response.

Arquette cleared his throat, then looked over to the left at her. Instantly, he became aware of her body language; noticing just how uneasy she appeared while asking about his nightmares. So, in hopes to alleviate the tension from her mind, he formed a smile on his face and then replied causally.

“You know, I haven’t had that many bad dreams lately; I think these pills are working,” he replied, optimistically.

She looked at him with a skeptical impression on her face; then, with a firm voice, suggested that he call his prescription refill in and she would pick it up later.

“Well, just make sure you get your meds refilled, please. It won’t be good for you, or me, if you don’t get any rest; or more importantly, if you’re still having those nightmares,” she proclaimed.

“I’ll have some time later today to pick them up. So as soon as you’ve ordered them, let me know,” she continued.

Arquette agreed and then they began to converse on a much lighter topic. Linda walked back over to the stove, grabbed her breakfast plate, and then sat at the table directly across from Arquette.

After finishing her breakfast, Linda got up from the table, walked over to the sink, and began washing dishes. For a moment, she paused and began speaking quietly to herself, trying to decide what to cook for dinner. Next, she turned her head to the right to ask Arquette what time he thought he would be home later that evening. This way she could have his dinner fresh, hot, and ready to eat, just the way she likes to have it when he gets home.

“Honey, what time do you think you’ll be home this evening?” she asked.

Arquette paused for a moment, trying to reflect on his workday in advance. He then replied with an optimistic

tone, almost guarantying that he would be leaving work early.

“Actually, I should be home early today because I only have a few cases to review, make some phone calls, and interrogate a suspect whom we have overwhelming evidence on,” he stated, practically giddy.

“There is a new case Maurice wants me to look into, but I don’t think I’m gonna take it...unless Chief says I need to take it,” he added.

As Arquette continued with his seemingly light-hearted response, a news reporter appeared on tv, interrupting a morning show. The mood of this broadcast seemed eerie as the subtitle read “**This just in**” scrolled horizontally from right to left at the bottom of the screen. In addition, a box-like, caution-tape frame picture emerged offset at the top-right corner from the reporter’s head, surrounding the title, “**gruesome murder.**”

The reporter began to discuss the latest.

“Good morning, everyone! We come to you with breaking news. A local man was found dead in the downtown area early this morning from what can only be described as a perverse, homicidal act. His body was discovered behind a restaurant by the owner in a back alley,” the reporter announced, with an appalled expression on her face; yet, remained moderately professional.

Arquette, interested in the news, asked Linda to turn the volume up.

“Baby, could you turn that up, please?” he asked, in a slightly paranoid tone.

Linda dried her hands on her apron then reached for the black tv remote on the counter to her right. With the remote in her right hand, she pointed it at the tv and adjusted the volume. Troubled by what the reporter was broadcasting, Linda turned around, placed her back against the sink, and just stared at Arquette. She then began to ask about the news report.

“Honey, do you hear this? I mean, how bad could this have been?” she asked, with her voice full of trepidation.

“Please don’t tell me you’re gonna be given this case,” she pleaded, as the reporter continued on in the background.

“Linda, please calm down honey, you’re starting to make me paranoid,” he requested, while listening to report.

“We actually have a few detectives on staff, so it’s likely the department will assign one of them to the case,” he continued, in an optimistic tone.

During their frantic conversation, Arquette’s cellphone suddenly began to ring, instantly bringing the kitchen to a complete silence, leaving only the reporter to be heard. Linda picked up the remote with her left hand, pointed it at the tv, and pressed the mute button. Arquette tilted his head to the left and looked downward toward the table to read the caller ID. It was his partner, Ryan.

“Ok. It’s Ryan,” he said, with slight curiosity.

“Huhhh. I wonder what he wants,” he continued, speaking to himself in a low voice following a sigh.

With his left hand, he picked up his cellphone, pressed the call button to answer, then placed the cellphone up to his left ear.

“Hello, this is Detective Arquette speaking,” he answered, in a mediocre tone.

“Hey Arquette, it’s me, Ryan,” greeted Ryan.

“Listen, I’m downtown right now, which is a circus by the way, because a man was found murdered sometime early this morning down here. I mean it’s bad. We have just about half the precinct here, along with forensics who are running all over the place,” he addressed, in a fluttered tone.

“Already? Man, I’m just seeing this on the news right now,” mentioned Arquette in an astonishing voice.

“Alright. So what have y’all gotten so far?” he asked, trying to keep his composure.

“Well right now all we know is the man was of African American descent, mid to late age, and a bus driver for Richmond High. We found his license and other identifications scattered along the alley. So far, there’s been of prints found, nor are there any suspects at this time; although forensics is still sweeping the area,” replied Ryan, providing a brief update of the scene.

“Ok. So my next question is perhaps the most important one. Who’s been assigned this case, you?” asked Arquette, partially nervous to hear his name.

Linda turned around to face the sink as if she had no interest in hearing Arquette’s name being mentioned in response to that question. She then continued washing the dishes.

“Well Chief called me early this morning and only asked me to come down to help out in any way I could; but he never told me I was heading the case, nor to report to anyone that was,” replied Ryan.

“Right. So, basically no one’s been handed this case yet,” assumed Arquette, placing his right elbow on the table, and using his right hand to rub his forehead out of concern.

As Ryan continued to explain the situation downtown, Arquette noticed a break in Ryan’s conversation. He pulled his cellphone from his left ear and brought it around to the front of his face; causing Ryan’s voice to fade and his conversation became difficult to hear. It was the call waiting. The caller ID read “Chief.” Now Arquette’s nervousness really kicked in as he was sure to find out who would be leading this investigation. This nervous sensation felt like that of a child about to get spanked for doing something terribly wrong. He put his cellphone back to his left ear.

“Ryan, I’ll call you back, it’s Chief,” said Arquette.

“Hey, he might be calling to tell you...,” mentioned Ryan before suddenly getting cutoff by Arquette switching over to the other line to avoid hearing the end of his comment.

“Hey Chief, sir, good morning! How can I help you?!” answered Arquette, in a mild enthusiastic tone.

“Good morning Jackson! Well, I’m sure you’re probably aware of the murder that took place sometime this morning,” assumed the Chief.

“Yeah, I heard about it on the news a few minutes ago, actually. And then Ryan called me. Apparently, he’s already at the scene. He gave me some updates as well,” informed Arquette.

“Alright! Well he did happen to tell you who was heading this investigation?” asked the Chief, in a hinting tone.

“No sir, and I’m trying to avoid the answer to that question,” replied Arquette, slightly humorous.

“I could understand why, Jackson,” Chief sympathized.

“Hell, I’d probably try to avoid it also if the odds for me being assigned lead detective of this investigation were great,” he continued, with slight humor to soothe the tension from which the phone call created.

“Listen Jackson, I know you’ve had more than your share of homicide cases. And, I’m fully aware of your visits to the psychiatrist regarding your mental health. More importantly, I’m sure you’d prefer that this case be assigned to anyone but you,” he added, expressing empathy for Arquette.

“Damn right!” Arquette agreed, in a frank tone.

“Right. But unfortunately, Jackson, this isn’t your typical homicide, so I don’t want just any detective on this case. I need the best, which means I need your years of experience to ensure this case gets solved expeditiously,” the Chief requested.

“Now, you’re up for retirement soon, so I’d like to think I’m asking this as a favor,” he continued, expressing respect and admiration.

Arquette exhaled slowly while looking over at his wife still standing at the sink, placing the clean dishes into the dish rack.

“Chief, I’ll call you back sir,” he stated in a passive tone.

They then disconnected. Arquette finished his juice then stood up from the table and walked over to Linda. He gently grabbed on her waist from behind and then he pulled her body extremely close to his. Linda paused briefly and looked out the window in front of her. He took a deep breath, hoping to have had an easier way to let her know that he was given the case by the time he exhaled. However, by the end of his exhale, he still couldn’t think of any less intense way to tell her that he was given the case. And so, he just chose to keep it simple by saying he had to leave.

“Honey, I need...,” he started to say but was interrupted by Linda.

“I know, you need to go. You’re the best detective for the case,” she mentioned with a disappointed; yet, supportive tone as she took her hands and placed them on top of his.

“Just leave your prescription on the table and I’ll pick it up later. Oh, and give me a call later and let me know how things are going, please,” she continued in a caring voice with her head turned slightly to her left.

“I will, love,” he replied, then kissed her on her left cheek. “Please pray for me today,” he requested. Then, he unwrapped his arms from around her waist and exited out the kitchen.

“I always do my husband,” replied Linda looking to her left at Arquette as he exited the kitchen.

Now in the living room, Arquette paced back and forth, ensuring he gathered all his essentials needed so he wouldn’t have to return home. First, he grabbed his weapons belt from

off the back of the loveseat. After placing it around his waist, he adjusted it properly to ensure his silver badge was visible. After that, he then put on his black suit coat. As he continued to get organized, collecting his keys, wallet, computer case, and other items, he suddenly paused and lifted up both of his hands after feeling them starting to quiver slightly. He presumed that this was a sign of his anxiety building from paranoia as he was uncertain of what was awaiting him at the crime scene. Acknowledging this, he knew he would need his medication refilled. He picked up his computer case from off the loveseat with his right hand and placed the strap around his left shoulder. Next, he reached his right hand into the case and grabbed a black ink pen and a small yellow notepad. He wrote a reminder note to Linda about the prescription refill and placed it on the shelf above the fireplace. Right after, he headed towards the front door and reached for the doorknob with his left hand to open the door. Before stepping outside, he stood at the threshold and raised his voice slightly to inform Linda where the prescription was placed.

“Honey, I put the prescription on the shelf above the fireplace, I’ll call you later!” he yelled.

Then, with his left forearm, he pushed the screen door open, while simultaneously using his right hand to pull the front door closed behind him. Moments later, Linda slowly appeared at the threshold of the kitchen while wiping her hands on her apron, sighed with worry, then reentered into the kitchen.

Chapter 3

The Investigation Begins

The sun had now passed the horizon which caused the temperature to increase another five degrees. The overcast that once sheeted the night had dissipated, allowing the beam from the sun to illuminate across the city. The traffic lights were now in normal operation, functioning on a coordinated timer to ensure the increased traffic flow ran smooth and organized as opening hours for businesses drew near. Vehicles of all types poured into downtown from the early morning rush coming in from off the highway. Majority of the streets all appeared to have moderate traffic flow; however, traffic became quite sluggish as it neared the area of the crime scene. Between the police officers extending their barricades as crowds moved in for a look, and “rubber-neck” drivers curious to see what happened; traffic flow nearly seemed motionless. This street had drawn an enormous amount of attention, from drive-byers, stand-byers, and now from other news sources. What once began as a local news coverage, had now become a nationwide interest. Like a moth to a flame, more and more people grew mesmerized by the various news reporters’ random theories on what they believe may have led to this homicide.

“This just in,” suddenly scrolled horizontally from right to left at the bottom of the local news broadcast. The reporter had now received the name of the murdered victim.

“Good morning everyone! For those of you who are just joining us, we’re live here in downtown where there’s been a homicide we believe happened sometime late last night. As of now, we have additional information about the victim. The man who we knew only up to this point as John Doe, has now been identified as Myron Osborne, a local bus driver for Richmond High School. We have not yet received any detailed information on this homicide from Annapolis Police Department; nor have they said when an official statement would be released. At this moment, we can only speculate that a statement will be made later today as their investigation continues to unfold. So stay tuned!” concluded the reporter.

Now that Myron Osborne had been identified as the murdered victim, his name spread across the city like a wildfire in California. Although many people soon became aware of his name, majority of them were still unfamiliar with who he was. The few, however, whom were familiar of him, worked at Richmond High School in the admissions office. Moreover, there were also students who knew of him from riding on his bus. And as his name continues to be broadcasted, there would soon be four former students, in-particular, who would later recall their experiences for when they rode on his bus many years ago.

At the crime scene, many police personnel were swarmed about the alley leading up to the victim. They were dressed in dark blue uniforms and wearing silver plated badges on left side of their chest. All of a sudden, a few officers began to scramble then proceeded towards the entry access point after being radioed to clear the barricade for Arquette's cruiser due for arrive shortly. A dozen more officers whom were controlling the outer perimeter started moving the crowd back and off to the side; this way when the barricade opened outward, there would be enough space for the cruiser to move forward. About 5 minutes passed before Arquette's dark blue Ford sedan approached the entry access point. The only thing that identified his vehicle as a squad car were the blinking combination of blue, white, and red lights flashing in sequential pattern from left to right, front to back, and high to low. The sedan's siren unexpectedly made a high-pitch, short pulse tweet-like sound numerous times to alert the officers and other officials ahead as it advanced toward the barricade. Finally, Arquette reached the yellow caution tape and came to a stop. Looking directly ahead, he noticed that the caution tape was the divider between the assisting officers and the investigating team. Though, in his mind, this tape marked the mental illusionary frontline between actual reality and surreal fantasy.

He shifted his cruiser into park and sat idle staring at some officials who were beyond the caution tape talking amongst themselves in what appeared to resemble a football huddle. He knew he would have to get out of his

car soon which made him feel like this moment was the point of no return; knowing that turning around was definitely not an option for him. The huddle the officers were in suddenly began to separate, as if assignments were given and they were now proceeding to their designated locations. Just as they all began to move in opposite directions, a few of them looked over towards the caution tape and noticed Arquette's cruiser. Ryan, Arquette's partner, was one of the officers who recognized the sedan and immediately began to walk towards it. As soon as Arquette saw Ryan lift the caution tape and scoop himself underneath to approach his car, he felt like that was his queue to exit the car.

"Ok Jackson, Chief is counting on you. So let's do what we do best, assess the scene, collect all the evidence, and solve this thing," he told himself softly as a little motivation.

"Lord, please be with me during this time. Help me find all the evidence I'll need to be able to close this case quick. Amen!!" he prayed, expressing the need for religious guidance and inspiration.

He then opened his door and stepped out the car. He stood on his left leg while his right leg was still inside the car. His left arm was folded and propped on top of the driver side door, and his right hand was clenched at the edge of the sedan's roof.

Ryan approached Arquette and began to update him on the latest regarding the scene.

“Hey, Arquette, thank God you’re here,” greeted Ryan, seeming slightly exhausted.

“The forensics team is still assessing the area; however, they still haven’t found any prints yet,” he claimed.

“No prints yet!!” cried Arquette, now stepping completely out of the sedan and shutting the door with slight aggression.

“Yeah, I know, right?! I mean, they should’ve at least found a fingerprint or something as long as they’ve been out here,” Ryan assumed.

“Oh, and the department is asking us to give a statement to the press whenever possible,” he continued.

“Us, or me?” asked Arquette with a sarcastic tone.

“Yeah, I know!” replied Ryan.

“Well I’m sure there’s not much to report at the moment, given the current status of the investigation,” assumed Arquette, in an unimpressed tone while scratching his forehead with his right hand.

“So, are you ready to take the tour of the crime scene?” asked Ryan, with slight humor.

“To be honest, not really. But at this point I don’t think I have a choice, right?” Arquette asked, rhetorically.

“So, let’s go view the “nasty,” replied Arquette with a chuckle.

He stepped back and opened the back door to his sedan and grabbed his computer case and black binder. After he had everything, they both proceeded toward the caution tape. Ryan lifted the tape with his left hand and allowed Arquette to pass underneath, first. Then, he stepped underneath the tape and joined Arquette on his right side, then they began

to walk up the alleyway, passing the many officials whom were assisting the scene. As Arquette observed the various activities taking place in the alley up towards the location of the victim, he began to inform Ryan about some of the changes he would prefer. For him, these changes were to create a more organized atmosphere for him to better manage the scene.

As he neared the location of the victim, Arquette stopped in his tracks to briefly announce himself.

“Alright everyone, listen up. I’m Detective Jackson Arquette and I’m the lead investigator on this case. Right now, I’m gonna ask those of you whom aren’t assisting the forensics team in anyway, to move back towards the entrance,” he directed, having a furious look on his face.

His body was partially turned to the left with his left arm pointing back towards the caution tape.

“I apologize for this abrupt notice, but I can’t afford this scene to become contaminated,” he continued.

“And those whom are assisting, need to address me of their actions. More importantly, if anyone finds any evidence, prints, whatever, I want you to bring them to me; or, give them to my partner Ryan. And lastly, I ask that you all please do not speak to the media about this case. They’ll be provided a statement about this later today,” he concluded.

He then slowly began to proceed further into the alley. The further he and Ryan walked, the more it felt like the ambiance of humanity began to diminish. The luminous rays from the sun became deficiently visible above the buildings

that surrounded the alley, giving the crime scene a grim, haunting atmosphere. This grayish, dreary setting caused by this sinister aftermath had brought the prediction of a beautiful day, as promised by the weather forecaster, to seem as if it were a myth within this area. For Arquette, this was how each of his nightmares began, causing him to feel a sense of nostalgia, which also brought about a noxious sensation in his stomach when he suddenly came across a trail of streaky blood on the ground. This blood stain marked the starting point of his investigation.

Continuing along this path, a disturbing odor struck him monstrously. The scent was that of old food combined with the aroma of a rotting corpse which was that of the victim. This scent induced a slight vomit sensation within Arquette's stomach.

"Good Lord! Wow! Do you smell that?" he asked, using his right hand to pull a napkin from out of his upper-left coat pocket. He covered his mouth and nose in an effort to guard himself from this petrosas smell.

"Man, I'm actually used to it now. I mean, I've been out here since 6:30am, so to me, it smells like breakfast," replied Ryan, humorously with a smile.

"Please don't say that," begged Arquette, replacing his napkin over his mouth and nose again.

"Well, apparently my stomach can't seem to handle it right now," he continued.

They then resumed down the alleyway, approaching the area where a few forensics officers were working. These

officers were wearing blue jackets with the word forensics in bold yellow letters displayed on the back. Moreover, they were wearing black khaki pants and light blue gloves. Each of them whom were scattered about the area were either taking photos of the scene or searching for evidence. Two of the officers were at a dumpster to the right of the alley, examining blood stains on dumpster. Another officer was directly across from the dumpster examining a blood stain along a building. About ten feet from the dumpster was a fourth officer who was examining a puddle of blood on the ground.

When Arquette reached the area, he happened to glance down and noticed a pair of bloody handprints on the ground. He immediately squatted down to get a closer observation, placing his binder on top of his left thigh. As he observed this pattern, he tried to foresee how this incident may have unfolded, before and after the bloody prints.

“Ok. So here we have some handprints that seem to be moving forward in a trail-like pattern,” he described, pointing at the prints with his pen in his right hand.

“Now, I assume that they’re possibly from the victim because they proceed after that blood trail we passed when we first came in,” he continued, turning slightly to his right to look back towards the caution tape.

Ryan was standing to his right, observing the prints on the ground.

“Yeah, you may be right about that, but these handprints and that blood trail back there seemed to end here,” Ryan mentioned, observing the ground a few feet ahead of them.

“So, can you explain how the victim got from this location to over there without one single spot of blood found on the ground?” he asked, having a puzzled look on his face.

“I mean, it’s obvious the victim had deep lacerations of some sort,” he continued.

“Ok. I guess I can see your logic about there being more blood found after this point. But I can only assume that the victim apparently got up to try and escape,” replied Arquette.

“Yeah, I don’t think that happened,” mentioned Ryan feeling slightly confident.

“What?! Why not?!” asked Arquette, feeling offended after providing his professional analysis.

“Because, Arquette, the body was found over there,” informed Ryan, pointing his right finger toward the dumpster about ten feet ahead.

“Over where?” asked Arquette, looking curiously in the direction Ryan was pointing while still in a squatted position.

“Are you ready for this?!” asked Ryan.

“Well, I’m here now, so I guess I have no other choice but to be ready, right?!” replied Arquette.

“Alright! Follow me!” instructed Ryan.

Arquette took a deep breath, stood up, and began to walk alongside Ryan. As they walked toward the dumpster, they approached a yellow triangle forensics tag labeled “caution” placed next to what looked like a large-size pile of spaghetti with thick tomato sauce. The noodles, however, were larger than usual, and the sauce was dark red with a sticky texture. A forensics officer appeared from behind Arquette and

squatted near the unknown substance. In his hands was a high-tech black camera with a sophisticated lens. He began to take numerous shots of the evidence. Suddenly, he paused from taking shots and reached his right hand down into a black plastic case he placed on the ground and pulled out a silver, pen-like object. He then used this object to maneuver the pieces of this substance around in an effort to capture additional detailed footage.

“What the.., now that’s not what I think it is, is it?” cried Arquette in disbelief.

“Mum hum!” replied Ryan, nodding his head.

“Excuse me!” said Arquette, rushing to the wall on their left, instantaneously.

Just then, his breakfast became visible for many to see. “Urhh, Urhh!” was the sound that came from Arquette as his morning breakfast was regurgitated as he leaned forward, supporting himself with his left hand propped against the wall.

“Oh man, are you ok?!” shouted Ryan with slight sarcasm.

“Yeah, just give me a second,” replied Arquette breathing heavy.

“Sir, just don’t get that near the intestines, I’m still analyzing them,” warned the forensics officer with a smirk, while shaking his head.

“Yeah, got it!” replied Arquette, feeling offended by the officer’s remark.

“What’s wrong with you?” asked Ryan, with a confused look on his face.

“I thought you were a homicide detective,” he continued, in a sarcastic tone.

“I am, but all the years I’ve worked homicide, my cases involved your typical gunshot wounds, knife attacks, or fatal car crashes. I mean, none of them ever involved horrifyingly butchered body parts,” replied Arquette, showing signs of nausea and stomach discomfort.

“Oh. Well I guess I understand,” said Ryan.

“Ok! So, you got it all out of your system now?” he asked, seeming almost giddy.

“There’s a lot more to see, and it’s very disturbing; so you may wanna prepare yourself,” he warned, walking toward the dumpster.

“Wait! Hold on a second! Do we even know where these intestines came from? I mean, there’s no body lying there, so how did these intestines happen to get there? I assume they’re from the victim, right?” inquired Arquette, turning slightly to his right to look at Ryan.

“Arquette, hold on, all your questions will be answered soon enough! Again, get ready, because you’re about to really be shocked,” told Ryan.

After seeing Ryan heading over toward the dumpster, Arquette pulled himself together quickly so he could join him. He took out another napkin from his suit pocket and wiped the saliva from his mouth. Right after, he slowly stood upright, took a deep breath, then proceeded over near Ryan. But this time when he passed the intestines on the ground, he avoided making eye contact with them.

Ryan was now at the dumpster where two forensics officers were analyzing the area for evidence. Seconds later, Arquette joined Ryan next to the dumpster. One of the officers was taking interior photo shots of the left side of the dumpster. The other officer was laying out a black body bag on the ground next to it.

“Hey fellas, could y’all give us a minute?” asked Ryan, politely tapping the officer with the camera on his right shoulder with his right hand after approaching him from behind.

Both officers suddenly stopped what they were doing and allowed Arquette and Ryan to assess the dumpster. Arquette came around to Ryan’s left side and began to inspect the dumpster. As he attempted to focus in on the overabundance of waste, he found it very difficult to discern exactly what he was looking at. It took him a few minutes for his eyes to adjust before he was able to differentiate between the revolting rubbish, and the victim’s body.

The head of the victim was visible, sitting above of the garbage. It could easily be distinguished as one eye was freakishly open, the nose distorted, and mouth posed in a way that would indicate that the victim had overcame a horrendous, traumatic episode. In addition, the victim’s right arm and right portion of the chest were also emerged. Although the victim was surrounded by large quantities of debris, it was clear that the victim was wearing a Blouson jacket that was possibly school issued because the school’s name was in large bold font at the upper right part of the

shirt. The title “bus driver” was in small Italic font underneath it. But, although the jacket was easy to identify, the blood stains and combination of garbage made it difficult to determine the original color of the jacket.

“That’s it?!” challenged Arquette, seeming slightly disappointed.

“Is this what you thought I wouldn’t be prepared for?” he continued, with an offended expression displayed on his face.

“Man, you had me thinking...,” he rambled on but then came to a disturbing pause after Ryan moved around to his left side, slid blue latex gloves on both of his hands, and then pulled some of the debris back away from the victim’s lower body.

Arquette’s facial expression instantly changed from being fully confident to looking shocked and disgusted as he learned the reason why there were intestines on the ground.

“Oh sh...t!” exclaimed Arquette.

“Well now that explains why there’s intestines over there,” he said, with slight sarcasm as he raised his napkin up toward his mouth.

“Yeah, I gather that the victim must’ve been ripped apart over there,” Ryan proposed, while assessing the body and pointing his right index finger toward the intestines.

“Yeah, that’s likely. But how the hell did his body get all the way over here without any signs of being dragged over?” inquired Arquette, turning his head left to right in search for evidence on the ground around the dumpster.

However, there were no signs of any additional evidence nearby.

“Ok. So where’s the rest of the body?” he questioned.

“And more importantly, what on earth could’ve possibly ripped this man apart without using some sort of machine or something?” he continued, in a frustrated tone while examining the victim’s body.

“And that’s where we’ve been at a loss, Arquette, because so far there’s been no machine, or weapons of any kind, found here that could do something like this,” proclaimed Ryan.

“Are you serious?! I mean, not even a knife?!” asked Arquette, feeling perplexed.

“Well, what I’ll concluded at this point is that whatever did this, must’ve been extremely strong, had some very sharp nails, and really pissed off,” he continued, being slightly humorous.

“Arquette, maybe we should take a step back for a bit, you know, let forensics continue working,” advised Ryan.

“You seem a bit edgy anyway. Maybe this case is getting a little overwhelming for you already,” he continued, in a therapeutic tone.

He gently wrapped his left arm around Arquette’s upper back; placing his left hand on Arquette’s left shoulder, trying to lead him away from the dumpster.

“Nah, I’ll be fine Ryan, thanks,” replied Arquette in a calm tone.

He then took his right hand and removed Ryan's hand from his left shoulder, then continued to observe the body in the dumpster.

As Arquette and Ryan continued to converse about the victim, the two officers began to assess the scene again. Across from the dumpster was the other officer with a camera taking photos of the building. While looking through his lens, he noticed a crescent-shape blood strip running vertical on the wall of a building. The strip ran down behind a pile of large black garage bags. When he approached these bags to get closer shots of the wall, he happened to notice a bloody shoe facing bottom-up in between them. He decided to lift the camera strap up over his head and placed the camera around his neck; allowing him to now use both his gloved hands to maneuver the top bags for better shots of the shoe. Although, after he repositioned these bags, he soon discovered something even more graphic.

"Ah, Detectives, you'd wanna take a look at this!" exclaimed the officer, in a high frantic voice.

Immediately, Arquette and Ryan, along with the other two officers, moved quickly to his location. The officer with the camera moved to the left to allow Arquette to investigate.

"Well, I believe this answer's one of my questions," declared Arquette, reaching for a pair of blue latex gloves from one of the forensics officers.

"Here, hold this for me," he requested, placing his black binder underneath the officer's left arm who had the camera.

He then put both gloves on.

“Alright! Let’s see what we got here,” he continued in a calm, low tone.

He then leaned forward, placing his right hand against the wall; off-set from the blood stain, while using his left hand to grab the bottom of the shoe. Once he had a firm grip on it, he then lifted it up slowly to avoid damaging the evidence. Surprisingly though, this shoe felt heavier than expected.

As he continued to pull it up above the bag, it became gruesomely obvious why it was heavy; and that’s because there was a leg still attached to it. The victim apparently was wearing tan, kaki-type pants at the time of his death. Arquette placed the leg down on top of the bags, then he stood up-right. The officer with the camera moved in swiftly for the advantage of taking a few shots of the leg.

“Ok, there’s one leg, but I’m sure he had two,” stated Arquette, humorously; trying to relieve some of the tension created by this moment.

Each officer began to search the area, pulling forth the additional garbage bags, as well as checking behind the dumpster containing the body. Out of instinct, Arquette’s movement came to a halt. He looked over at the blood stain on the wall as, if his intuition was telling him to begin there. He moved back over to where the victim’s leg was located, leaned forward, placing his right hand in the same spot on the wall again, then began to focus directly on the blood stain. As he concentrated on it; practically squinting his eyes, he realized that the blood had a downward flowing pattern.

Majority all of it was dry, but as he continued to analyze the stain going upward, he soon found that the higher portion of the blood was still moist. Not sure though, he took his left index finger and touched it to confirm.

“Hum, this is odd! How is it this portion of blood’s still wet after so many hours?” he asked himself, observing the blood on his left finger.

“Think Jackson. What’s keeping this wet blood?” he continued, pressing himself for answers.

“I mean, it can’t be coming out of the walls. This isn’t some weird, scary movie. And there was no rain this morning, either,” he assessed.

“That could only mean that it’s probably coming from...Oh!!” he continued, seeming he found the answer.

He continued to follow the blood stain up along the wall.

Far above the blood stain was a black fire escape which was near the roof of that building. This fire escape showed signs of age as brown rust appeared within various parts of the metal. To the right of Arquette was a lever for a ladder belonging to the fire escape. It, too, showed signs of age; possibly requiring extra potency in order to turn it for the ladder to be released. While analyzing the condition of the fire escape, Arquette wondered how blood could have reached so high to cause such a trail. And more importantly, what was this blood linked to.

“This is odd!” he said, looking puzzled while gazing upward along the fire escape.

“The ladder for the fire escape appears unused; yet, something had to’ve been up there this morning to leave something up there to cause this blood to drip,” he continued, while observing the fire escape.

But because this fire escape was a few feet high, it made it extremely difficult to see all the way up. He tried looking up at each level from the ladder side but couldn’t get a clear view. So, he decided to reposition himself around the bags; stepping cautiously to avoid disturbing the scene. Then, he positioned himself directly underneath the fire escape and he looked up. Shockingly, as he observed each catwalk, he suddenly discovered an L-shaped silhouette lying across the lowest one. This object was about 3ft to 4ft in length.

“What the hell is that?” he asked himself.

“Well, clearly I won’t find out unless I get up there,” he presumed.

“Looks like we’ll need to get this ladder down. Hopefully there’s more evidence up there,” he added.

He then turned to his left toward Ryan and the other forensics officers.

“Alright guys, it looks like I’m gonna need your strength!” he said, encouraging teamwork to lower the ladder.

Ryan and one of the officers got close to Arquette. Next, they all positioned themselves around the lever, grabbed it, and then began to apply force. With all their combined effort, however, the lever was still unwilling to turn.

“Damn it man!” exclaimed Ryan, trying to get a better grip on the lever.

“You know, I don’t think this thing’s gonna move,” he assumed, slowly releasing the lever.

Eventually, they all stopped trying to pull the lever, and took a step back.

“Arquette, I think it’s safe to assume that’s the victim’s other leg, I mean, what else could it be?” he continued, feeling fully confident about what was up on the fire escape.

“You could be right, but we still need to get up there and retrieve it, and look around for any additional evidence,” directed Arquette.

“Yeah I know,” agreed Ryan, while wiping his hands clean of dirt and rust.

“Ok, listen up! I’m gonna need some oil or something for this lever. Can I have someone bring me either some WD40, gun oil, or something?!” shouted Arquette, stepping back further from the fire escape.

After making this request, he moved up near the fire escape again and continued to analyze the ladder.

About fifteen minutes had passed before an assisting officer cleared the caution tape carrying a blue can with a red top. This can read WD40 in bold white letters on the side. Arquette and Ryan watched as the officer ran his way up to their location. When the officer approached them, he appeared a little flushed and disturbed from running through the crime scene. He then handed the can of oil to Arquette.

“Here you are sir,” he said, while covering his mouth to avoid inhaling the stench which engulfed the area.

“Thanks!” replied Arquette, with a slight grin on his face.

“Hey, are you ok?” he asked, while glancing to his right at Ryan in hopes he would make fun, also.

“Sir, I think I’m going to be sick,” replied the officer.

His body language strongly indicated that he was ready to leave that area.

“If you need anything else sir, just let me know” he concluded, while trying to make his way back toward the caution tape.

“Well, just hold-on one minute,” requested Arquette, instantaneously.

“We could actually use your help with turning this lever,” he requested, feeling certain that additional arm power could now help get the ladder loose.

“Could you help us?” he continued.

“Haa...yes sir.” replied the officer, in an unenthusiastic tone while exhaling.

He slowly moved up toward Arquette. Ryan took the WD40 from Arquette and sprayed it on the lever. He used quite a bit of it to ensure he sprayed it completely, soaking all of the level, even within the cracks.

“Ok!” exclaimed Ryan.

“Let’s give it about 5 minutes to set in and then we should be good to go,” he advised.

After five minutes had passed, Arquette, Ryan, the forensics officer, and the assisting officer had all decided a strategy on how they could effectively pull the lever loose. As soon as they came to an agreement, each officer grabbed a portion of the lever in an effort to balance the weight for equal

arm strength. It worked! At first, the lever made a screeching sound, showing signs of reluctance. But eventually as they continued to apply force, the lever slowly began to adjust and turn counterclockwise. They finally got the lever to complete a 360-degree turn which brought the ladder down swiftly.

Feeling as if they had successfully completed their task, they smiled and high-fived one another; expressing a sense of triumph and great teamwork.

“Alright everyone! Great job!” praised Arquette expressing gratitude for everyone’s hard work and team support.

“So I’ll head up first, then forensics can follow behind to take some photos. Then, once they’re done, we can start cleaning up the scene,” instructed Arquette, placing his left foot at the base of the ladder to test his weight.

After feeling confident that the ladder wouldn’t fall and safe to climb up, Arquette proceeded up towards the first level of the fire escape. He climbed with extreme caution to reach the catwalk. As soon as his head passed the threshold for the catwalk, he was now eye-to-eye with the mysterious object that was unidentifiable from the ground below. Shockingly, it was in fact the other leg belonging to the victim, Mr. Osborne. He cleared the threshold and immediately began to investigate the catwalk. While looking around the area, Arquette became a little agitated because he could not find any prints along the rail or catwalk floor that could be useful for identifying a suspect.

“Chris!” he exclaimed, calling for the forensics officer with the camera.

“You can come up now and take your shots. There doesn’t seem to be much to investigate up here, however,” he proclaimed, leaning over the rail of the catwalk and looking directly down at the officers.

“Is that the other leg?” inquired Ryan with curiosity.

“Yeah, but you’ll never believe this,” replied Arquette.

“Let me guess, no prints though, right?” assumed Ryan, believing that was the troubled circumstance.

“Yeah, it’s shocking isn’t it?” replied Arquette.

“Well...of course, this is just an assumption because I don’t see anything yet, anyway,” he proclaimed.

“I mean, maybe forensics might find something when they come up,” he continued, expressing optimism.

Just then, the forensics officer, Chris, appeared at the threshold of the catwalk with his camera around his neck. As soon as he got up the ladder, he swiftly positioned himself and began to take photos of the area. First, he began with photographing the leg. After five snap shots from different angles, he then aimed the lens at the stairs heading up toward the roof. He took four snap shots of the stairs and then moved over to the wall to the left of the catwalk. He got himself into a good position and began photographing the top portion of the crescent-shape blood stain from early. At first, he did not notice anything curious while taking his snap shots. He just continued to photograph the wall. Arquette, now feeling satisfied with the photos taken by the officer, leaned over the rail again to ask the other forensics officer to bring up an evidence bag and a forensics kit.

“Hey Paul, we’re ready for you guys now!” told Arquette.

“Bring up an evidence bag for the leg and a kit to dust for fingerprints,” he ordered.

As Arquette continued to give instructions, Chris began to review the photos he just took. Fortunately for him, his camera was digital which allowed him to review his shots immediately after taking them. He held the camera screen close and started flipping through the photos, assessing each one slowly. Finally, he reached the last few shots which were the images of the blood stain on the wall. While analyzing each one thoroughly, he happened to discover something mysterious. Evidently, the flash from the camera managed to detect a footprint along the wall. They were invisible to the naked eye, which is why Arquette did not notice them. Startlingly, this footprint seemed to only appear directly off to the left of the catwalk rail.

“Ahha, Sir!!” exclaimed Chris, interrupting Arquette still talking with the other officers. He lowered his camera, turned to his left slightly, and then waved his left hand for Arquette’s attention.

“Detective, you really need to see this sir!” he continued, displaying signs of high anxiety.

Arquette stopped his conversation mid-sentence then quickly moved over to officer and approached him on his left side.

“Yeah, what cha got?” asked Arquette, expressing curiosity.

“Look!” said Chris, adjusting the rear screen of the camera to the left for Arquette to see.

The screen presented photos that displayed highlighted glimpses of the footprint.

“Humm, now this is unexpected.” stated Arquette, as he observed each photo. He then looked at the wall while simultaneously analyzing the photos.

“Ain’t that something?! It appears this print aren’t visible unless you use a flash or something,” he proclaimed.

“Ryan!” he yelled, still observing the photos and the wall.

Just then, he discontinued reviewing the photos and walked back over to the rail and leaned forward.

“Ya, what’s up?!!,” replied Ryan.

“Hey, see if you can find me a blacklight or something to that effect,” Arquette requested.

“A blacklight?” repeated Ryan, looking up at Arquette with a puzzled expression on his face.

“What for?” he inquired.

“We found something in the photo that reveals something on the wall, but I can’t properly assess the wall unless I use a blacklight or a camera flash,” answered Arquette.

“Oh! And bring up that forensics case I asked for. We’re gonna need to dust this wall for prints,” he continued.

“You got it, Boss!” agreed Ryan.

Ryan then walked away from the fire escape and headed back towards the caution tape.

Ten minutes later, Ryan returned to the ladder and began to climb up. In his left hand was a black miniature size blacklight; in his right hand was a small aluminum fingerprint case. After reaching the catwalk, he approached

Arquette and the officer while they were still observing the photos in the camera. He stood directly behind them to get a glimpse of the photos.

“Hey, I got the blacklight and fingerprint case,” mentioned Ryan, peeking over both of their shoulders to see the photos.

“See Ryan, if you look at this photo, you see a footprint; but, if you look directly at the wall, you don’t see anything,” stated Arquette.

“Humm. And when you zoom in, it looks like this person may’ve been barefoot,” he proclaimed, adjusting the camera screen shoulder length between himself and Chris for Ryan to see.

“But that’s not what has me baffled. What I’m trying to figure out is how the hell this person managed to walk up this wall,” he wondered, pointing his left index finger at the wall while holding the camera up with his right hand.

Chris stepped to his right so Ryan could hand Arquette the blacklight. Arquette received the blacklight then handed Chris his camera.

“Now, let’s get a better look-see of this footprint,” said Arquette to himself, as he moved closer to the rail near the wall.

Ryan followed close behind him. Now in position, Arquette clicked the blacklight on with his left thumb and the bulb produced a medium blue fluorescent glow. Next, he gripped the rail with his right hand, titled himself forward, and then extended his left arm out toward the wall; slowly scanning it up and down. With the ambiance having a pale or colorless display, it made the use of the blacklight

more effective. Surprisingly, the footprint reappeared under the blacklight.

“Whoaa, do you see this?!” he asked.

Ryan swiftly moved around to Arquette’s left side for a better view of the wall.

“Yup! I sure do. But I damn sure don’t believe it,” replied Ryan, slightly nervous and unprepared for this discovery.

As Arquette continued to shift the blacklight upward, two more footprints were detected, and they proceeded to scale diagonal to the left upward towards the roof.

“Alright! We seem to have a few prints here, and yup, they appear to be heading up toward the roof,” declared Arquette.

“So, for the time being, I’m gonna assume that whatever left this leg here apparently walked along the wall to get to the roof where he, she, or it likely left the area,” he presumed, elevating the blacklight upward slowly with his left hand.

“After seeing this, I would say you’re probably right,” agreed Ryan.

“So do you wanna check the roof?” he asked.

“I mean who’s knows, we may even find out where these footprints go,” he continued.

“Yeah, I think so. But first let’s get these prints recorded,” replied Arquette.

He took a few seconds to think about how to move closer to the prints. Then suddenly, he turned off the blacklight and stood upright, then turned slightly left toward Ryan.

“Here, hold this,” he requested, handing Ryan the blacklight.

“Alright Ryan, I’m gonna need you to hold the blacklight up against the wall. This way, while I’m over the rail, I’ll know actually where these prints are and can apply the dust and print tape,” he explained.

Ryan agreed to this arrangement and handed the print case to Chris holding the camera. Arquette then moved close to the rail and lift his left leg over the it.

“Careful Boss, this catwalk definitely shows some signs of age,” cautioned Ryan.

After getting his leg over, Arquette took a minute to steady himself. Once he felt stable, he brought his right leg over the rail and stood facing outward with his back against the rail. He then leaned forward as far as he could to where the prints were located. Ryan moved closer to the rail and turned on the blacklight. Then, he extended his left arm out and began to highlight the area to reveal the footprints.

Arquette tried to position himself securely by placing his left hand against the wall while planning to use his right hand to dust the prints. However, he quickly realized his stance was too unstable. This prompted him to consider using a ladder. He decided to stop his efforts and asked Ryan to radio for a ladder.

“You know what, I can’t seem to get myself in a stable position. Can you get on the radio and have someone get a ladder over here?” he asked, leaning back against the rail.

Ryan lowered the blacklight, put it in his right hand, then removed his radio from the left side of his hip.

“Yeah, this is Detective Harding. Listen, we need a ladder over here asap,” he requested, while monitoring Arquette’s position.

“Ten-four! We’ll have one to you immediately,” replied an officer.

Moments later, two fire fighters approached the fire escape with a ladder and positioned it against the wall near the catwalk. Arquette waited patiently against the rail; looking downward at the fire fighters preparing to extend the ladder up. As they extended the ladder, Arquette began to instruct them on where he wanted it.

“Alright fellas, I’m gonna need it close to this area,” directed Arquette, leaning slightly forward while holding the rail with his right hand and pointing his left index finger at that specific spot.

Slowly, the fire fighters extended the ladder upward and then tilted it toward the area where Arquette requested it. As soon as the ladder was set, Arquette extended his left leg out and placed his foot on the ladder; followed by his left hand. As soon as he felt stable, he then asked Ryan to re-illuminate the wall with the blacklight.

“Alright Ryan, I’mma need you again, just like before. Hold the blacklight steady in this area,” requested Arquette, while trying to ensure his safety on the ladder.

Ryan moved up to the rail and clicked the blacklight on. After putting it in his left hand, he extended it over the rail and started scanning the wall again. Right then, Chris passed the fingerprint case to Ryan to hand to Arquette.

“Here you go, Boss!” said Ryan, handing Arquette the fingerprint case.

With his right hand, Arquette took it then put it in his left hand. Next, he opened it and removed the brush with his right hand then scrubbed the black powdered ink with the bristles and began to dust the footprints. After all the prints were dusted, he closed the case and handed it back to Ryan. Chris handed Arquette a few stripes of white carbon copy paper to record the prints. He took the stripes and placed them over each footprint. With his right hand, he then applied pressure on each piece, then swiped his hand up and down to ensure the paper copied each print sufficiently. When he felt confident of his efforts, he decided to remove the stripes, peeling each one off the wall slowly. Efficiently, his efforts captured clear images of all the prints.

“Here you, go. Put these in a plastic bag,” ordered Arquette, passing the paper stripes to Ryan.

Ryan turned off the blacklight and handed it to Chris. He, in turn, handed Ryan a small clear plastic bag for the prints. Ryan received the plastic bag but didn’t put the stripes into the bag immediately. He decided to observe each one first, carefully.

“Yeah, we got some good prints here Arquette,” proclaimed Ryan feeling positive.

“So what do you think, our suspect may be 5’2-5’3 in height, judging by the size of these footprints anyway,” he speculated. He then placed the prints in the bag.

“I guess so. I mean, you could right; however, us knowing their height really won’t help us solve the ultimate mystery which is, how did he or she walk upside this building,” replied Arquette staring upward along the wall.

“You got that right!” Ryan agreed.

“Alright! Now that we got these prints, let’s take a look on the roof. Maybe there’s more footprints or, even better, some hand or fingerprints,” he continued as he adjusted his body to the right to reach the rail for the catwalk.

Ryan reached for Arquette’s right arm in support of helping Arquette back over the rail.

“Thanks Ryan!” replied Arquette finally bringing his left leg over the rail and onto the catwalk.

“Alright, let’s head up,” he suggested while glancing at the additional catwalk above.

He then proceeded up the staircase to the right of him and headed up to the roof. Following directly behind him was Ryan and Chris. Once they all reached the roof top, Chris ventured off to the right side of the rooftop to search for more evidence. Arquette walked toward the ledge of the building to his left where the footprints would have continued. Ryan stayed near the staircase to give Arquette some time and space to assess the area.

“Hey, did you pick anything up yet?” asked Arquette to Chris.

“No sir, nothing yet,” replied Chris, carefully scanning various areas with the blacklight.

“Well how bout this, since the footprints ended near this location, we oughta try this area first,” recommended Arquette, while assessing the ledge.

Chris immediately stopped scanning, walked over to Arquette’s location, then passed the blacklight to him. Now holding it in his right hand, Arquette began to scan the ledge, slowly. He moved the blacklight downward below the ledge to scan for possible prints on the ground. After nearly ten minutes, he came to a brief pause.

“Are you kidding me?! I can’t believe this crap!” exclaimed Arquette, kneeling on his left knee.

“What?!” asked Ryan.

“I just can’t believe this. There’s not one freakin print over here,” affirmed Arquette, standing to his feet.

He clicked the blacklight switch to off which indicated that his search had now come to a halt.

“Apparently, whoever or whatever prints are on the wall, must have been able to fly, or something,” he said, concluding his assessment.

Ryan walked over to him and Chris and the three of them just looked straight ahead, beyond the roof top.

Chapter 4

Stacey's Residence

Knock, knock, knock... “Stacey, I’m heading off to work now!” declared Stacey’s mother, speaking from behind Stacey’s bedroom door.

“Listen, if you could, I’ll need you to run to the store later and pick up a few things for dinner tonight,” she continued.

But there was no response from Stacey. Assuming that Stacey was still asleep, she decided to speak louder.

“Stacey, did you hear me?!” she asked, in a slightly higher tone.

“Oh my God mom, yeah, I got it!!” exclaimed Stacey in an immature, groaning tone.

“Well you didn’t say anything, so. Ok honey, I’ll see you when I get home.” Stacey’s mother concluded.

She then proceeded downstairs.

Moments later, Stacey opened her bedroom door and walked out of her room yawning and stretching. She was wearing a two piece, white and pink pajama set decorated with images of miniature bears all over it. First, she entered into the bathroom to clean herself up. Once she was done, she exited the bathroom and proceeded downstairs for the kitchen. As soon as she entered the kitchen, she picked up the tv remote from off the table and turned on the black 24’ flat-screen tv. Once she found a station she liked, she placed the remote on the counter and then walked over to the refrigerator. She opened the refrigerator door and began to

search each shelf, trying to decide what to eat. Before long, the of taste for pancakes, eggs, and sausage arose in her mouth; hence, steering her to grab the carton of eggs, box of pancake mix, and a pack of sausages from the refrigerator shelves. Now having everything, she shut the refrigerator. She these food items on the table and then took out the cookware and other utensils to prepare her meal. As she gathered these supplies, a news reporter appeared abruptly on tv; interrupting the local channel's broadcast. Stacey's attention was suddenly averted from preparing her meal to looking at the news as the reporter began to provide updates on the latest events.

News reporter: "Good morning everyone! If you're just joining us, we would like to update you on a murder that occurred early this morning. Up to this point, we've been able to confirm that the identity of the man killed was bus driver, Myron Osborne, who worked for Richmond High School. It appeared that Mr. Osborne was preparing for his shift when someone brutally attacked him. His body was later found just a few miles from the parking lot where the buses are located. Currently, law enforcement officers are on the scene working, trying to uncover this mysterious death. They hope to find the suspect responsible for this heinous attack and bring him or her to justice, immediately. As always, we will continue to cover this story as it develops and provide you with updates. Stay tuned!" the reporter closed.

The tv station then returned to normal broadcasting and Stacey resumed with preparing her meal. Surprisingly, her house phone began to ring. She walked over to the kitchen counter and grabbed the white portable phone from off the wall and read the caller ID. It read, “Chris Stevens.” Without hesitation, she pressed the call button to answer; expressing slight excitement and romance as she placed it up her left ear.

“Hey baby, good morning! What-cha up to?”, she asked in a charismatic voice.

“Nothing right now. I woke up like an hour ago,” replied Chris.

“Since, I’ve been up though, I’ve been watching the news,” he continued, sounding troubled.

“I mean man, have you had a chance to see the news this morning?” he asked, feeling slightly eager to reveal what he knows.

“No, not really. I just turned on the tv and been trying to fix some breakfast. I mean, the news did come on briefly, talking about a murder or something that happened to a bus driver who worked for our old high school,” replied Stacey, in a moderately concern tone.

“Yeah, that’s right!!” said Chris, seeming partially gratified with her response.

“But do you know who that person was?” he asked, in anticipation to reveal the answer.

“Ah, it was something Osborne, I guess. I don’t know. I didn’t listen to the whole thing. But he was a bus driver, so what?” replied Stacey, sounding slightly uninterested in talking about him.

“Yeah, that’s right! It was Mr. Osborne, remember? We rode his bus the last few years we went to Richmond. Man, how do you not remember him? I mean, we use to cause a lot of problems on his bus,” reminded Chris, expressing mild disappointment in Stacey.

“Really! How did you forget him?” he continued, expressing disbelief.

“Well first of all; one, it’s because it’s been nearly 10 years now, Chris, and that to me is one good excuse, alone,” answered Stacey, feeling criticized and affronted.

“Second, all the things I did in high school, I’ve left in high school. So please, stop trying to remind me of the past. The past, to me, is exactly what it is; the past,” she continued, having a philosophical moment.

Silence interrupted their conversation for a brief minute before Chris suddenly changed the topic. He decided to talk about his plans for the day. As they talked, Stacey prepared her meal, ate, then placed her dishes in the sink. Chris told her where he planned to be for majority of the morning, then asked if she could meet up with him later.

“Listen, I’m gonna do some running around this morning; but after, I plan to stop at the mall, say 2 o’clock, to grab some lunch. Do you want to meet me there?” he asked.

“Yeah, I guess I could stop by around that time. You said around 2pm?” she replied.

“Yeah,” he answered.

“Alright! Well I can’t wait to see you,” she said, with slight excitement.

They then said their goodbyes and disconnected. Promptly, Stacey ran up to her room to get dress. About twenty minutes later, she came downstairs fully dressed in a pair of blue jeans and a light green blouse; wearing a pair of green, low heeled shoes. She had her black purse hanging from her left shoulder when she reached her right hand inside it to extract her keys. She then walked out the front door, locking it behind her, then got into her car and drove to the store.

Chapter 5

At the Precinct

Meanwhile back at the crime scene, Arquette and the others were near the entrance of the crime scene talking amongst themselves. Arquette was instructing the forensics team on what to do if they discover any additional evidence.

“Ok, listen up team. As of right now, I believe we’ve gotten just about all we could from this scene. I’m gonna head back to the office now to process these prints. If you come across any new evidence while cleaning up, please hand them to Ryan and he’ll get them processed asap. But, if there’s anything urgent, don’t hesitate to call my cell,” he instructed.

He then started walking toward his sedan. Ryan accompanied him to his vehicle while discussing further investigative options.

“Hey Arquette, I was thinking I could go out to the school, you know, to question the administrative staff; see if they’ve heard anything or had any concerns with anyone in or outside the school,” suggested Ryan, displaying a sense of enthusiasm.

“Wow! Now that’s a smart move, and it would help out greatly!” commended Arquette.

“Just get with me later and we can go over what you’ve found out,” he instructed.

“As for me, what I’ll do after I process these prints, is head over to where he lives and question his neighbors.

Maybe they saw or heard something that could possibly give us a lead, too,” he implied.

Two assisting officers at the access point lifted the caution tape for Arquette to pass underneath. Once he got to his cruiser, he put all his computer case, binder, and other supplies in the backseat, closed the backdoor, and then got into driver’s seat. Next, he started his car and backed out of the alley entrance with the sirens on; then exited the scene.

The time is was now a quarter to noon. The sun was high in the sky, which caused the temperature to increase even more. Traffic had finally loosened up, allowing for a smoother traffic flow. Pedestrians were circulating along the sidewalks effortlessly, but the crowd flow began to increase dramatically near the crime scene as more people grew interested to see what had transpired. News reporters were still documenting recent findings as they continued to report updates. The forensics team initiated their final search for evidence, placing their remaining findings into containment units. Ryan contacted the lead forensics officer to inform him that he was now leaving the scene for Richmond High.

“Officer Rivera, I’m heading off now. I need to visit Richmond High to speak with their admin staff about this late bus driver. I take it you have everything covered here,” he informed, looking back down the alleyway.

“Yes sir! Well, we’re not quite done yet, but we should have everything wrapped up in ‘bout an hour or so,” replied Rivera.

“Sounds good sir. I have no doubts. Your team has never disappointed. Listen, you have my number, so please contact me if you need or hear anything,” instructed Ryan.

“No problem Detective. Will do.” agreed Rivera.

After discontinuing their conversation, Ryan then exited the crime scene for his sedan.

At the precinct, Arquette was in his office commencing his report of the crime scene; listing all the evidence that were found there. The prints he retrieved were still in the clear plastic bag on his desk. Unexpectedly, Chief Miller walked in to check on the status of his case, as well as his mental health.

“Hey Jackson, I know it’s probably too early to ask, but where are we regarding this case? What all do we know so far? Oh! And did we get anything from these prints yet?” asked the Chief, picking up the plastic bag containing the prints.

He then sat at the left edge of Arquette’s desk with his right foot touching the floor.

“Well Chief, to be honest, all we found was a scene that looked like something out of a horror movie. The only things we’ve uncovered were the victim’s name and those prints there which I’m gonna to process in a few. Now hopefully these prints will lead us to our killer. But until a positive match is made, there may not be an arrest anytime soon,” replied Arquette, while typing his report.

The Chief placed the prints down to his left then leaned left toward Arquette.

“Ok. And how about you, Jackson? How’ve you been managing yourself thus far, I mean, in regard to this case?” he asked, expressing concern for Arquette’s mental health.

“Well sir, it just started, so I plan to take this case like the others; one step at a time. Now don’t get me wrong, I wasn’t expecting to see what I saw this morning. It was definitely like some weird horror flick out there, that’s for damn sure. But right now, my mind’s honestly focused on finding this killer, that’s all. This way, I shouldn’t have to experience another scene like that again; before I retire,” replied Arquette, looking to his left at the Chief.

“Yeah, I agree. But they say, once you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all,” the Chief expressed, casually.

“Anyway, I’m just glad to see you’re able to adjust. I need you on this case cause I know you’ll get the answers we need in a timely fashion,” he continued, expressing high optimism in Arquette’s talent.

“Now, with that being said, I know you’re busy with your report, but I really need you to run those prints as soon as possible,” he instructed, as he stood up from the desk to leave the office.

“No problem Chief! Let me save my work and I’ll head down to the lab,” replied Arquette.

“And as soon as you find something, you’ll let me know?” the Chief asked.

“You already know, Chief,” replied Arquette.

The Chief then left the office. As soon as Arquette found a good place to stop, he saved his report. Next, he reached

for the clear bag with the prints and left his office for the lab. He turned right out of his office then proceeded down the hall. He then reached the end of the hall and made a left. Halfway down that hall was a staircase on the right leading downstairs. On the wall posted above it was a sign that read “Forensics Laboratory.” Just underneath it was a red arrow in the form of stairs pointing down to indicate that the lab was located downstairs. Arquette then proceeded down the stairs. The stairs had two flights, one set of stairs went down one direction, then turned right to continue downward in the opposite direction. When he reached the base of the stairs, he turned left. Across the hall from the staircase was a door with the title Forensics Laboratory written in blue bold letters on the window. The word Forensics was directly atop of the word Laboratory. The window was made of non-transparent glass to ensure the lab had privacy. After entering the lab, he immediately asked for a tech to assist him with his prints.

“Umm, could someone help me process these prints?” he asked, holding the plastic bag up in his left hand.

“And I need these ran asap. High priority per the Chief,” he insisted.

A female tech, wearing a white lab coat, buttons fastened up to the collar, black khaki pants with black shoes and pair of blue latex gloves, quickly approached him and extended her right hand out for the prints.

“Let’s see what we got here Detective,” said the tech, while opening the bag to extract the prints.

She then walked over to her desk to the right of the lab. Arquette followed behind her; watching her every move.

“These could likely be the prints left by the suspect; unless someone else tried scaling the wall...like the victim,” Arquette chuckled, with minor humor.

The tech looked to her left at Arquette and stared at him with a sense of uncertainty, unsure of what Arquette was referring to.

“Oh yeah! That’s right, you weren’t there,” he said, becoming serious.

She then removed the prints from the plastic bag and place it on desk. Next, she walked over to one of the analysis machines and began to scan the prints. Arquette, again, followed close behind her. She sat each print on a medium size microscopic slide within the machine then pressed the start button. The machine then launched a sequence of patterns; trying to link these prints with those already in its database. After the tech confirmed the prints were being processed, she walked back over to her desk until the results complete. Arquette remained near the machine.

About fifteen minutes passed before and the results came back inconclusive. Her computer indicated that there were no known links connecting the prints to the ones in its database.

“Uh Detective, unfortunately we didn’t find anything yet sir,” the tech reported, sitting at her desk.

Arquette turned from the analysis machine and then walked back over to her desk.

“Humm...well that’s not what I wanted to hear,” uttered Arquette, while approaching the tech from behind her left shoulder. He then leaned forward slightly to see her computer screen.

“Ok...well do me a favor. Just run these prints through every system you can think of. I mean, use the city, state, county, and federal, if possible. One of these systems have to have something,” recommended Arquette, standing up right.

“Sir, that could take hours. Yet, more importantly, some of those systems would likely require special access!” exclaimed the tech, coming to a stand and looking to her left at Arquette with a confrontational expression on her face.

“Yes, yes it will. And I really do apologize for this. However, I’m facing a bit of a time crunch, which means I need these results as soon as possible. Please!” replied Arquette, expressing compassion.

The tech remained silent while reading the information on her computer screen.

“Listen, I’ll forever be in your debt, and will definitely be sure to make this up to you. I mean, you can probably tell this case is a huge deal considering this tremendous request of mine. So, just know we’re all having to put in a little overtime to get this case closed. Yet with your help, we could likely wrap things up quickly,” he continued, expressing sincerity and optimism for hopes to gain tech’s support.

The tech turned her head to the left, gave Arquette a slight smile, and then calmly pressed the enter key on her computer to initiate another scan.

“Thank you so much!” said Arquette, in a sincere, compassionate tone.

He then exited out the lab. Before leaving the precinct, however, he first stopped by his office to grab his computer case and binder. After collecting those items, he then left the precinct for the residence of the deceased bus driver.

Chapter 6

Lunch at the Mall

It's now mid-afternoon in the city of Annapolis. Stacey had just arrived at the mall where she agreed to meet her boyfriend, Chris. Once she found a free parking space, she parked her red, two door Honda Civic. She then exited her car and proceeded toward the entrance. As soon as she entered the building, she texted Chris, informing him that she had just arrived. A few seconds later, Chris returned a text stating that he was in the food court. Stacey read his response then continued toward the food court straight ahead. When she reached that area, she paused briefly to scan for Chris. Within seconds, she recognized him wearing a dark blue T-shirt with black jeans. He stood about 5'8, with a masculine build of a junior football player. Stacey headed over towards him waiting at the Chinese cuisine concession. The food there had an aroma of soy sauce, grilled bourbon chicken, steamed broccoli, and hot egg rolls. Chris turned to his left toward Stacey's voice as she called out his name.

“Chris, what chu gonna eat?” she asked, as she approached him from the left side.

After reaching him, she extended her right arm out to embrace him around his waist.

“Well, I was just looking at this Chinese food trying to decide if this is what I want,” he replied, gazing down at the food through the clear glass in front of him.

“Well, just make sure you get enough for both of us, hon,” she insisted, while turning around to check the seating area.

“In the meantime, I’mma find us a place to sit,” she suggested.

She then left from Chris’s side and walked to the seating area. Chris approached the glass and began to point at the various food items he desired. After the Asian server packaged Chris’ meal into a white Styrofoam container, he put it in a white plastic bag and awaited payment. Chris paid for his meal and drink with cash then headed over to join Stacey at the table. When he reached the table, he sat down on the left side of Stacey.

As Chris and Stacey ate and conversated, an African American male approached them at the table, unexpectedly. It was Michael Smith, a friend whom they knew from high school.

“What’s up y’all? greeted Michael, walking up to their table with an excited smile on his face.

“Michael is that you?!” asked Stacey in disbelief.

“Yeah it’s me; the one and only. I’m still in the area...for now anyway,” Michael responded, humorously.

“Man, it’s been what, about 8 years since we’ve all hung out together?!” he asked, deciding to take a seat across from them at their table.

“Yeah, it’s been a while,” agreed Chris, displaying minor enthusiasm about Michael’s presents.

“So, what’chu been up to these past few years?” he asked, while taking a bit of his food and staring at the 32’ flat-screen tv displayed above the table.

“Well, to be honest, I’m still at Food Lion stocking shelves on the nightshift. No, it still doesn’t pay much...but it gets me what I want...Jordans!” Michael replied, with a slight giggle while looking directly at Stacey.

“Jordans huh? Is that all you’re living for?” replied Stacey, in a sarcastic tone while placing her fork into Chris’s food.

“Well no, of course not. I’m actually about to start college soon, believe or not. There’s a clinical psychology program I’m interested in...you know? I always wanted to understand why people do the things they do,” replied Michael, displaying confidence and giddiness about his college major.

“Like, why the hell do people spend over \$100 on a pair of snickers?” Stacey implied, patronizing Michael with laughter.

Suddenly, a news reporter appeared on the tv above, causing all three friends to fixate their attention to it.

“This Just In” appeared at the top left corner of the screen as a reporter began to provide the latest development on the murder investigation.

Reporter Diane: “Good afternoon everyone. Early this morning there was a murder in the downtown area. The victim was a bus driver for Richmond High School. According to police, there are still no reports of a potential suspect. Though, they’re still investigating the scene. We’ll now take you to Erica who is live at the scene. Erica, what do we know so far?” briefed Diane.

Reporter Erica: “Thank you, Diane. Right now, the police are still here investigating, but no new information has been provided at this time. Now, we did speak with detectives earlier, yet they could only speculate that there was one killer at the time of the murder; and, that the killer may have used the fire escape to exit the area; considering the prints they said they found. They also stated that there’s still no leads to whom this killer could possibly be at this time,” Erica concluded.

Reporter Diane: “Thank you, Erica. As we continue to cover this story, we’ll be sure to provide you the latest updates. Stay tuned!” informed Diana, concluding the news segment.

The news broadcast had ended and a commercial about computers for sale appeared on the screen. The three friends then reengaged in conversation with one another once again.

“Yo man, did you hear about that this morning?” asked Chris, with strong interest to hear Michael’s response.

“Hear about what...that murder?” Michael replied, seeming mystified by the question.

“Yeah,” said Chris.

“I mean, since you’re planning to be a psychologist and all, why do you think a person would kill someone the way they did; in such a violent, morbid way?” he continued.

“And you know what makes this really sad, is the guy killed was only a bus driver,” he added, displaying a minor sense of aggravation.

“Well, I’m not sure right now. Hell, I haven’t even taken my first class yet. Though I have to say I do see that you’re sure taking what happened a little personal, don’t-cha think?”

I mean, you wanna tell me what's up?" asked Michael, expressing concern for Chris.

Chris looked directly at Michael and began to explain who the bus driver was. By the time he finished his story, Michael was completely traumatized as he, too, remembered who this bus driver was.

"Oh man! Are you serious?! I mean, he was a son of a bitch, but he didn't deserve to die like that. Man, what's going on in this city?!" exclaimed Michael, softly.

Stacey stared at Michael in disbelief.

"What?" asked Michael, after realizing Stacey was giving him a confusing stare.

"Nothing. I just didn't think you'd remember who he was, that's all," replied Stacey as she turned her eyes from Michael and looked down at the food.

"What? You mean you don't remember him?" asked Michael, feeling slightly appalled at Stacey.

"Look, just like I told Chris, I don't remember a lot of things from high school," proclaimed Stacey.

"But if those years were that traumatic for the both of you, then maybe y'all oughta seek therapy or something," she chuckled, as she resumed to watch tv and eat.

Chris and Michael just stared at her with minor disgust.

All of a sudden, Chris raised his left wrist up to look at his watch; contemplating where he planned to go next. Michael saw him looking at his watch and asked him for the time.

"Yo, what time is it?" he asked.

"It's a quarter to 4," replied Chris.

“Thanks! I gotta be to work by 5, so let me get outta here. Yeah, I asked to work the evening shift so I could get more hours, you know? Gotta make that money!” stated Michael, standing up from the table.

“You’re right about that,” Chris agreed.

“Alright! So I guess we’ll see you later, right?” he continued, slightly modest.

“Sure. I mean you know where to find me now. Oh! And make sure you find me on Messenger! My new profile name is Psych_Mike,” replied Michael.

They said their goodbyes then Michael walked away from the table to leave the mall.

“Baby, where you about to go now?” asked Stacey, with interest.

“I just have some running around to do and take care of a few things. But I should be free in a few hours,” Chris replied, uncertain about his schedule later.

“What time does your mom get home?” he asked.

“Humm. Normally she works late on Fridays and then stays the night at her boyfriend’s,” Stacey answered.

“Though, she did ask me to pick up a few things for dinner, so I’m not entirely sure what she plans to do just yet,” she continued, while forking up the last bit of food.

“Alright, well you go do your shopping. Me, I go take care of my business, then later we’ll meet up at your place; if you’re mom doesn’t come home, that is. Just call me as soon as you find out,” requested Chris.

Stacey did not respond. She just continued eating. Chris then stood up from the table and came around behind Stacey's chair. After embracing his arms around her neck, he kissed her on her right cheek.

"I love you, baby," told Chris, expressing strong compassion.

"I love you, too, Chris. I'll call you in a little," Stacey replied, turning partially to her right to look at him.

He then removed his arms from around her neck, slowly, and then left the food court for the mall exit. Stacey remained at the table for another ten minutes. As soon she had finished Chris's drink, she gathered up all the trash from the table and then put everything in the garbage can. Right after, she then proceeded toward the exit of the mall.

Chapter 7

Investigating the Leads

On the other side of town, Detectives Arquette and Harding were working to gather as much information about the bus driver, Mr. Osborne. Ryan had arrived at Richmond High School to speak with their Administration Office and inquire about any recent concerns that the bus driver may have encountered. He entered through the right glass double door then approached the front counter. As soon as an administration official acknowledged his presents, she stood up from her desk and walked over to the counter to greet him.

“Good afternoon, sir! How can I help you?” she welcomed him.

“Good afternoon ma’am, my name is Detective Harding and I’m currently assisting in an investigation involving a deceased bus driver from your school, Mr. Myron Osborne. I thought I’d come here in hopes of retrieving some information on him that could maybe be of assistance to this investigation,” introduced Ryan, handing her one of his business cards from his black binder.

“Yeah, we heard the news. It’s so sad to hear about Mr. Osborne, you know? He was a quiet, humble man,” told the admin, in a despairing tone.

“Uh, I’m sorry. Just give me a minute, Detective; let me contact the principal. He’ll be able to assist you,” she concluded, trying to keep her composure from crying.

She then turned slightly left toward the phone and picked up the phone receiver. Next, she dialed the extension for the principal then held the receiver to her left ear .

“Sir, there’s a Detective Harding here wishing to speak to you,” she informed the principal.

A brief pause in her conversation commenced as if the principal was providing her instructions.

“Yes sir, I’ll let him know. Thanks,” she concluded, then hung up the phone.

“Ok sir, if you could have a seat, the principal said he’ll be with you shortly,” she requested.

“Thank you, ma’am,” Ryan replied.

He turned to his right to locate the blue chairs behind him, then walked over to take a seat.

Nearly ten minutes had passed. The admin, looking up to check on Ryan who was waiting patiently for the principal, decided to reassure him that the principal was still coming to meet with him.

“Sir, I apologize for the wait. It should be just a few more minutes,” she said.

“Ok. Thanks!” replied Ryan, shifting his body in the uncomfortable chair.

To try and ease the mode, the admin decided to ask Ryan about the case; to see if he had any new information. “Hey sir, how’s your investigation going, so far? Still don’t know who

it was?" asked the admin, displaying a sorrow expression on her face.

"Unfortunately, ma'am, because this just happened, it may take us some time before we uncover who or what caused this," Ryan replied.

"At this time, we're just searching every possible angle for new leads, whether it was school related or personal. Someone has to know or at least have seen something," he continued, expressing optimism.

Suddenly, to his surprise, the door to the principal's office finally opened and out stepped a slightly overweight Caucasian man with light brown hair. He stood about 5'7 inches, wearing a black, polyester polo shirt with tan khaki pants. Without hesitation, he approached the front counter and introduced himself.

"Good afternoon, Detective Harding. I'm Principal Bower," he introduced himself, while coming around the right side of the front counter to shake Ryan's hand.

"I do apologize for the long wait sir. How can I help you?" he enquired, extending his right hand out.

Ryan stood to his feet and approached the principal, offering his right hand in return.

"Well sir, I came here to see if I could review any recent or past reports regarding Mr. Osborne; basically, searching for any concerns he might have had with anyone going back few months," replied Ryan, opening his black binder to review Mr. Osborne's information.

"Yeah, that's a shame to hear about what happened to Mr. Osborne. He was a good man and devoted worker. So,

anything you need from us, Detective, I'll be more than happy to share them," the principal avowed.

"Ok sir, if you could follow me. I'll pull his files for you to look at them," he continued, leading Ryan behind the front counter to reach the back of the office where the filing cabinets were located.

"Alright, let's see what we got here," the Principle said to himself, with a slight sigh as he opened the filing cabinet containing Mr. Osborne's file.

After shuffling through the various light blue binders, he came across the last name Osborne and then pulled the file out.

"Here we go!" he exclaimed.

He placed it on top of the filing cabinet and opened it; flipping through the pages to locate the tab labeled "incident." Ryan stood patiently to the right of Mr. Bower as he skimmed through the file. As soon as he found the tab, he started reading through the dates for which each incident occurred.

"Alright. So, the only recent incidents I see here are those related to the bus. For instance, Myron recorded the dates when the bus needed a new alternator, a replacement taillight, how the sliding door kept getting jammed, the radiator overheated, and some other minor repairs..." he mentioned, as he flipped from one page to the next.

"Right. But are there any recent incidents involving him and a student; or, even a staff member, that led to an argument which could've later led to some type physical altercation?" inquired Ryan, placing his binder down on top

of the filing cabinet then reaching for the file to have a closer look.

He began to search through the file for reports that were related to physical or verbal altercations. Unexpectedly, Ryan came across one incident that involved a student and Mr. Osborne. This report stated that Mr. Osborne had to discharge a student from the bus for inappropriate behavior toward another student. It further stated that this aggressive student apparently threatened Mr. Osborne while being escorted off the bus. However, there were no additional reports of any physical altercations.

“See. Look. There was one incident here of a verbal altercation with a student, but the date shows that this took place about 2 years ago. Were there any other altercations like this that took place during Mr. Osborne’s time here at the school?” inquired Ryan, as he continued to read over that report of the altercation.

“If so, and they were reported more than two years ago, they wouldn’t be in there. And that’s because our files only go back three years,” informed the principal.

“Three years huh? Ok. Well do you have any more of his files in the facility that I can check out?” asked Ryan, looking directly at the principal.

“Oh yeah! But it’ll take some time to find them. We keep our old files in a storage room looked up. If you could wait another half an hour or so, I’ll see what I can find,” replied the principal.

“Principal Bower, our Chief wants this case closed and suspect caught, asap, so I have as much time as it’ll take,” told Ryan, with a polite smile on his face.

Principal Bower left Ryan’s side to go speak with the admin at her desk. It appeared that he received something from her as he retracted his left arm away from her then walked toward a side office.

Ryan continued reading the report. As soon as he finished, he decided to venture further back into the file. Twenty minutes later, the principal returned, approaching Ryan with four older files belonging to Mr. Osborne. Each file dated back about three years.

“Here you go Detective. You can now go back about a decade with all these files regarding Mr. Osborne,” informed Principal Bower, with his left hand placed atop of the files and right hand underneath them, ready to pass them to Ryan.

“And please know you can hold on to these files for as long as you need. Mr. Osborne was a good man, so you have our full support. Whoever did this needs to be caught and prosecuted,” he continued, expressing a sense of patriotism.

“Oh man, all our hearts truly go out to his family,” he concluded, now expressing grief and heartache.

“Well sir, I don’t think I can thank you enough for your time and support on this. We will continue to work diligently until his killer is brought to justice,” professed Ryan, expressing gratitude and empathy.

He reached out for the files and placed them securely under his left arm; wrapping his left forearm around to keep

them from falling. He then reached for his black binder with his right hand and passed it to his left hand. This way he could shake the principal's hand before leaving. After they shook hands, the admin came over to escort him to the front to exit. Now at his car, Ryan placed the bus driver's files in his trunk, got into his car, and then drove off the school parking lot.

On the other side of town, Arquette had now reached the neighborhood of Mr. Osborne. First, he stopped by home where Mr. Osborne lived, but after a few knocks on the door, he concluded that no one there. He then chose to speak with the neighbors. He went from house to house inquiring about any recent or past events involving Mr. Osborne; mainly anything involving arguments or other altercations up until the time of his death. Many of the neighbors, though, could not recall any such incidents or problems involving Mr. Osborne, as they could only remember him as being a kind, peaceful, and well-respected man by many in their area. Arquette spent over two hours enquiring the neighbors for possible leads. After he contacted all neighbors, he went back to his car. Just then, his cellphone began to ring. He pulled it out of his right pants pocket to read the caller ID. It read, "Wife." He pressed the send button to answer and then held the cellphone up to his right ear.

"Hey honey," he answered.

"Hey, I was calling just to check on you. Are you ok? Are you coming home soon?" she asked, sounding concern.

“I mean, when I looked at the clock and saw that it was almost 6pm, I thought I’d call,” she continued.

“Yeah love, I should be home soon. I believe I’ve completed all my objectives for today. But just in case, I’d say give me another half hour and then I should be on my way,” Arquette predicted.

He lowered his cellphone to look at his watch. Soon after, he began to envision the other tasks he still needed to complete for the evening. A few minutes went by before he decided to get into his car. As soon as he closed the door, he placed his left elbow up against the driver side window with his cellphone now held to his left ear and head leaned back against the head rest. He just sat there thinking to himself, silently. Linda waited patiently on the other end until he was ready to reengage.

“Haa. You know what baby? I feel like I’ve gotten enough done today. So yeah, I should be home soon,” he continued, feeling reasonably satisfied with his efforts for the day.

He then shifted his car into drive and began to leave out of the neighborhood. He drove towards the highway while continuing to converse with Linda.

Chapter 8

Stacey's Late-Night Visit

The sun had begun to set in the west, creating a replication of an artistic painting which centered on the unique beauty of an orange evening sunset. The evening rush hour traffic began to dissipate, allowing for easier flow of traffic. As the night sky expanded, the temperature dropped to nearly 70 degrees with winds combing the area like invisible waves off the coast. Lights from various office buildings began to highlight the area downtown, insinuating that the workday had now reached its end. In addition, a systematic wave of dim streetlights came on and began to transmit from one street to the next on a timer, illuminating the city in a synchronized pattern, which soon gave it an orange glow.

Chris finally completed his last errand and decided to stop at this 24hr café shop to use their wi-fi. Learning more about Mr. Osborne was the only thing on his mind at this point. Once inside, he chose a table to sit at, placed his laptop case down, then went to order a beverage. Moments later, he returned to the table and took seat, placing his cellphone and Mocha Latte on the table to his left. After removing his laptop from the case, he instantly connected to wi-fi then began his search on the updates of the police's investigation. It appeared he had now developed a personal attentiveness

in finding the killer himself. While searching the news and police department sites, Chris' cellphone began to ring. He leaned to his left to check the caller ID. It read, "Stacey." With his left hand, he picked up his cellphone and pressed the send button to answer.

"Hello. Hey Stacey," he answered, putting his cellphone on his left shoulder then tilting his head to the left to keep it in place.

"Chris, where the hell are you?!" she exclaimed, in an aggressive tone.

"Why aren't you here yet?" she asked.

"Yo relax! You were supposed to call me first and let me know if your mom was coming home, remember?" asked Chris, in a calm tone.

"Yeah, you may be right; but, if you saw that I hadn't call you, you should've at least called me," Stacey assumed.

"You know what...you're right, and I apologize. I should've called, but I was still in the middle of something," replied Chris, trying to avoid further argument.

"Well, where are you? Are you still coming over?" Stacey asked, expressing a lack of patience.

"My mom hasn't called yet, so I can assume she's not coming home tonight," she continued.

"Yeah, I'll be there. Right now, I'm at the All-Night Lounge using their wi-fi. I wanted to know more about Mr. Osborne's death," answered Chris, while clicking various news links.

At that moment, Stacey erupted with infuriation.

"Are you f..ing kidding me?! I don't f..ing believe this. You're really gonna spend time on that sh..t when you

could be here with me?” she exclaimed, expressing anger and disappointment.

“Stacey please, I just wanna find out more about this,” pleaded Chris.

“Look, it’s little after 7pm. Give me another hour or two then I should be over there, I promise,” he continued, trying to submit reassurance.

“Oh! Another hour or two! Well you know what Chris... don’t even f...ing bother,” cried Stacey.

She then discontinued her call with Chris, abruptly. After realizing they had disconnected, Chris placed his cellphone back on the table and continued searching the internet.

Nearly four hours had now passed. Stacey, who fell asleep on the living room couch while watching an episode of Law & Order, was startled from her sleep after hearing her doorbell ring. At first, she just opened her eyes and tried gathering herself for what she thought she heard, but then closed her eyes again. Unexpectedly, the doorbell rang a second time, as if someone she knew was trying to get her attention. Again, she opened her eyes, but this time she recognized that it was the doorbell.

“Who is it?!” she shouted, expressing frustration.

But there was no response at the door. The doorbell, however, rang a third time. Right then, Stacey jumped to her feet, adjusted her night clothes, and then proceeded to the door. The living room was dark with only the tv giving off a white gleam of light which caused her shadow to appear as a tall, dark figure walking alongside her as she

walked out the living room. The closer she got to the door; she began to call for Chris.

“Chris! Hey, are you out there?!” she yelled, feeling slightly sure that it was him.

Yet, no one answered. When she reached the door, she immediately turned on the front door light and leaned left to look out the window. She moved the curtain to the left in hopes to see who rang the doorbell. However, when she glanced outside, she found no one standing at the door. A smirk formed on her face as she assumed it was Chris likely playing a joke in an attempt to scare her. At that moment, Stacey decided to unlock the front door and open it.

“Chris, if you’re out here playing games, I swear I’m gonna kill you,” she said, partially humorous as she stood at the threshold.

She scanned the front of the house from left to right, slowly, but saw no one in sight. What she did see, though, were the trees beginning to weave intensely. But this wind had an abnormal flow to it as it continued to intensify the longer she stood at the door. Although, what made her even more frantic about this wind was how it sounded as if it was carrying a dull moan.

Suddenly, a gust of wind came from around the left side her house then shifted towards the front door. Now perturbed and clueless of this odd draft, she quickly shut her door, then locked it. She then waited patiently with her back against the door, thinking this wind would eventually reduce; however, as she stood at the door, this dull moan began to get louder.

Instantly, Stacey leaned to her left again to glance out the window. This time she happened to notice a pair of red eyes illuminating from across the street at a distance.

Without hesitation, she dropped the white window shade and ran to her left for the living room to get her cellphone from off the table. After grabbing it, she then dashed into the kitchen and turned on light, hoping it would safeguard her while she searched for Chris's number. She scrolled through the recent calls list, and as soon as she highlighted his number, she pressed the speed-dial button. The phone rang but Chris did not answer.

"Where the hell are you?" she muffled to herself, hoping that whatever was outside would not hear her.

After the fourth ring, Chris's voicemail picked up. Unsure of what else to do, Stacey decided to leave a message.

"Chris, pick up damn it!! Please!" she demanded, in a low, frantic voice.

"There's someone outside my house. I don't know who or what the f..k it is but it has red eyes or something," she described, while leaning over the kitchen sink to look out the window.

Alarmingly, the wind started picking up near the kitchen window, as if it were seeking her out. It grew so strong that the backdoor of the kitchen began to shake aggressively. To Stacey, it sounded like someone was trying to enter through that door. She rushed over to inspect it and ensure it was locked. After confirming the door was secure, she then bolted out of the kitchen, through living room, to get to the

staircase. Without warning, the kitchen door blew open violently to the right; slamming into the wall. The impact caused the window on the door to shatter and pieces of glass crashed to the floor. After passing through the living room, Stacey had now reached the staircase. The house was dark which made it difficult for her to see each step. She climbed up each one quickly but happened to stumble a few times along the way. Now at the top of stairs, she turned left and ran to her room. An orange shine from a streetlight outside her bedroom window projected onto the wall in the hallway. This helped Stacey find the threshold of her room.

As soon as she entered the room, she immediately closed the door and locked it. Next, she decided to use her cellphone again, but this time she sought to contact her mother. But then disturbingly, the moan that she heard outside had now grew from within the house. This brought Stacey to a paralyzed state of fright. At this point, she was terrified to say anything out of fear of being tracked by this distressing moan. Startlingly, her door began to shake as if one hundred bulls were stampeding up the stairs. Stacey snapped out of her state of shock and thought to evacuate from her bedroom window. But after pulling the string for the white blinds, she immediately saw the red, illuminating eyes she saw earlier. Her reaction was swift as she stepped back from the window to avoid being seen. Just then, the intensity of the wind had intensified into a powerful hurricane-type gust which ultimately blasted the bedroom window inward, creating sharp glass fragments. Mysterious though, these fragments

did not strike Stacey straightaway. This force driving the wind hauntingly suspended these pieces of glass in the air for a slight moment only to say, “It’s your turn to scream!” in a low, horrifying voice. Right after, this shattered glass configured mid-air and the aimed directly at Stacey.

Before she could devise another strategy of escape, those red terrifying eyes appeared at the window, bringing her to a state of hypnotism. As she stood there motionless, this dark force unhesitatingly thrust the glass fragments forward, instantly slicing and impaling her arms, legs, and abdomen. This excruciating pain caused her to fall to her knees, instantly. Blood started pouring heavily from her abdominal area, bringing her to immediately wrap her forearms around her mid-section tight in hopes to slow the bleeding. These various lacerations got so bad that Stacey soon began to scream in misery. Unsure of why this force was attacking her, she decided to question it.

“Aaahh! What the hell are you?!” she cried, while shifting herself on the floor away from this force.

“What do you want from me?!” she continued.

But there was no answer. Instead, a vaporous figure mysteriously moved pass the broken window and entered into the room. Moreover, from within this figure ominously emerged a hand with five sharp, blade-like nails. Although experiencing enormous pain, Stacey tried moving back with her left elbow and left leg in an effort to distance herself from this mist. This vaporous figure, however, proceeded slowly toward her with its eyes growing more

radiant. Stacey, now having a clear descriptive view of this haunting figure, again questioned it.

“Cough, cough, what the hell do you want from me?” she exclaimed, now choking on blood seeping from her mouth.

She looked up at the red eyes with interest to see who this could be, but the darkness of the room made it difficult to identify this smoky silhouette. The only thing she was able to discern was the voice she heard when it replied, “to diiiieeee!” in a hissing tone. Soon after, its blade-like nails rose high in the air then abruptly slashed forward at her, making everything go black, instantly.

Chapter 9

Arquette Meets Chris

It's now Saturday morning. The sun slowly ascended over the horizon, giving Annapolis another beautiful display. Alarming, Arquette's cellphone began to ring, startling him and Linda from a deep sleep. The time was 6:23am.

"Baby, you gotta work this morning?" asked Linda, moving her left arm lethargically to reach across Arquette and placing it around his stomach.

"Umm...I shouldn't, but I did plan to go in for a little bit later today," replied Arquette, with his eyes still closed.

"Huh, but let me see who it is," he exhaled.

He opened his eyes and turned his head to the right, toward his cellphone on the nightstand. When he looked at the caller ID, it read, "Chief."

"Ah hell, what happened now?" he exhaled again, now feeling slightly anxious.

With his right hand, he picked up his cellphone, pressed the send button to answer, then held it to his right ear.

"Uh-um. Good morning, Detective Arquette here," he answered, clearing his throat.

"Hey Chief, what's up?" he continued, while lying in bed with his left forearm against his forehead.

"Hey Jackson, good morning. Sorry to call so early but we had a distress call from a neighbor this morning," replied the Chief.

“Is this something I need to handle, or can’t Ryan take this one?” asked Arquette, expressing uninterest in this case.

“Believe or not, I was about to put Ryan on it, but after the responding officers described the scene, it’s a strong possibility that this could be the same suspect from yesterday,” told the Chief, slightly optimistic

“Oh really?!” replied Arquette, sitting up with an absorbing amount of motivation.

“Baby, what?” asked Linda, as she turned slightly on her right side toward Arquette.

She then raised herself up slightly with her right elbow propped on the mattress. Arquette looked to his left at her and held his left index finger up in the air, signaling her to wait one minute.

“So you see, that’s why I need you on this case, so hopefully we can find this perp and get him or her off the streets,” stated the Chief, expressing a sense of urgency.

“And please Jackson, the sooner you get there, the better. We don’t need that scene to get contaminated,” he advised.

“Yeah, I understand. And you’re right, sir. Can you text me the address?” Arquette agreed, turning himself to the right to place his feet on the floor.

“I should be dressed and on my way in about 20 minutes. It’s early; and it’s the weekend, so traffic shouldn’t be a problem,” he continued, now standing to his feet.

They agreed, concluded their conversation, and then disconnected. Arquette placed his cellphone back on the nightstand and turned around toward the bed to update his wife.

“Baby, I gotta go. Apparently, there was another incident last night,” told Arquette, as he leaned over the bed to give Linda a kiss.

“I’m not surprised, hum. What else is new, right?” Linda replied, slightly humorous.

“I mean, isn’t there at least an on-call detective or something that works weekends?” she continued.

“Yeah, but judging from this scene, Chief believes there’s a possible connection from the one from yesterday morning; which means, this might be the same suspect. And so that’s why I’m being asked to check it out,” Arquette explained, while expressing empathy for Linda’s concern.

He then stood upright, turned around, and proceeded toward the bathroom to get ready.

“Honey, don’t forget to take your meds!” shouted Linda.

“Yeah, I’ll take two now then grab some food on my way to the scene,” confirmed Arquette, as he opened the medicine cabinet.

Linda heard the prescription bottom rattle, and then the faucet run. Feeling confident about Arquette taking his meds, she laid back down and closed her eyes.

“Hey baby!! Thanks for refilling my meds for me!” shouted Arquette, from behind the bathroom door.

But Linda did not reply.

Over at the All-Night Lounge, Chris had awakened at the table with his computer in front of him. He quickly looked at his cellphone and noticed he had 2 missed calls from Stacey. Next, he pressed the missed call icon for an instant

redial then held his cellphone up to his left ear. The phone rang a few times, but Stacey did not answer. Chris pressed the end button to hang up only to redial the number again. After not getting no response the second time, Chris disconnected. Oddly, the thought of checking his voicemails did not enter his mind at that moment. He, instead, made a third attempt to reach her but came to same conclusion; no answer. This time Chris decided to wait for her voicemail to leave her a message.

“Hey Stacey. Baby, I’m so sorry about last night. I fell asleep at the lounge. Listen, I hope you’re not still mad at me because I plan to be over in a few. I’ll see you soon,” affirmed Chris, while shutting down his computer.

He then disconnected and began to pack up his belongings. Once everything was packed, he left the lounge.

Now in Stacey’s neighborhood, Arquette had finally arrived on the street where the scene was located. A portion of the area around the house was quarantined off with caution tape a few yards in three different directions from the house. The neighbors had already gathered along the sidewalks and streets to speculate and talk amongst themselves about this mysterious incident that happened in their quiet residential neighborhood. On one of the streets, some assisting officers noticed a blue unmarked patrol car approaching from behind a crowd. It was Arquette’s sedan. His lights were flashing red, white, and blue as he cruised up to the caution tape. Three officers began directing the crowd to the side to allow the sedan to come through. After

clearing the caution tape, two yellow barricades which controlled the entry access point to the scene, were then pulled apart in opposite directions, simultaneously, to allow for Arquette to move forward toward the house. As he approached the house, he noticed to its left was the news team setting up for broadcast. Next to them was a white forensics' van parked in the driveway. As he scanned both ends of the street, he saw a few squad cars parked diagonally at each end with their lights flashing. Finally, he approached the house and then parked. After exiting his car, he opened his backdoor to collect his computer case and other items. Near the front of the house were three officers standing in a huddle on the sidewalk talking amongst themselves. Arquette closed his backdoor then proceeded toward the house. One of the officers seeing Arquette approaching in a dark purple suit, separated himself from the group to greet the him.

“Morning Detective. Chief gave us instructions to remain outside to ensure forensics aren't interrupted, and the scene; of course, doesn't get contaminated,” the officer reported.

“I understand. But what do we know so far?” asked Arquette, looking over the officer's left shoulder, toward the house.

He saw that the front door was wide open.

“Well sir, right now we believe this was a possible break-in. The backdoor to the kitchen was smashed open; kitchen appliances and other things are all over the place. Forensics say the victim, who we believe to be the resident, is upstairs in one of the bedrooms, and that the window in that room

was shattered; however, the door was still locked when they got up there,” told the officer.

“And that’s what’s really strange,” he continued, feeling a bit leery.

“What? What’s strange?” asked Arquette.

“Well sir, if someone broke in through the kitchen, then the bedroom door should’ve been busted through as well, considering all the damage. But it was still locked from the inside. I now assume that whatever came through the kitchen door might’ve also come through the bedroom window,” the officer concluded.

Arquette took a moment to reflect on all the details the officer provided.

“Huh, that does sound a bit odd,” agreed Arquette, feeling perplexed over the details.

He took his right hand and patted the officer on his left shoulder, thanking him for the update. He then passed beside him on his left and headed up toward the house. As he approached, he reached his right hand into his inner left coat pocket for a pen and note pad. The moment he reached the front door, his anxiety began to ascend. This was due to his anticipation of what he believed he would find beyond the threshold of this house. Now at the threshold, Arquette paused briefly and took a deep breath. After he inhaled and exhaled for about 3 minutes, he then proceeded pass the threshold and entered the house.

Inside, the mood was emotionless and sinister. The outdoor ambiance, which displayed serenity and vivacity,

seemed to have met a force obstructing its way inside as the chirping of the birds ceased, the warm air became chilly, and the sunshine lost its radiance; like tint covering the sunrays. This dreadful atmosphere created a gloomy essence which saturated the homey mood meant within a house. Leaving the entryway to the right, Arquette began his observation in living room. At the threshold of the living room, he came to a pause and noticed white chipped paint on the carpet which was seemed to have been from the ceiling. It appeared that these chips trailed from out of the living room and toward the staircase in the entryway. Seeing this, Arquette decided to begin his notes at the staircase. Moments later, a forensics officer came from out of the kitchen and walked through the living room, toward the staircase where Arquette stood.

“Oh, hey sir! Good morning!” he greeted, entering the entryway with his case of supplies in his right hand.

“Well the kitchen’s done. It wasn’t too bad in there. Now the real mess is upstairs where the body is,” he said, easing slightly pass the right side of Arquette to get upstairs.

Arquette did not respond. He just continued to write his notes. After jotting notes about the paint chip, Arquette decided to assess the kitchen since forensics had completed their examination in there. He left the staircase and walked to his right toward the kitchen. As he passed the living room, he stopped briefly to open his computer case on the arm of the couch. He pulled out some blue latex gloves from his case and put them on. With his hands now protected, he left his computer case in the living room and

entered the kitchen. The kitchen appeared ransacked as various supplies and dishware were scattered about. Glass from both, the window above the sink and the window on backdoor, were all over the floor. When he looked straight ahead, he noticed that the backdoor was wide open. Arquette noted these findings, while also stating that there were no prints to record. Once he finished his observation of the kitchen, he decided it was time to see the bedroom, and the body.

He headed upstairs. Now at the top, he paused briefly to observe the hall. First, he looked to his right and saw a bedroom down on the left, yet that door was still closed. Under the presumption that no one was in there, he then looked to his left and saw another bedroom down on the right. That door was open with movement inside the room. He proceeded toward that bedroom. Now at the threshold of the bedroom, Arquette noticed a large gap of space in the wall directly in front of him. This was likely the bedroom window at one point. He then looked to his right and saw three forensics officers moving about. Two of them were kneeled down around the victim that was on the floor in the middle of the room. They were talking amongst themselves while taking snap shots of the body and taking notes. The other officer was near the bed scooping up fragments of bloody glass into a small clear evidence bag. Arquette entered the bedroom. To his immediate right, he noticed blood spattered on the wall near the threshold. Just then, he opened his notepad and began to notate the details of the

room. He presumed that the blood on the wall and the glass fragments were that of the victim. As he documented these various findings, he further noted that there were no known explanations to what caused the glass to shatter and fly inward across the room, likely striking the victim fiercely.

Feeling satisfied with his notes, Arquette decided to join the two officers who were probing the body.

“Good morning gentlemen! What do we got here?” asked Arquette, as he stooped over the officers from behind.

“Well Detective, it looks like we have a Caucasian female, approximately 24 years old, who evidently suffered internal and external lacerations as if something ripped away at her, leaving behind these unbelievable gashes,” one of the officers reported, while pointing to the multiple lacerations using a silver, pen-like inspection device.

Arquette asked the officer if he could maneuver parts of the body for a better view.

“Do me a favor, could you turn her a little to the left? I wanna see something,” he requested, leaning forward a little more while squinting his eyes.

“No problem sir,” replied the officer.

As the officer reconfigured the body slowly to the left, Arquette noticed a small portion of lower intestine bulging out underneath the abdomen area.

“My God!” Arquette exclaimed, while pulling a napkin out of his right suit pocket and placing it over his mouth.

“What? The intestines?” asked the officer in a modest tone.

“Yeah! It appears she’s been severed across the abdominal area pretty deep,” he continued, now pointing his inspection tool at the life-threatening abdomen incision.

“You know, now that I think about it, this seems awfully similar to what we inspected yesterday,” he concluded, looking up at Arquette to his left.

He was now filled with suspicion.

Arquette stood motionless and stared at the body, envisaging the previous crime scene and all the evidence were found there. Just then, he removed his cellphone from his right pants pocket, searched for the Chief’s number and pressed speed dial, then held the cellphone to right ear. The phone rang three times before the Chief answered after then they began to discuss the situation.

“Chief, I’m here at the scene and what we’re finding here all seems to be similar to what we found yesterday,” reported Arquette, with assurance.

“Yeah, that’s what I was told. But now that you’re there, we can know for sure. So what do you think; it’s the same perp?” the Chief probed.

“At the moment sir, I’m not 100%; but, majority all the evidence shows identical patterns,” replied Arquette, reading through his notes on his notepad in his left hand.

“Well, maybe this is a good thing...of course a bad one also. I mean, although this may be the same perp, it’s absolutely crucial we find him or her and get them off the street, asap. And that’s because now we have two murders that’s taken place miles apart within a 24-hour period. To

me, that just doesn't seem possible unless there's some kind of connection," the Chief speculated, feeling skeptical and terribly bothered.

"Yes sir, I totally agree. Alright! Well let me finish checking out the house inside, then I'll go outside and take look around. Once I'm done, I'll call you back with more updates," assured Arquette.

"Sounds good, Jackson," replied the Chief.

Arquette and the Chief disconnected.

After notating the findings of the corpse, Arquette began to investigate the rest of the bedroom for additional clues. Twenty minutes later, he had now notated all the potential evidence he could find and felt it was time to inspect the perimeter outside, which would include the backyard. He exited the bedroom, went downstairs to grab his computer case, then exited out the front door. Now in the front of the house, he paused briefly to determine how he would begin his inspection around the perimeter. After careful planning, he figured he would start from the right side and then head toward the back. Then, once he finished probing the backyard, he would continue around to the left side of the house, for the front. The purpose of this tactic was to ensure that he did not miss any potential evidence around the house. As he stood at the front, Arquette decided to take a few minutes to check out the atmosphere near the caution tapes; scanning the area from right to left. He soon noticed that more neighbors had congregated near the barricades, as assisting officers tried maintaining order while looking back at the crime scene

themselves. When he looked to his right, he saw the news reporter providing live coverage of the scene. Now ready to begin his perimeter search, Arquette proceeded towards the right side of the house.

As he walked across the front yard, he heard some officers shuffling to one of barricades as if a fight had broken out. He stopped and looked to his right at the barricade on the street that led away from the front of the house. It appeared that there was some type of aggressive disturbance developing. A few moments later, that which was causing this commotion suddenly revealed itself. It was Chris trying fight his way to the house to see what had ensued. A few assisting officers were working to detain him, while also enquiring the purpose of his presents.

“Sir, we need you to relax, ok?” suggested an officer.

“We wanna help you, but we need you to claim down first and tell us why you’re here,” he instructed, with his left arm interlocked with Chris’s right arm.

“That’s my girlfriend’s house! You need to let me through!” exclaimed Chris, as he tried to tug himself away from both officers restraining him.

Unsure of what was taking place, Arquette figured he would go and inspect the commotion, first. He stopped at his sedan, placed his computer case on top of it, then removed his gloves and sat them on top of the case. After that, he then proceeded to assess the situation. When he approached the commotion, the chaos instantly reduced to minor grumble.

One of the officers assisting to detain Chris, turned slightly to his left toward Arquette to explain the situation.

“Detective, we have a young man here who claims to know the person living at this residence,” he reported.

Arquette then moved closer to Chris and introduced himself.

“Hi. Good morning. I’m Detective Arquette with the Annapolis PD,” he greeted, in a professional manner.

“May I ask who you are?” he continued.

“Yes sir. My name’s Chris, Detective, and that’s my girlfriend’s house you’re at,” he replied.

“What happened? Is she ok?” he continued.

“Hold on one minute. You know this resident? What can you recall about her evening yesterday? Were there any concerns, whatsoever, of anyone following or threatening her?” Arquette enquired, intrigued to hear Chris’s response.

“Well sir, I was actually planning to spend the night, but I stopped at the All Night Lounge to use their wi-fi first. I must’ve been tired because before I knew it, I fell asleep. Anyway, she called but I didn’t hear my phone. When I woke up, which was pretty early this morning, I saw her missed calls and tried calling back, but she didn’t pick up. I left a message telling her I was on my way, and so here I am. I mean, I just figured she didn’t answer my call because she was still mad at me from last night,” explained Chris, breathing mildly exhausted.

“Ok. And I take it she was mad with you because you didn’t show up last night,” presumed Arquette.

“Well, she got upset when I told her I was stopping at the lounge before coming to her house,” stated Chris.

“I see, but did she mention anything about anyone following her?” Arquette inquired.

“No! She didn’t mention anything like that. And we saw each other earlier that yesterday at the mall. But still, she didn’t see bothered about anything,” told Chris.

Arquette did not comment. He just remained silent, trying to think of a way to inform Chris of this incident. Chris, seeing Arquette’s nonverbal expression of concern, decided to ask about Stacey again.

“So, what happened?! Is she alright?! Why the hell is that forensics truck there?” asked Chris, now desperately wanting to know about Stacey.

“Well Chris, before I answer any questions, could you provide me your girlfriend’s name?” Arquette asked, pulling out his note pad and pen to take notes.

“Her name is Stacey Kirsten,” Chris revealed.

Arquette wrote her name down then moved up to Chris. With his left hand, he sincerely placed it on Chris’s left shoulder then asked both officers to release him and allow him to come through the barricade.

At that moment, he decided to walk Chris away from the crowd, back over toward the house for some minor privacy. Once they got far enough away from the crowd, he and Chris stopped and began to conversate again. At that moment, Arquette began to explain the situation; but, chose to provide him the short, undisturbed version of the incident.

“Alright. So what we think happened was someone broke into the house and attacked your girlfriend; and since we

haven't found anyone one else inside, we're assuming that she was alone during that attack," Arquette disclosed, trying to remain calm and discrete.

"Ok. So she was alone. Can you please just tell me how she's doing now?" asked Chris, growing frustrated.

"Well Chris, I'm sorry to have to tell you this, but unfortunately, your girlfriend was murdered. I'm deeply sorry to have to be the one to tell you this news," replied Arquette, expressing remorse as he prepared to console Chris.

Right then, Chris's body started to shake; his face displaying signs of misery and heartbreak. Then, without warning, he rushed at Arquette to try and get to the house. Arquette immediately grabbed him with a strong embrace and whispered comforting words to him. Chris began to cry out Stacey's name while embracing Arquette in return. For about five minutes they continued to hold one another while Arquette continued to whisper words of encouragement and inspiration to Chris, assuring him that the killer would be caught.

"Chris, I really need you to stay strong right now, ok? Please know that this killer will be caught and brought to justice. I assure you. But right now, I need you to tell me all you can about Stacey that might lead us to finding her murderer," consoled Arquette, speaking softly near Chris's left ear.

For nearly the next ten more minutes or so of heavy grieving, Chris suddenly began to calm himself down; then, he nodded his head up and down in agreement with Arquette.

After acknowledging how Chris's emotions had now pacified, Arquette slowly unwrapped his arms from around

him then placed his left hand on Chris' left shoulder again while looking him directly in his eyes.

"For now, the only other question I have is, can you remember of anyone who would've wanted hurt Stacey?" Arquette asked.

"No sir!" replied Chris, wiping his eyes.

"Alright. Well that's all I have for now. I mean, I would love to ask you more questions, but I really need to get back and finish investigating her house," said Arquette.

"Although, if you happen to hear anything or see anything regarding this case, I want you to call me asap," he advised, while reaching into his right coat pocket for a white business card to hand to him.

This card had the name of the police department printed at the top left corner and a badge logo printed in black at the top right corner. His full name, Det. Jackson Arquette, was at the center. Both, his office and cellphone numbers were listed beside one another at the lower center, with his official email address underneath. After receiving this card, Chris held it in both hands and reviewed over the information. Arquette then waved an officer come over to escort Chris back to the entry access point.

"Thanks sir. Yeah, I'll definitely be sure to call you if I hear anything," Chris said, wiping his eyes with his right hand while being escorted away.

Arquette just stood in sorrow, watching as Chris was being led away. After he had cleared the barricade, Arquette proceeded to his car for his computer case and gloves, and then returned to the house.

Now back in front of the house, Arquette placed his computer case strap on his left shoulder then proceeded around the right side of the house. Reaching the corner of the house, he approached some gray stone bricks posed as a path leading toward the back of the house. When he reached the back corner, he then noticed a pile of broken bricks pulled up from the stone path. It appeared as if something powerful had thrown them against the house. He continued on, soon approaching the backdoor only to find pieces of it scattered about on the ground. Evidently, what pulled those bricks up could likely have also caused damage to the backdoor, or so he thought. After noting these findings, Arquette moved over to the area just beneath the bedroom window of the victim. He looked on the ground for evidence but only saw a few pieces of glass which came from that window.

“Humm!! Ok. This is strange,” Arquette muttered, in an inaudible tone to himself.

He removed his computer case from his left shoulder and sat it down against the house. Next, he put his gloves back on, squatted down, and began to brush his right hand carefully across the grass underneath the window. After no additional evidence was found, he stood up and then began to scan upward alongside the house towards the window. As he inspected, Arquette soon began to sense a bit of nostalgia, reminiscing about the scene in the ally and those footprints that were found along the wall of one of the buildings.

He then quickly snapped out of his recollective state then yelled for one of the forensics officers in the bedroom.

“Hey, can you hear me up there?” he shouted.

“Does anyone have a blacklight? I need a blacklight to inspect this wall,” he requested, as he moved up closer to the wall.

One of the forensic officers appeared in the window, trying to get a better understanding of what Arquette was seeking.

“Hey Detective, we couldn’t hear you up here. Are you talking to us?” he asked, leaning over the window seal with both hands carefully holding onto the ledge.

“Yeah! I wanted to know if you had a blacklight up there I could use. I wanna check this wall for prints,” replied Arquette.

“Sure thing Detective! Give me a second!” replied the officer.

The officer then disappeared back into the window. Moments later, he reappeared then leaned forward, placing his left hand on the ledge while holding a small black object in his right hand.

“Here you are, Detective!” said the officer, dropping the blacklight down to Arquette.

Arquette cupped his hands to catch it. After he saw that Arquette had received the blacklight, he went back into the window.

“Alright, let’s see if we can find some prints now,” said Arquette, quietly to himself.

He switched the blacklight on and began sweeping across the wall. He moved the pale purplish-blue beam from left to right against the wall. He chose to start at the lowest point on the wall, first, then move upward, slowly. This way he would feel confident that he scanned every inch of the wall.

After reaching the center of the wall, he came to a halt once he realized a ladder would be needed to scan any higher.

He turned the blacklight off then pulled his radio from off the left side of his waist.

“Hey, this is Detective Arquette,” he announced over the radio.

“Hey, I need a ladder at the back of the house,” he ordered, looking up at the window and taking a few steps back from the wall.

About five minutes went by before a Caucasian female fire fighter with blond hair came from around to the corner of the house carrying a gray ladder. She was dressed in a yellow fire fighter suit and wearing a white helmet. When Arquette saw her, he pointed to the location where he wanted the ladder positioned.

“Good morning, ma’am. Thanks,” thanked Arquette.

“Yeah, while scanning up the wall, I soon realized I wasn’t tall enough to get way up there,” he joked.

“It’s ok sir. I understand,” said the responder.

As soon as the ladder was set, he asked the responder if she could hold it as he climbed up.

“Ok. Now, would you mind holding it steady while I climbed up? I wanna get as close as I can to that window without the ladder moving from underneath me, causing me to fall,” Arquette requested.

“No problem Detective. I’ll hold it steady for you,” she replied.

Now standing in front of the ladder, Arquette placed both hands as well as his right foot on the ladder. The blacklight was held secure in his right hand as he began to climb up safely. Slowly stepping up each step, he finally reached the desired spot then turned the blacklight on and started scanning the wall again.

As he moved closer to the window, the blacklight managed to uncover some purplish-blue marks. They were small and indescribable; however, as he continued to move the blacklight near the window, footprints suddenly appeared. But this time these prints had a downward pattern trailing off to the right of the window.

“What the hell! I’ll be damned! I don’t freak’in believe it!” exclaimed Arquette.

Two of the forensics officers from the bedroom soon appeared at the window. The fire fighter holding the ladder, readjusted her position to try and see what Arquette had just discovered.

“What Detective!? What’cha find?!” asked one of the officers, expressing great curiosity.

“Hey, you remember the prints from yesterday?” asked Arquette, holding the blacklight close to observe the prints.

“Yeah. What about them?” replied the officer.

“Well, it appears I just found some similar here,” told Arquette.

“Yeah, there’s now a strong possibility that this was done by the same person,” he declared.

“Right. But if it is the same person, how the hell is he, she, or it perhaps, able to scale walls like Spiderman or something?” asked the other officer, scratching the top of his head with his right hand.

“That I’m not quite sure of just yet. Right now, I’m only interested in finding a match to these prints for facial recognition. Then I’ll be able to add a name and piece all this together for an arrest. And the sooner this happens, the sooner we can avoid any future incidents like this one; I hope,” replied Arquette.

He then asked the forensics team for some carbon tape to pull the prints from the wall.

“Alright. Could one of you get me some carbon tape? I need to pull these prints,” said Arquette.

As soon as one of the officers heard him request this, he ducked back into the window to get some tape. Seconds later, he came back to the window and reached down to hand Arquette the tape, along with a clear evidence bag.

“Here you are Detective. And here’s an evidence bag, too,” said the officer.

“Thanks!” replied Arquette.

After collecting the prints, he placed them inside the bag then began stepping down the ladder. When he reached the bottom, he then pulled his cellphone out from his right pants pocket and hit speed dial for the lab.

“Hello, hey this is Detective Arquette. Has a match been found yet from the other prints yesterday?” he asked, holding the blacklight and evidence bag in his left hand.

He held the evidence bag up and began to observe the prints he just obtained.

“No sir, unfortunately we may need some more time. I mean, we’re using all known security levels we have access to, per your request, but we still haven’t found a match yet,” informed the tech.

“Yeah, you probably right,” agreed Arquette.

“Well, guess what, you’re not gonna believe what I have in my hand right now,” told Arquette, in a mild tone to keep the tech from guessing the answer.

“Yeah, probably not, Detective, but I’m sure you’re gonna tell me, right?” replied the tech.

“You’re right! I just found some more prints from another scene, and they seem identical to those yesterday,” revealed Arquette, feeling slightly enthused.

“Alright!! That’s good news sir! Just bring them by and we can run them all together,” requested the tech.

“Sounds good. Give me about thirty to forty-five minutes and I should be there,” told Arquette.

“Now, although this may be good news, it’s even more imperative we find a match, asap, because I fear there might be another murder if this suspect isn’t caught soon,” he advised, in a disturbed tone.

“Huh. Hopefully not, but we are doing everything we can, sir,” stated the tech, sounding slightly frustrated.

“I know, and I appreciate the long hours you guys been putting in. Please, keep that intensity going,” replied Arquette, sounding sympathetic.

The tech and him then disconnected. Immediately after, Arquette decided to contact the Chief to discuss the new evidence.

In the front of the house, the news reporter, Erica, was standing in front of the camera. Her head was lowered, and her left index finger was pressed against her left ear. It appeared as if she was awaiting word from the news studio on when to report. Suddenly, the cameraman raised his right index finger in the air, giving Erica the ‘que’ that her time to report was drawing near. Within a few seconds, his right hand soon opened, and he began to count down from five. As soon as he reached one, he pointed his index finger at Erica to indicate that she was now live.

Reporter Erica: “Good morning all! If you’re just joining us this morning, we’re here live in Great Springs, a suburban neighborhood north of downtown. Behind me is a home police are saying had been burglarized, leaving one person dead. Forensics have been here for some time now assessing, both, the house, as well as the surrounding area, in search of possible leads. Some neighbors have been questioned about this recent event, but no one can recall hearing or seeing anything involving this house. The police, though, have said that they do recall getting reports about the weather being a bit rough late last night; which, if you look behind me, you’ll see there’s a bunch trees limbs and other debris in the streets and along the sidewalk near the scene. And so, it’s been assumed that because many in the area believed that this was some sort of intense storm, that this was likely the reason

why nobody was remotely aware of the travesty that had taken place at this house. As this investigation continues; however, we'll be back to update you on the latest. Please stay tuned! Back to you, Diana!" she concluded.

Right then, she took her left hand and slid it from right to left underneath her chin to signal the cameraman to stop his camera from recording now that she had completed her session.

Another hour had passed. The forensics team felt that they had retrieved as much evidence as they could find and ultimately brought their investigation to an end. The victim was loaded into the coroner's van to be taken to the lab for further examination. In addition, the police barricades began to get broken down as officers removed the caution tape and roadblocks to now allow neighborhood traffic to flow into the area again. As Arquette stood at the front of the house reviewing his notes, while also overseeing the cleanup, his cellphone began to ring. He removed it from his right pants pocket and read the caller ID. It was his wife, Linda. He then pressed the call button and answered it.

"Hey baby! Good morning! How's everything?" he answered, in a calm voice.

"Good morning honey. Everything's ok here. I was just thinking about you; wondering how your morning was going," she professed, in a sympathetic voice.

"Love, my day is going pretty good. Just completed another investigation and found some prints like the ones yesterday, believe it or not. So, hopefully I'll have a suspect soon...if the lab gets a match anyway," explained Arquette, feeling optimistic.

“Oh wow, now that is good news. I’m really glad to hear that,” Linda expressed.

Just then, Arquette decided to conversate on a much lighter topic because he had no interest in providing Linda any more information about the scene, especially regarding the victim.

“Alright love, I’m about to wrap things up here then head back to the office. Oh, and I may be home a little late tonight; maybe around ten, and because Chief wants me to put a little more grit into finding this suspect, especially after this recent murder,” Arquette disclosed.

“Jackson, now you know you don’t have to explain anything to me, honey. I know this homicide, like the one yesterday, is extremely important. Just please, please be safe out there. I don’t want anything to happen to you,” said Linda, expressing empathy and understanding.

“Thanks Linda. You know, I really don’t know what I’d do without you,” told Arquette, expressing tenderness and appreciation.

“Well, just got home safe. I love you!” Linda said, with infatuation.

“Yes ma’am, will do. And I love you, too!” Arquette responded.

They finished their conversation and then disconnected. Arquette then resumed with overseeing the assisting officers as they worked to reopen the neighborhood. As soon as the house was securely contained, and the neighborhood had been reopened, he proceeded to his car and left the scene for the precinct.

PART II

Chapter 10

Working the Late-Night Shift

It was now mid-afternoon, and the temperature had reached 80 degrees as the bright rays from the sun scorched the sky. There were barely any clouds in sight, leaving only an amazingly sky-blue atmosphere inspiring the whole city of Annapolis. In addition, the wind drift was blowing a calm, warm breeze that complimented this tranquil ambiance, which further heightened this perfect Saturday for many to enjoy. Yet, even though this day appeared incredibly superb, Chris' view of it was dark and gloomy. As he traveled about the city, he tried desperately to make sense of what he just learned about Stacey. Slowly, the feelings of depression and anxiety began to overwhelm his mind. He now felt it was time that he speaks to someone about his recent lose. While driving through town, he reached his right hand over to pick up his cellphone that was in the passenger seat then flipped through his contacts. After he saw his mother's number, he pressed the dial button and then held the cellphone to his right ear. It rang four times before her voicemail responded. Having no interest in leaving a message, Chris hung up and searched his contacts again for someone else. He attempted to contact four other people whom he felt would console him; yet, because the weather appeared to be perfect, it was very likely they were all out enjoying it. All of a sudden,

Chris made a right turn onto the next street and then stopped his car next to a curb on his right. As he continued to scroll through his cellphone, he eventually came across Michael's number. He highlighted it, pressed the dial button, then held his cellphone to his right ear. The phone rang but Michael did not pick up. Chris, now growing increasingly frustrated, tried to figure out where Michael could be this time of day. Then it suddenly hit him. From their conversation yesterday, Chris could only assume that Michael was at work.

The time was now 3:25pm. Chris was now only ten minutes away from Michael's job. After he arrived in the parking lot of the grocery store, he sat in solitude to reflect over what he had just witnessed at Stacey's house. While reflecting, he picked up his cellphone and started flipping through the various texts, photos, as well as missed calls from Stacey. This suddenly brought forth tears. After nearly fifteen minutes, he began to wipe his eyes and pull himself together. Now ready, he exited the car and started walking toward the entrance of the store. He slowly approached the automatic double doors, taking his time to ensure his details about Stacey's incident was accurate. When he entered the store, he turned left, passed the customer service desk on his left, then proceeded down the bread aisles. As soon as he exited the aisle, Chris turned left and passed the bakery on his right. The smell of fresh baked bread and sweet donuts caused a small craving within his stomach. He glanced over at the bakery and gave the workers a courteous smile. Ten feet ahead, Chris saw the corridor for the back of the store.

A set of dark blue heavy-duty double doors were inside this corridor. When he approached these doors, he used his left arm to open the left door slowly to peek inside, in hopes of seeing Michael. Casually, Chris scanned the back area but saw no sign of him, just six fully stocked pallets wrapped in saran wrap in the middle of the floor. To the left of them were eight single, five level shelves for the food items to be stocked. He entered the back area to look for Michael. Now at the first set of pallets, there was still no sign of him. Yet, still confident that he was back there, Chris continued on to search between the remaining pallets. Startlingly, he soon felt something tap him on his right shoulder, causing him to jump with extreme paranoia. Overwhelmed with fright and suspicion, he turned rather quickly to his right but did not see anyone. At that moment, he decided to call for Michael, with hopes he would appear from behind the pallets.

“Michael, are you back here? It’s Chris!” he yelled.

But there was still no sign of him.

He then moved forward; walking pass the next few pallets. Unpredictably, Michael appeared on the left side of Chris. He grabbed his left arm and shouted, “hey!” with an impassive expression his face. Chris immediately raised his right arm in a defensive manner as if he was going to punch Michael with his fist.

“Easy easy! What’s wrong with you, man?” asked Michael, as he released Chris’ arm and instantly raised both of his hands in the air as a sign of surrender.

Chris did not respond. He just stared at Michael with an angry look on his face. His eyes turned slightly red and his breathing grew heavy.

“Oh man, you ok? What’s wrong?” he asked again, now expressing compassion as he lowered his hands.

“Why’d you come up here?” he continued, hoping for some type of response.

Chris’ face gradually changed from anger to despair as tears began to develop in his eyes. Michael immediately embraced him like a brother in anguish. He held him until he felt Chris was ready to talk.

“Alright man, you wanna tell me what the hell is going on?” he asked, pulling himself away from Chris to look him in his eyes.

Right then, Chris took a deep breath, wiped his eyes with his shirt, then cleared his throat to speak.

“uhh-umm. Stacey...Stacey’s gone,” he disclosed, while wrapping his eyes.

“What? What the hell you talkin about, Stacey’s gone? Gone where?” Michael asked, trying to make sense of Chris’ statement.

“Stacey’s dead!” Chris exclaimed.

“I went to see her this morning, but when I got there, cops were all over the place. They said that someone broke into her house and attacked and killed her,” he continued, as he leaned back against one of the pallets while staring up toward the ceiling.

“Get the f.outta here Chris! Are you serious?!” exclaimed Michael, shaking his head in disbelief.

Chris nodded his head up and down gracefully.

“Man, I’m really sorry to hear this,” he empathized.

“What the hell is going on here?” he continued, in a distraught tone.

“I don’t know man,” replied Chris, in a low voice.

He then stood up straight and walked toward the pallet next to Michael and stared at the items within the pallet as if he were looking for something particular.

“I mean first it was Mr. Osborne, our bus driver, now her. What does this mean?” he continued, in an investigative mindset.

“Chris, what are you talking about?” asked Michael, in a humble tone as he moved closer to him.

“The bus driver was killed in an alley, probably by some homeless guy or something. But Stacey’s death was likely from a home robbery, right? I mean that happens in this messed up world,” he continued, in an effort to debunk Chris’ conspiracy theory of a possible connection.

“For me, I just can’t see a connection here,” he stated skeptically, while pulling off the plastic from one of the pallets holding the various merchandise tightly together. Just then, Chris took a deep breath and then turned to his left toward Michael.

“You know what, I actually talked to the detective handling her case. He gave me his card,” mentioned Chris, as he pulled Arquette’s card out of his right pants pocket.

Michael did not bother to look at it.

“But I think I’mma do some research of my own, see if I can find out who’s doing this,” he continued.

“And if I happen to find anything, I could pass it to him so he could solve this case. I don’t know. All I do know is I want is this killer caught,” he concluded, sliding the card back into his pants pocket.

Chris, after seeing how detached Michael appeared, showing an uninterest in the card or hearing more regarding Stacey’s case, decided to walk away and head toward exit. As soon as Michael saw this, he paused from working then walked out pass the pallets and called for Chris.

“Yo Chris, whatever you do, just be careful, man. I don’t wanna hear about you on the news next,” he cautioned him, slightly humorous.

“Oh! And let me know if you need anything, or hear more about Stacey,” he continued, expressing some interest.

“Don’t worry, you’ll be first to know. Well second, after the detective,” Chris replied, with a smirk.

“Alright, let me get out here and see if I can get my little investigation going,” he added.

“I hear ya. Do wha-cha gotta do, man. Me, I’ll be here working,” replied Michael, in a supportive tone.

“What time do you gettin off?” Chris asked.

“I’m not sure just yet. My sup might need me to work late to get all these items unpacked and stocked on the selves before tomorrow,” replied Michael, pointing his left index finger back at the pallets.

“Yeah, I see that. You got quite a bit to unpack. I’ll just give you a call later.” said Chris.

He then walked toward the double doors then exited the back area. Michael stood there and stared at the double

doors, momentarily, with a worried expression on his face; exhaled in grievance for Chris, then went back to unloading the pallet again.

Back at the precinct, Arquette gave Ryan a call to provide him with the latest news about the new case.

“Hey, this is Ryan!” answered Ryan, knowing it was Arquette calling.

“Hey Ryan, did you hear about the latest homicide yet?” asked Arquette, with his head tilted to the left to hold his cellphone on his left shoulder as he flipped through his notes.

“I heard some of it. Something about a girl in her early twenties murdered during a possible home invasion. But nothing significant,” replied Ryan.

“Alright. Well after I tell you what I found, you’ll see the significance of this case,” presumed Arquette.

“Ok, what-cha got?” asked Ryan, with an intrigued interest.

“Alright. Now, you remember the last crime scene, right? Ok, now take away the many body parts that were all over the place,” suggested Arquette.

“Wait, that’s it?!” asked Ryan feeling a bit clueless.

“Think about it!” told Arquette.

“I’m sorry Arquette, I just don’t see the connection. Just tell me what you have so it doesn’t take me all day,” advised Ryan, with a sigh.

“No problem. So this crime scene had the shattered glass which nearly mutilated the body, there’s blood from the victim, only, in the bedroom...” Arquette described, but was abruptly interrupted by Ryan.

“Right! Which is the usual scenerio for a break-in story” Ryan commented.

“Yeah, you’re right. But the most significant part of this case are the prints found,” informed Arquette.

“Ok. So there were prints found. That, too, is also quite common,” replied Ryan, sounding unenthused.

“Right, but if you recall the last scene, these prints resembled those from the alley scene. But this time they trailed downward along the wall, away from the bedroom window that was busted inward, with no evidence to how that was even possible,” revealed Arquette.

“Humm. Alright. Well based from that, I’d say this was pretty significance, too. Ok Arquette, you win!” Ryan decreed.

“You’re right, I guess we do have a break, especially if these prints resemble those from yesterday morning. So, what’s our next move?” he continued.

“The next move is finding out how these two victims are affiliated, you know, what is it that links them together. This may lead us to finding the person who may’ve wanted them both dead,” concluded Arquette, using his left hand to flip open the case file on his desk belonging to the deceased bus driver.

“Oh! Did you make it over to the school? What did you find out?” he asked.

“Yeah, they gave me a few record files on the bus driver dating back almost 10 years. Not sure what we expect to find though,” replied Ryan.

“Yeah, I’m not sure what to look for either. I mean, maybe we oughta check if there were any recent physical

incidents. Perhaps he and someone, possibly a student, had a verbal and/or physical altercation,” suggested Arquette.

“I like that idea. Yeah, I’ll skim through each file, starting with the most recent for any incidents, and then go backwards chronologically to the first file,” proposed Ryan.

“And I’ll keep digging around for more history on this recently deceased to see if she had any enemies also,” informed Arquette.

“You know! Come to think of it, I actually met the boyfriend today at the scene today,” he added.

“Oh really?! Now he oughta be a great resource!” said Ryan, with minor excitement.

“You got that right! So yeah, I’ll definitely be using him to learn more about her,” Arquette concluded.

“Alright. Well let me get started with these files,” insisted Ryan.

“If I come across anything worth investigating, I’ll give you a holla,” he concluded.

“Sounds good!” agreed Arquette.

Ryan and Arquette concluded their conversation and disconnected. As Arquette read through the bus driver’s file, comparing it to the new case, he got a text message from his wife that read, “Honey, I’m going to lay down now. Dinner’s ready. I put yours in the microwave. Please be safe coming home, and don’t forget to eat. I love you!” Arquette read the message, replied in turn, then returned to comparing cases.

The clock had struck 10pm. What was once a vibrant, immaculate day, had now receded as darkness vanquished

the sunlight. The bright glowing white light from the moon now plagued the dark blue sky, shining high over the city of Annapolis. Majority all the buildings in the downtown area became silhouettes of themselves in the background as the orange glow from the streetlights glared vividly. At the store where Michael was working, the light that illuminated the sign suddenly went dark, indicating that the store was now closed. The manager exited his office, went over to the main switch box, and began turning off the internal lights to the store. After that, he then went to the backroom to check on Michael. He opened the left dark blue door with his left hand and then stood in front of it.

“Hey Michael, how’s everything goin back here?” he asked.

At that moment, Michael paused from working and looked at the last full pallet to his left.

“It’s going good I guess. Only a pallet and a half left, so it shouldn’t be too much longer for me,” replied Michael, skimming through the full pallet.

“Ok. Well listen, if you don’t finish in the next hour, leave it for tomorrow. You did more than enough tonight. We can take care of this last pallet tomorrow, if we must,” the manager insisted.

“Now, I already turned all the lights off up front. And since I know you know how to close-up back here, I’m gonna head out and lock the front doors behind me. Have a good night and I’ll see you tomorrow!” he concluded, as he slowly closed the door.

“Yes sir! See you tomorrow, sir!” replied Michael.

The manager walked up one of the aisles, toward the main entrance. He reached in his right pants pocket and pulled out the keys to the store. As he approached the front doors, he noticed the wind starting to increase slightly. He proceeded to lock the door on the left, first. Next, he opened and then propped the door on the right outward with his right arm. After pushing it closed, he paused briefly and observed the wind blowing out in the parking lot. Not seeing anything out of the norm, he locked the door. As he walked to his car, the manager heard a low howling sound, almost resembling a faded woman's voice. A little disturbed about hearing this, he quickened his pace to reach his car. Finally, at his car, he paused to scan the parking lot, again. This time he happened to discover something red glowing from a far, but it was too difficult to discern what it was. Not thinking anything of it, he turned to his car and unlocked the door. After he got in, he started the engine, and then drove out of the parking lot. Meanwhile in the backroom, Michael was still working. He was getting ready to open the last pallet but decided to check the time on his watch, first. It was 10:25pm.

"Alright! Just one more pallet! Shouldn't take long," he said to himself, quietly.

"Come on Michael, you can do this. And then you can go home and give your bed some much quality time," he continued, being humorous.

Back at the office, Arquette, after hours of analyzing both files, that of Mr. Osborne and Stacey, concluded that because of the way both sets of prints were found; and, how the injuries of both the victims fairly matched, the chances

this was done by the same murderer was very high. Though, unfortunately, without confirmation from the lab in regard to these prints, it was clearly just speculation, at best. Arquette decided to take a break from reviewing the files and checked his watch.

“Yeah, I think it’s about that time now. There’s no need to keep going tonight, especially with the prints not yet confirmed. I mean, the only thing I’m really doing right now is making assumptions, that’s all,” he proclaimed, leaning back in his black leather chair with his hands folded behind his head.

Right then, he leaned forward to reach his computer mouse, dragged the cursor to click the lock icon to the right of the screen, then stood to his feet and started gathering all of his essentials. Once everything was packed, he left out his office. After closing his office door, he proceeded toward the main entrance. The night staff was at the front desk. Arquette wished them a good night then walked out the front door. Now outside, he proceeded rather swiftly through the parking lot to reach his car.

As he approached his car, he pulled his keys out of his right pants pocket and unlocked the door. He opened the backdoor first and placed his computer case on the backseat. After closing the backdoor, he then opened the driver’s door; however, before he got into the car, he paused to observe the night sky.

“Wow, what a gorgeous night tonight. If only this type of ambiance could actually prevent terrible things from

happening, that would be outstanding. But I know, that's just wishful thinking," he said to himself, slightly pessimistic.

"With the way things been, I don't need anything to happen tonight. This way I could actually stay caught up," he continued, feeling a bit overwhelmed.

He then got into his car, started the engine, and drove out of the parking lot. Finally reaching home, he parked his car in the driveway behind his wife's car and turned off the engine. He then got out, grabbed all of his belongings from out the backseat, and then walked up to the house. When he opened the front door, he noticed that all the lights were off except the one in the kitchen. He placed his computer case and other items down in the living room, then went into the kitchen. Now in the kitchen, he looked around for his dinner plate. But then it struck him. He looked over to his right at the microwave and saw a note from his wife stating his food was in there and that she had gone to bed. She concluded this note with an "I love you" signature directly underneath the message. Arquette removed the note, set the timer for three minutes on the microwave, then pressed the cook button to warm his food up. As soon as the microwave rang, alerting him that his food was ready, he removed his plate from the microwave then sat at the table to eat. Fifteen minutes later, he stood up from the table, placed his dish in the sink, then walked to the threshold of the kitchen and flipped the light switch off. He then slowly made his way through the dark living room for the staircase. Now upstairs, Arquette entered the bedroom and began to undress for bed. Once he had his night clothes on, he immediately hopped into bed to the right

of Linda. But before he laid down, he first kissed her on her forehead and lips, then wished her a goodnight. After, he laid himself down and placed his right forearm around her mid-area then went to sleep.

The time was now passed midnight and Michael had just pulled the last item from the pallet. After putting it on the storage shelf, he started picking the pallets up and putting them against the wall.

“Yeah, this oughta get me employee of the month,” he chuckled, feeling satisfied with himself for staying later to unload all the pallets.

As he moved each pallet, Michael suddenly began to hear an unusual sound echoing throughout the backroom. It sounded as if it came mainly from the ceiling, or possibly the roof. As this echo grew stronger, the wind began to pick up simultaneously, now sounding as though the roof was about to come apart. Moreover, the wind started causing the walls to soon make a low, irking, crackling sound, as if there was something slowly penetrating them. Shortly after, the lights in the backroom began to flicker on and off, as if there was a lightning storm outside that was affecting the powerlines. Michael stopped working and took a few minutes to observe what was taking place around him. Now interested in seeing what was taking place outside, he went over to the back exit and pressed the door release with both hands to open it. The door swung outward to the right. He leaned slightly forward with his left hand against the wall and looked up at the sky. Thinking that there was a storm approaching, he looked for

clouds as well as lighting. But as he continued to stare at the sky, he did not see neither. Now although the night appeared to be free of storms, Michael did discern how the wind had increased dramatically the longer he remained at the exit, as if there was something lurking near him. At that moment, he shut the door then decided to head for the blue double doors.

Then suddenly, without warning, all of the lights in the backroom went out, leaving that entire area in total darkness. Luckily for Michael, though, he was still able to find his way around the back there. He placed his right hand on the wall and used to feel his way toward the supply office to get the emergency flashlight. When he reached the door, he opened it, then started feeling around for the supply cabinet. As he moved about the office, a hollow, metal noise rang out after his left foot hit the base of the cabinet. He positioned himself in front of the cabinet then reached for the handles with both hands. As he turned both of them outward, simultaneously, he noticed that the handle on the left was locked. The one on the right, however, was not and so he proceeded to open the cabinet. Knowing that the flashlight was located on the top shelf, he reached his right hand up and felt around for it. As soon as he felt it, he grabbed it and pulled it down, then used both hands to caress it to locate the on/off switch. When his right thumb hit the switch, he then flicked it up and turned the flashlight on. The office instantly lit up from its bright beam. Michael was now able to see inside the cabinet in front of him. He then turned to his right and exited the office.

Now out in the backroom again, he began to scan the area to his right in search of the blue double doors. The beam from the flashlight finally illuminated the doors and Michael headed towards them to exit.

Now on the grocery floor, he shined the flashlight toward the open area, searching for a sales display which would reveal the beginning of an aisle. As he scanned about, he suddenly seen a sales display with various bags of potatoes chips stacked from top to bottom. Its sign read 2 bags for \$3 dollars. Michael approached that aisle and then followed it up toward the front of the store. As he proceeded forward, the flashlight revealed other various snack items on both, the right and left sides of that aisle which ranged from Oreos, Graham crackers, Animal cookies, Chips Ahoy, and other tasting treats. Finally, the flashlight's beam reflected off one of the roller beds at a check-out station. Michael knew that he was now at the front of the store. At the front, were three large glass windows which provided a wide view of the parking lot outside. He lowered the flashlight to avoid the light's reflection off the glass and then approached the windows. As he scanned the parking lot slowly, he saw that all those lights were also out. The moonlight was the only source of brightness that marginally reduced the eerie effect of the darkness. The stars also twinkled, yet they displayed a semi-bright pattern around the moon. Michael decided to point the flashlight toward the window to try and locate his car; however, because the reflection of the beam off the glass was so bright, it made it difficult to see outside. So, Michael

decided to aim the flashlight to his right, in the direction of the front door.

He walked over to the door while trying to search his left pants pocket for his keys. The beam from the flashlight soon reflected off the glass of the door, making it easier for him to see as he searched for them. Finally, he got them out and then put the flashlight underneath his left armpit. This way, he could use both of his hands to browse through his keys. With the beam reflecting off his keys, he was able to locate the one to the front door. He approached the door with the key in his right hand then slid it inside the lock. After unlocking it, he then removed the keys with his left hand, while grabbing the flashlight with his right. Being cautious, he shined the light beyond the door to ensure that it was safe to exit. And since there were no signs of danger, he decided to open the door, pulling it inward slowly to the right. Now standing at the threshold, he took a few seconds to glance down the sidewalk. Still not seeing any concerns, he decided to step out and turn around to lock the door. He inserted the key into the lock with his left hand; but just before turning the lock, he heard an ominous moan not far from him. At first, he chose to ignore it, proceeding to lock the door. But disturbingly, this moan soon grew louder, concurrently with the strengthening of the wind gust. Realizing this odd change in the wind, he turned to his right with the flashlight in his right hand and began to inspect the area around him. He scanned the parking lot first but saw nothing unusual. Next, he scanned down the sidewalk where he instantly spotted a

pair of small red, irradiated circles from a distance seemingly easing in his direction. He continued to observe this strange object, in hopes of identifying it. However, as the feeling of paranoia and fear began to escalate, he soon chose to reenter the store; especially after realizing how this red, unspecified object was growing increasingly brighter as it neared him.

Now back inside the store, Michael quickly locked the door then shined the flashlight out toward the walkway. Bizarrely, a pale white image appeared near the door as the moan grew louder. He couldn't believe what he was actually seeing. He then receded slowly from the door in shock; yet, felt a sense of security because the door was locked. This white image happened to mysteriously disappear just before it reached the door. This stunned Michael. At this moment, he was unsure of what to do next. But before he could decide a plan, the front windows began to vibrate intensely as if an earthquake was developing directly beneath the store. When Michael looked at the windows, he suddenly noticed that the red mysterious image had now grown incredibly radiant and was now approaching the windows. He moved up close to them, in hopes of getting a better description of this image, yet, with skepticism about the stability of the window, he remained about five foot away from them. All of a sudden, this aggressive turbulence caused all the windows to burst and shatter, forcing pieces of broken glass to project inward. Moreover, after the windows broke, the intensity of the wind rushed in and heaved Michael backwards. Consequently, the glass fragments that were within the wind struck Michael,

tearing into his face, arms, and legs. As soon as he hit the floor, he became temporarily incapacitated.

After coming to, he lifted his head up and noticed a mysterious pale figure standing beyond the window frame. Ominously, this figure gracefully dispersed into vapor then floated past the middle window. It then reconfigured right in front of him. In tremendous pain, Michael grasped various parts of his body that sustained injuries in an effort to soothe the aches. But because this figure was standing near him, this quickly motivated him to focus more on getting up from off the floor, and less on the pain. There were signs of agony as he cautiously rose to his feet. Now up, he wobbled and ached as he tried to stable himself. The store was pitch dark which made it difficult for him to locate the flashlight he lost after the wind blew him back. He moved toward the registers but soon found it difficult to see past them for an aisle that would lead him to the backroom. After finally passing the registers, he began to search for a nearby aisle. He looked back briefly toward the window to locate that ghostly figure. When he noticed that it was moving further into the store, he quickly turned around to locate an aisle. As soon as he found one, he proceeded down it with haste to get to the back of the store. Just then out of nowhere, a loud crash resounded in the aisle he was in. It was the sound of a shopping cart falling from above. Michael paused for a second to see if there would be another one to follow. Startlingly enough, another cart came crashing down, nearly missing him. Michael suddenly sped up his pace toward the back.

He now made it to the back of the store, but had some trouble locating the double doors. He moved forward slowly across the floor and eventually made contact with the wall. With his right hand against it, he eased his way toward the corridor. Terrifyingly, more carts began to fall from above, as if the frame of the roof was collapsing. Michael knew that he needed to move much quicker to avoid being struck by a cart. Now moving swiftly, he soon came across the aroma of baked bread, donuts, and other sweet goods. This meant that he had now reached the bakery and that the corridor to the backroom was near. When he reached the corridor, he then rushed to the double doors. The minute his hands felt them, he threw himself toward them as if his life depended on it. Oddly, the noise of the carts hitting the floor ceased and the place went quiet. Michael got up from the floor and tried to find his way through the backroom. But this room did not have any isles to follow. There were just eight metal framed shelves stocked with food items. However, after that strong turbulence from earlier, those shelves disconnected and fell, scattering all the food items across the floor. This made it a massive obstacle for Michael to overcome in order to reach the exit. As he attempted to cross the room, he fell almost immediately after slipping on various objects. After he got up, he decided to return to where he started. When he found the wall, he used his right hand again to guide himself along it, to find the exit door. Alarmingly, the double doors made this mysterious, lingering, screeching sound as if someone, or possibly something, was entering the backroom. Michael

paused briefly to listen. Assuming it was that ghost figure from the window, he quickened his pace. He successfully reached one corner of the room, in hopes he'll soon reach the wall where the exit door was located at the other end. That moan he heard earlier suddenly started up again. In addition, various food products from the floor began to now drop from the ceiling, seemingly targeting Michael.

Although he heard these objects falling, he persisted on reaching the next corner with hopes that by reaching that wall, it would guide him to the exit. But abruptly, something loud crashed against the wall just above him. This sound was wood smashing into pieces. Immediately after, these pieces fell on top of Michael's head, causing him to collide to the floor. Based from the texture of this material, Michael knew that it was likely one of the pallets. He then crept along the floor on his hands and knees, attempting to find the wall once more. But that moan was now awfully close to him, seeming almost intimate with him. At that moment, he decided to lay flat on his stomach, motionless, in hopes to avoid being seen by this force haunting him. He scanned the room from left to right and from up above for that red illumination; however, he didn't see anything near him. Although there was no sign of this ghostly figure, the sound from that moan was directly above his location. Michael decided to prop up on his hands and knees again and move about the floor at a quick pace. This moan, unfortunately, seemed as though it were shifting concurrently with his every movement. All of a sudden, a cold, disturbing chill grasped him from behind. The sense of

suffocation began to commence, causing him to panic and wheeze for air. This moan had now approached his left ear. Unable to breath adequately and continue to move forward, Michael collapsed to his stomach.

Feeling practically immobilized, he decided to turn onto his back with hopes to clearly see that which has been haunting him. Now looking up, he instantly recalled the red, radiated eyes and pale white face he saw moments earlier outside.

“It’s your turn to scream!” spoke this mysterious phenomenon, with great assertiveness.

While gasping for air, Michael noticed a hand with blade-like nails emerge, extending out toward him. After seeing this, he tried sliding himself back using his elbows. But as he moved back slowly, this force followed closely from above. Soon, he felt his attempt to escape was futile and decided to try to engage with this mysterious entity. He took a deep breath and then began to commune with it.

“What...what the hell do you want with me?!” he asked, while trying to grasp for air.

But this ghostly figure did not respond. Now feeling exhausted and weak, he stopped trying to flee and waited to see what this phenomenon was going to do next. Right then, it positioned itself over him then said, “To diiiiiieeeee!” in an eerie, furious tone. In the next second, it raised its hand high, only to swing it back down toward Michael, hostilely. Then instantly, everything went completely black.

Chapter 11

The Aftermath

Sunlight peaked over the horizon, giving the city of Annapolis a superb start to a Sunday morning. The chirping of the birds implied that a new day had begun. The sound of human existence in the city, though, remained quiet as many were still sleep. Linda, overhearing the birds, came to a yawn while stretching her legs and arms, then opened her eyes and looked to her right to see if Arquette was in bed. After seeing him there, she then sat up, turned to her left, then got out of bed quietly. First, she went into the bathroom to get cleaned up. After exiting the bathroom, she then slipped on her pink nightgown and proceeded downstairs for the kitchen. Now in the kitchen, she hit the start button on the coffee maker, first. Next, she picked up the tv remote off the counter and turned on the tv. After finding the station she wanted, she put the remote back down on the counter then went over to the refrigerator. As she stood in the refrigerator door, carefully scanning at each row, she tried to envision herself devising a scrumptious breakfast dish. After deciding a dish to make, and now collecting all the various breakfast components, a news reporter appeared on tv, interrupting a morning show.

“This just in” appeared horizontally, moving from right to left at the bottom of the screen. In addition, in the background was a photo of a crime scene posted at the top right with yellow caution tape labeled across it horizontally

from right to left. Within seconds, the news reporter began to speak.

Reporter Diane: “Good Sunday morning everyone. We’re coming to you with a report of a homicide we believe was the result of a robbery late last night. Erica is currently live at Food Lion, so we’ll take you there now. Erica, what do we know so far?”

Reporter Erica: “Good morning, Erica here. Well Diane, it seems we may have a possible robbery/homicide police believe might’ve happened sometime late last night. Though, this is just speculation as no investigative official has yet provided a statement. Now if you look behind me, you’ll see that they’ve blocked off the entrance, ensuring no one enters. Though, I have been informed that they’ve found at least one body. Now, it hasn’t been confirmed if this victim was a worker here; but if so, then they said they’ll probably deem this a robbery along with vandalism due to the many shopping carts and food items seemingly hurled throughout the place, as well as the windows having been busted in. To me, I could definitely see this as an act of vandalism. Yet, again, this is all just speculation. As soon as we receive a statement from the investigative official, we’ll be back with more details. Back to you, Diane,” concluded Erica.

Diane: “Thanks Erica! As usual, we’ll be continuing to cover this story as it unfolds and will update you with any new developments. Stay tuned!” said Diane, to conclude the news segment.

Linda had finally gathered all the cookware needed to prepare her breakfast. After overhearing the news report, she paused briefly to decide if she should awake Arquette and tell him about it. Though, as she pondered, she soon remembered that he came home late last night. And so, she resumed cooking and decided to let him sleep to ensure he got adequate rest. Twenty minutes had past and the food was almost done. Her final touches were now being added to complete her dish. The succulent aroma of grilled sausage overwhelmed the kitchen, accompanied by the flavorsome scent of scrambled eggs and Aunt Jemima's pancakes. This kitchen was definitely carrying the smell of a well-known, reputable restaurant. Now complete, Linda covered the food so it could remain warm while she went upstairs to awaken Arquette. As she exited the kitchen and entered the living room, she happened to hear footsteps upstairs. Right away she knew it was him and figured that he was getting ready to come downstairs, so she decided to turn around and go back into the kitchen. A few minutes later, Arquette's voice was heard in the living room, then drifted into the kitchen.

"Yes sir. I understand. As soon as I can, I'll head over to that location. No sir, I'm not sure if Ryan's there; I just woke up. Have you tried calling him?" asked Arquette, as he stood at the threshold of the kitchen looking at Linda.

"Well please sir, give me some time. I should have some information for you as soon as I can, alright? We'll talk soon," he concluded, now slowly entering the kitchen while lowering his cellphone from his left ear.

“Hey baby, good morning!” he greeted Linda, still dressed in his light blue pajamas.

“Hey baby, how’d you sleep? You get some rest?” she inquired, expressing minor concern for his rest and well-being while at the stove preparing their plates.

“Aawwhh, I guess I slept alright,” he replied, slowly moving toward the table to take a seat.

He saw two glasses of orange juice already there.

“But...I definitely enjoyed coming home and holding you in my arms. I believe I fell straight to sleep. Of course, that medication played a small part in it, also,” he laughed, now sitting on the right side of the table and looking over at Linda near the stove.

“Well, that’s always great to hear. How was dinner last night?” Linda asked, as she carried both of their plates over to the table.

“Uh honey, dinner was scrumptious...like always! I mean, even after warming it up, it was just as good, to me,” he responded, while reaching his right hand out to grab his plate from her.

“Good! I’m glad you enjoyed it! You know, I was worried you would’ve forgot about it by the time you got home,” she stated, now taking a seat to the right of him.

“No ma’am, I was looking for that plate, as hungry as I was. Plus, your cooking is superb!” he declared. “You know, after that phone call, I feel today’s gonna be another long day. So I’mma take my time and enjoy this meal...with my beautiful wife, might I add,” he continued, expressing humor and appreciation.

Linda chose not to talk about the news, presuming that he already knew about the incident. She even decided not to ask about the conversation he had on the phone recently, for hopes that they could just enjoy a quiet breakfast together. After Arquette finished eating, he stood up and took his utensils and plate over to the sink.

“Ok honey, I gotta get out of here,” stated Arquette, now walking over to Linda at the table.

He approached her from her left and kissed her on the forehead then on her lips, gracefully. After this passionate moment, he walked toward the threshold of the kitchen.

“Jackson, please be careful out there, my husband, and call me if you need me to do anything,” she requested, looking to her left over at Arquette.

“Oh! And don’t forget to let me know what you want for dinner later, this way I could have it ready by the time you get home,” she continued.

“I will, love. As soon as I can, I’ll call you and let you know how everything’s goin,” he replied.

He then turned toward the living room but just stood at threshold of the kitchen as if he was hesitant to proceed upstairs to get ready.

“I know, baby. You always call. And I thank you for that because it really helps me relax when you’re away,” she affirmed, with smile on her face.

Arquette turned back around then smiled and winked his right eye at her. After that, he exited the kitchen. Linda returned to eating her breakfast and watching tv.

Now in the bathroom, Arquette started the shower. But just before getting in, he stared at himself in the mirror and began to ruminate about his mental health, determining if he was mentally ready to endure that which awaited him. In addition, during this momentary pause, he also imagined how it would be surrendering his badge and weapon before his retirement ceremony. Unexpectedly, his cellphone rang in the bedroom. He exited the bathroom and picked up his cellphone off the bed next to his clothes. With it in his right hand, he read the caller ID. It read, “Ryan”. He immediately pressed the call button to answer then held his cellphone to his right ear.

“Hey Ryan, good morning. What’s up? How’s your morning been?” he answered.

“Hey Arquette, good morning! It’s been ok,” Ryan replied.

“Listen, I just received a call from Chief saying he already spoke to you about that murder at Food Lion,” he continued.

“Yeah, that’s right. I spoke to him about 45 minutes ago. He asked me if I heard about the homicide; I told him no because I had just gotten up and was now about to eat some breakfast,” confirmed Arquette, slowly pacing back to the bathroom.

“Alright! So did he tell you he wanted you to head this investigation?” asked Ryan.

“Yeah, he does. Especially after considering the two murders, recently, only a day apart with matching evidence. I mean, we could have a potential serial case, which is likely the reason Chief wants me on this one,” replied Arquette.

“Now that I believe. Ok. Well I’m actually heading there now. Guess I’ll be seeing you there soon then?” asked Ryan, seeming slightly buoyant.

“Yup! I’m about to hop in the shower now then be on my way in less than an hour,” responded Arquette.

“Hey, if you can, try to wait for me so we can walk the scene together,” he requested.

“Sure Arquette! No problem!” confirmed Ryan.

“Alright then, I’ll give you a call when I’m close,” assured Arquette.

After he hung up, Arquette returned to the bathroom and then took his shower. Twenty minutes later, he finally came downstairs fully dressed in a brown suit with a black dress shirt on underneath. His weapon’s belt was around his waist; yet, his suit coat was covering it. Now in the living room, he first, he stopped in front of the mirror above the fireplace and grabbed his car keys, badge, and radio. After clipping his radio to the left side of his hip, and badge in his left pants pocket, he stopped at the recliner and picked up his computer case then put it over his left shoulder. After that, he went into the kitchen and approached Linda from behind.

“Baby, I’m leaving now,” he affirmed, giving Linda a hug from behind.

Linda turned her head slightly to her left to give him a kiss.

“Ok honey. Just please be safe out there,” Linda wished.

“Oh! And don’t forget to give me a call later so I’ll know you’re alright,” she continued, while holding onto his right forearm.

“I’ll definitely be sure to do that, honey,” Arquette responded.

He then kissed her on her forehead. After easing his right arm from out of Linda's grasp, he left out the kitchen then exited out the house for his car.

On the other side of town, Chris had just awakened to the sound of a car horn from next door. He came to a full, long stretch while simultaneously removing the tan bed sheet from over him with his legs. But he did not get out of bed; he just laid there and began to reminisce about Stacey and the times they spent together. As he reflected on these great moments, the images of the caution tape around her house, and police securing the area throughout her neighborhood, suddenly commenced. Moreover, he also recalled seeing the news van and reporter speaking in front of the camera. And lastly, he remembered having a conversation with Detective Arquette. This moment of nostalgia soon led him to recall the card he received from this detective in case he needed to reach him. Chris sat up, turned to his left, then placed his feet on the floor. Next, he stood up and walked over to his blue jeans draped over the chair for his computer desk to the left of his room. He picked up them at the waist with both hands; then, with his left hand, reached inside the left pocket for the card. After pulling it out, he draped the pants back over the chair. While reading over the card, he began to contemplate on whether he should give Arquette a call regarding any new information about Stacey's case. But then changed his mind, figuring that it would probably be too early for him to have found new information, especially after they had just met at her house the day before.

“Man, what the hell is going on? One day I’m with her, and the next she’s gone,” he said, softly to himself.

His emotions were still a bit unstable with a mixture of depression and anger.

“Who knows, maybe this detective might’ve found something, or hopefully someone,” he continued, expressing slight optimism.

“Nah, this just happened the other day, so there’s no way he could’ve gotten anything this fast,” he added, now expressing doubt while placing the card on his dresser to the right of his room, next to his window.

He left out of his room for the bathroom, then closed the door. Minutes later, he exited out the bathroom and then reentered his room. After entering, he went back over to the dresser to search for his cellphone but could not find it. He then searched behind the dresser, as well as on the floor in front of it; yet, his cellphone was still nowhere to be found. Soon after, he decided to check his bed. After shifting both, the sheet and comforter around, he found it on the right side of the bed near the wall. He picked it up with his right hand and then started scrolling through his contacts for Michael’s number. Once he highlighted it, he pressed the send button to dial it.

“Let me get with Mike; see if he’ll ride with me to find out more about Stacey,” he said to himself as he placed his cellphone up to his right ear.

The phone rang four times before the voicemail answered. As soon as it beeped, Chris recorded his message.

“Yo Michael, it’s Chris. I know you’re probably still sleep. Listen, I’m up and about to eat. Later though, I plan to head over to Stacey’s and maybe talk with some of her neighbors about yesterday. If you wanna ride, hit me back and I’ll swing by to get you,” he offered.

The voicemail beeped again which signified that his message had been received. Chris pressed the end button on his cellphone to disconnect and then left his bedroom to go downstairs to make breakfast.

At the crime scene, Arquette’s blue, unmarked sedan pulled up beyond the police barricades; lights were flashing red, blue, and white. Ryan was at the front of the building talking with some of the assisting officers. As Arquette’s sedan cleared the barricades and drove up to the building, Ryan noticed it and started walking toward the parking lot. Arquette stopped his car horizontal in a parking space and got out. Ryan approached the driver’s side to greet him.

“Hey Arquette!” greeted Ryan.

“Good morning. So, how long have you been here?” asked Arquette, opening his door to exit the sedan.

He then closed it and then stepped back to open the backdoor.

“I don’t know. I’d say probably 30 minutes, maybe,” Ryan guessed.

“Oh! Alright then! Well give me a few seconds to grab my things, then we’ll head inside,” told Arquette, stooped over in the backseat of his car with his right knee planted on the seat.

Now confident he had everything, Arquette backed out of the backseat and stood up. He then shut the backdoor and walked up to Ryan while putting his computer case strap over his left shoulder.

“So how’s your Sunday morning been so far?” asked Arquette, slightly humorous.

“It’s going good, honestly. I can’t complain. I mean the weather’s nice, sun’s shining, and birds are singing. So yeah, I’m feeling pretty good about this morning,” replied Ryan, displaying a sense of thanksgiving.

He then turned to walk alongside Arquette on his left as he headed toward the store. As they continued to converse on a lighter topic, they passed by additional officers whom were monitoring the access point up to the store.

When they approached the building, they passed the news reporter who was preparing to record another segment. Now at the entrance, Arquette and Ryan took out their blue, latex gloves, put them on, and then began to investigate the broken windows. Arquette took his notepad and pen out of his left inside suit pocket and approached the window frame. Right then, he saw one forensics officer on the other side of the window, inside, dusting for prints and taking notes.

“Oh man! All three windows were busted in, huh?” he asked the forensics officer, while leaning over the window frame.

But the officer did not respond. Ryan ventured inside the store to view the broken glass on the floor.

“So what do you think?” Ryan asked Arquette, while observing the forensics officer’s work.

“Humm...well judging by how this looks, I’m gonna assume there was more than one robber who came through these windows,” Arquette hypothesized, as he assessed each window frame from right to left.

“Now I’m saying this because to me it doesn’t make any sense for one person to come through all three of these windows,” he continued, stepping back from the windows.

Ryan was standing and observing the window from the other side. He began to follow the broken glass trail from the window back toward the registers. Having seen just how far the glass had blown, he suggested that it could have been the wind that caused the windows to break.

“Hey Arquette, if you come where I’m, you’ll likely challenge your theory,” he proposed, now near registers.

“What-cha got, Ryan?” asked Arquette.

Ryan did not respond. Just then, Arquette decided to enter the store. Once inside, he walked over toward Ryan to see what he was observing.

“Alright. What-chu got?” he asked, feeling slightly clueless of Ryan’s last statement.

“Ok. So if you look here, the glass from the window actually reached this far. Now had someone broken them, the glass would’ve only reached maybe as far as where the officer is now. In my opinion, glass shouldn’t have made it this far out, not without some kind of force to project it,” explained Ryan, pointing to the glass near the registers with his ink pen in his left hand.

For about a minute or two, Arquette assessed all the glass near registers. After digesting Ryan's rationalization, he then coincided with him.

"You know what, I believe you're absolutely right!" he agreed, putting his left hand underneath his chin, and his right arm supporting his left elbow.

He took a moment to ponder about how exactly the glass fragments traveled across the room that far. Just then, he started measuring the distance from the window to where the glass fragments ended. All of a sudden, it hit him. As he recalled the details from the last two crime scenes, Arquette concluded that the only thing powerful enough to blast these windows out with such force, that wasn't a vehicle or a plane engine, had to have been a strong gust of wind.

"You know what Ryan, you got!" he exclaimed, with a smile as he lifted his head and lowered his left hand from his chin.

"So what do you think?" Ryan inquired, moving near Arquette.

"Well, as frightening as this sounds..." responded Arquette, looking down near his feet.

"What? What do you think happened?" Ryan asked, again feeling slightly intrigued to hear Arquette's answer.

"Ok. So, if you remember the last scene, the windows there also seemed to've been blown inward. Or, at least the assumption was it was the wind, right? Perhaps the wind was a factor here, too," Arquette insinuated, now walking over to the forensics officer who was kneeled down near the window frames.

“Excuse me officer, but what did you find so far?” he asked, as he kneeled down near him.

Ryan came over and stood directly behind Arquette.

“Well Detective, so far it’s just a lot of glass. I mean, I wanna say someone busted these windows in,” the officer presumed.

“Yeah, Ryan and I both thought the same thing, too, at first. But the only problem with this theory is that the glass couldn’t have made it that far unless something with force, like the impact of a vehicle or a jet engine, had blown them in,” smirked Arquette, scanning the floor for possible leads.

“So, we both concluded that a strong gust of wind may have done this,” he continued.

“Well sir, you could be right. That’s a possibility. But, I’m gonna continue scanning for prints just to ensure I don’t miss anything,” recommended the officer.

“Now I haven’t found any prints yet, but I did find some blood spots near the registers,” he continued.

“I took photos of them about 30 minutes ago,” he concluded.

“Alright! Well that shouldn’t be too hard to see,” Arquette commented, while looking back at the registers.

Just then, silence overtook the room, momentarily. Ryan glanced down at Arquette, trying to hint at what he was thinking. Immediately, Arquette stood to his feet.

“What? What’s wrong?” inquired Ryan, clueless to Arquette’s action.

“Based from the last two scenes, we did find prints, but those prints weren’t visible unless...,” stated Arquette, before pausing mid-sentence.

He then walked away Ryan and the officer and exited out the front door. Ryan thought about Arquette's last words, trying to conclude what he was about to say. Then suddenly it hit him.

"Oh, he must've went for a blacklight," he assumed, speaking to the officer.

"Oh yeah, that's right! I remember hearing a few of the guys talking about how they found some prints using a blacklight. I think that was on Friday, if I'm not mistakin'," said the officer, looking to his right, up toward Ryan.

"Yeah, that's right. It was Friday morning. I know, I was there," confirmed Ryan.

Right then, the officer began to move about the floor again, looking for prints. Ryan decided to walk back towards the front door to wait for Arquette.

Moments later, Arquette reappeared at the entrance holding a miniature blacklight in his right hand.

"Alright! Let's find some prints," Arquette said, with slight humor.

Before he got started, he went over to the registers and placed his computer case and work binder down on one of them. He then walked over near the window and squatted down to the right of the forensics officer but ensured not to disturb the area which he had already assessed. Ryan moved close but remained standing. Next, Arquette turned on the blacklight and began to scan the floor slowly, inch by inch. He started at the far-left corner of the window frame near the wall, then moved inward toward the center.

“You know, if we were to miraculously recover any prints, this would more likely mean it’s the same killer from the other two murders,” predicted Arquette, pausing briefly to look up at Ryan to his right.

“And if that’s the case, then we really need to get a move on to finding this killer,” replied Ryan.

“I mean...how many more are gonna fall victim to this guy, or gal?” he continued, beginning to think that their efforts for capturing this killer have been insufficient.

“Yeah, I definitely agree,” said Arquette, moving inward towards the center of the window frames.

The forensics officer saw Arquette moving near him and decided to stop assessing. He propped up on his knees and allowed Arquette to finish his scanning, uninterrupted. Finally, at the center of the window, Arquette concluded that the blacklight did not detect any signs of prints.

“I don’t know why I’m wasting time down here. I say this because the last prints we found were along the walls outside,” stated Arquette, starting to feel like his efforts were purposeless.

Never-the-less, he decided to scan the floor. He began to run the blacklight from the center of the window onto the floor and then began to back slowly away from the window. Shockingly, to his surprise, a pair of purplish-blue footprints suddenly appeared.

“Holy sh...t!!” exclaimed Arquette, as he held the blacklight steady over the prints.

“I know! I can’t believe what I’m seeing either. You actually find more of those prints!” said Ryan, expressing excitement.

“Yes sir. And judging by how close these prints are together, it looks like someone stood right here,” assessed Arquette.

The forensics officer stood to his feet, quickly, then moved over behind Arquette to see the prints.

“Wow! And I’ve been scanning this area for nearly an hour now. Hell, I would’ve never found this,” he stated.

“I’ll go get some tape,” told Ryan.

“Thanks Ryan,” replied Arquette, scanning up and down at the left and right footprint, slowly.

But just before Ryan could leave, some was offered by the forensics officer.

“Oh, hold on! You’re talking about carbon tape? I have some in my bag. Give me a second and I’ll get it for you,” the officer offered.

He turned to his left then walked over to a black equipment bag near the wall. A few seconds later, the he returned and handed Arquette the tape. After retrieving it, he handed Ryan the blacklight and asked if he could hold it over the prints. This way, he could accurately place the tape onto the prints using both of his hands.

“Here Ryan, can you hold this here for me? I need to use both hands to get this tape just right for accuracy,” proposed Arquette, positioning himself slightly offset to the left of the reflection of the blacklight.

Ryan took the blacklight with his right hand and then leaned over Arquette’s right shoulder to shine the light over the prints. As they worked to retrieve the prints, the officer

began to clear the area where he had already inspected. He figured since he did not retrieve any prints directly, and that if the area was clear of debris, maybe Arquette could scan the rest of the floor with the blacklight and find more prints.

Arquette, with caution, placed the tape onto both prints gently and accurately. Ryan decided to kneel to the right of Arquette and position the blacklight between his arms to ensure the prints remained visible. With elegance and grace, after Arquette placed the tape stripes down onto the prints, he then slid his left hand over each one to ensure there were no air bubble within the stripes. Next, he asked the forensics officer for an evidence bag. Right then, the officer stopped what he was doing and walked over to his bag for two clear bags. Holding them in his right hand, he then walked over to Arquette. Confident of his efforts, Arquette slowly lifted the stripes of tape up from the prints.

“Got’em!” declared Arquette, now holding up both pieces of tape.

As he held them at eye level toward the window, he noticed how the sunlight made his attempt to see the prints, effortless. Both prints had been successfully imprinted with great detail.

“This came up perfectly!” told Arquette, shifting his hand slightly to the right so Ryan could see the result.

“Yeah, you’re right. We might even have a positive match by this evening,” said Ryan, expressing optimism.

The officer opened both plastic bags then extended them out to Arquette.

As soon as he saw the officer holding the bags open, Arquette turned to his left and placed each strip inside a bag. Then, he took the bags from the officer.

“Here Ryan, can you put these in my binder?” asked Arquette, looking to his right at Ryan while still down on his knees.

Ryan handed him the blacklight then took the bags.

“Here you go, take this,” he requested, passing the blacklight to Arquette while also reaching for the bags in an even exchange.

He then stood up and walked over to Arquette’s binder on one of the registers. Arquette resume scanning the floor.

“Hey detective, you should sweep over here also. Though I didn’t find anything with the brush, but you might find something with that blacklight,” suggested the officer, pointing near the wall.

Arquette agreed and then moved over near him and began to scan the recommended area; however, he also did not find anything. At that moment, he decided to turn off the blacklight after feeling completely satisfied with the prints he just found.

“Alright, that’s enough. I think we’re going to find all we can over here,” he assumed.

He then went over to join Ryan near the registers.

“So...we have one set of footprints but there’s carts everywhere. How the hell is this even possible when there’s no actual trail of prints to indicate someone walked around to grab the carts?” he wondered, analyzing the many carts dispersed around the store.

“That’s a good question. Special powers maybe? I don’t know” replied Ryan, trying to add some humor to this mysterious situation.

“Yeah, though I know you’re joking, there could be some truth to this,” suggested Arquette, with a partial smile on his face.

“Let’s go ahead and search the rest of the store; see what else we’ll find. Then we’ll go look at the body,” he proposed, picking up his binder and computer case from off the register.

He placed the case strap over his left shoulder while holding his binder in his left hand. They proceeded pass the registers and headed toward the right of the store. Arquette turned the blacklight on and started scanning various parts of the walls and floors heading down toward aisle one. The forensics officer remained in the front to clean up the area near the window frame.

Walking slowly toward aisle one, Arquette and Ryan both continued searching the area for possible prints. As they passed each aisle to their left, they saw the damage that was created by the shopping carts. Now at aisle one, they then proceeded down toward the back of the store. As they reached the end of that aisle, they exited, turned left, then made another left to proceed up aisle two. They moved up and down each aisle, until they came to a stop at the end of aisle five after finding another forensics officer taking photos of some blood spots on the floor. Arquette came up near him and shined the blacklight around the area near the blood.

“Hey Arquette, who’s blood do you think this is?” asked Ryan, staring down at the blood stains.

“My guess, it’s likely the victim’s because forensics has yet to find any that could potentially be from the killer,” replied Arquette, bent over and scanning the area near the blood spots.

After being unsuccessful in finding any prints, Arquette turned off the blacklight. He and Ryan then continued on through the remaining aisles in search for additional clues. Periodically, Arquette would turn the blacklight on to scan portions of each aisle he believed had prints. Twenty minutes later, they had finally completed a walkthrough of all the aisles. The only place left which still needed inspecting was the stock room, ...where the victim was reportedly located.

“Alright! The only place left now is the stock room,” mentioned Ryan, feeling slightly rejoiced.

“Yeah, I’m sure we’ll find much more back there,” mentioned Arquette.

“Now, although it might’ve felt like a waste of time out here, I’ve learned it’s always good to check everywhere for prints,” he continued.

Arquette turned off the blacklight again as they walked out of the last aisle. They then turned right and headed for backroom. After reaching the corridor to the backroom, there was a dim, red atmosphere created by the emergency exit sign. Arquette stood in place with hesitation, looking at the blue double doors to backroom. Next to these doors stood an officer off to the left, securing the entrance. He was put there

to ensure that no one unauthorized would enter and possibly contaminate the scene. Arquette and Ryan approached the double doors.

“Hey Detectives, good morning!” greeted the officer standing post at the double doors.

“Good morning officer! How are you? Has anyone been back here yet?” Arquette inquired, in a professional, charismatic manner.

“No sir, I’ve been standing here for almost 2 hours now and haven’t allowed no one to go inside.” confirmed the officer.

“Oh yeah! And we also have another officer posted around back. He was ordered not to let anyone in or out, either,” he continued, now turning to his left to prop the left door open. He pushed it open with his left forearm, allowing Arquette and Ryan to enter. As soon as they walked past the threshold to the stock room, Arquette instantly stumbled on what seemed to have been food items and other supplies.

“Woo, it’s really dark in here,” he said.

He then turned the blacklight on. Ryan entered right behind him.

“Hey Ryan, see if you could find a light switch. But watch your step cause there’s apparently a lot of stuff on the floor,” cautioned Arquette, as he walked slowly against the wall to his right.

“Yeah, we could definitely use some light right now. We don’t wanna end up breaking our necks trying to walk back here,” he continued, while shining the blacklight at the floor. Periodically, he would shine the blacklight at the wall, ensuring he stayed near it while walking around the room.

Ryan felt the wall for a light switch near the entrance but was unable to locate one.

“Hold on. Let me go get a flashlight,” he decided.

He turned around for the double doors and then exited the backroom. Arquette continued his along the wall. When he lowered the blacklight toward the floor, it revealed various food items scattered in front of him. Intermittently, he would stop to scan portions of the floor, as well as the wall up toward the ceiling, hoping to discover more prints. Arquette got halfway around the room before suddenly the whole room grew brighter. It was Ryan and he had found the light switch.

“Ryan!” shouted Arquette, now barely able to see the purplish-blue light on the wall from the blacklight.

“Hey, can you hear me?! Listen, I’mma need you to stay there!” he requested, still moving along the wall toward the back of the room.

“Yeah, I heard you. Wha’cha need?” Ryan replied, standing at the threshold of the office in the backroom.

“Alright, when I tell you, I want you to turn off the lights. This way if I see anything worth using the blacklight for, the dark will help pick it up,” directed Arquette.

“Sounds like a plan! Just let me know when!” assented Ryan.

Once Arquette reached the back wall, he eventually discovered more blood spots. This time these spots were on the wall. He observed how the pattern of the blood traced downward. Immediately, he shouted for Ryan to turn off the lights.

“Ryan!! Go ahead and shut’em off!” he exclaimed.

He then turned the blacklight back on. To no surprise, all the lights went off and the purplish-blue shine made the blood stains more visible, turning the red blood marks a glowing, purple-blue color. He followed the spots on the wall down to a pile of broken pieces of wood. He shined the blacklight on the wall once again, just right above this pile; however, he did not find any wood fragments in the wall, surprisingly.

“Humm...that’s interesting. It looks like pieces of a pallet broken on the floor, but I don’t feel any wood pieces ingrained in the wall. If it didn’t break against the wall, then it must’ve broke...,” examined Arquette, speaking softly to himself before coming to a pause mid-sentence.

He decided to aim the blacklight towards the broken wood on the floor again, this time trying to find a pattern; but no pattern was discovered. What he did manage unveil, however, was more blood. This time the blood pattern led away from the broken wood fragments. As Arquette moved away from the wall, following this pattern, he came across a small pile of store items on the floor. Within this pile was a large quantity of blood, along with signs of human parts. Instantly, Arquette asked Ryan to turn the lights back on.

“Ryan, hit the lights! Hit the lights!” he cried out, looking down at the undescribed pile. The lights instantly came back on.

“What...what is it? Did you find something?” asked Ryan, highly anxious to know what Arquette discovered.

But Arquette did not reply. Instead, he first removed his computer case from his left shoulder and placed it against the wall, along with his binder. After that, he turned off the blacklight then went back over to that pile. While bending forward and starting to remove the items, he soon displayed an exceeding amount of interest in uncovering the mystery which lied within. As each item was removed, various body parts became visible. First, a pair of black and white Jordan sneakers were uncovered. They were about two feet apart from one another with blood soaked into the fabric. As he continued to dig, he soon uncovered the victim's legs which were still intact to the ankles within the shoes; however, both thighs appeared gashed open as blood spewed out slowly. It appeared that whatever actually attacked this victim, sliced right through the blue jeans, leaving them doused in blood. Arquette continued removing items from around and within the thigh area. But what he happened to find next made him nearly vomit.

“Oh God!!” he cried, turning away from the sight.

“What...did you find something else?” asked Ryan, eagerly anticipating the chance to come over.

But Arquette still chose not to respond. He just stood upright to collect himself, took a few deep breathes, and then focused on preparing himself for what he soon was about to ingest, visually.

He returned to the pile and bent over to continue his investigation. Just above the blood-soaked jeans was a pile of intestines interweaving within the waistline. It actually

resembled a pile of spaghetti spilled on the floor covered in mold and tomato sauce.

“Ryan, I found our victim!” he proclaimed, coming to a stand and taking his pen and notepad out his inner left coat pocket. He put the blacklight underneath his left armpit then began to document his findings.

“What happened? Is it a woman or a man?” asked Ryan.

“I’m not exactly sure what happened, or even if this is a man or woman just yet. I’ve only managed to uncover the lower portion of the body...and that’s covered in bloody intestines,” addressed Arquette, writing in his notes.

“Do you need any help?” asked Ryan, with hopes Arquette would say yes.

“Yeah. But if you could, walk counterclockwise along the wall because I still haven’t inspected the area near the back door yet,” instructed Arquette.

“No problem. I’ll be there in a few seconds,” relied Ryan, leaving the threshold of the office.

He then rushed to the right of the room near the blue double doors, ensuring to walk the same path Arquette took to get where he was currently. Arquette placed his pen and notepad back inside his suit pocket then continued removing items from around the body. Ryan finally reached Arquette’s position, approaching him from behind.

“So, do we know if it was a male or female yet?” he enquired, coming around to Arquette’s right side.

“I don’t know. Take a look for yourself,” suggested Arquette, pointing at the upper mid-section of the body.

The stomach was slashed open, leaving five lacerations near the lower chest area. This evidence led Arquette to assume that it was likely a five-bladed object that was used to incise the stomach area.

“Oh man, what the hell did this?” Ryan wondered in disbelief, while covering his mouth with his right hand.

“Well it apparently seems like the same instrument that likely caused the other two murders; all within a matter of 48 to 72-hours, to be exact,” replied Arquette.

“Which could now only mean one thing, and that is we need to find this killer, and soon,” he added.

“At this point, I fear we’re gonna have another victim by tomorrow,” he presumed, centering his theory around the last two murders.

“Yeah, you’re probably right, especially after seeing this here,” said Ryan.

“Well, I went through quite a few of the bus driver’s files but haven’t found anything just yet. Of course, I’ve only gone back about three years. But after seeing this here, I feel I’mma need to read through those files a bit faster,” he continued, feeling like his efforts of finding a lead have been ineffective.

“Well yeah, reading faster could work. But let’s do this, I’ll take the other half of those files to speed things up. This way, we could take our time reading so we don’t miss any leads. After all, it’s always better to have two pairs of eyes rather than one in this case,” Arquette proposed, as he continued to remove items away from the body.

“That’s true. Alright! Well I’ll get those files to you as soon as we get out of here,” said Ryan, assisting Arquette with uncovering the rest of the corpse.

After partially uncovering the body, Arquette pulled his radio from off his left hip and requested forensics back. He informed them that the victim’s body was currently being inspected and that he was in need of some evidence bags.

“This is Detective Arquette. Could we get forensics back here? And bring some evidence bags. We found the body and are about to finish our investigation.,” informed Arquette.

“Copy that!” replied an officer over the radio.

Arquette placed his radio back on hip and continued inspecting the corpse with Ryan. A few minutes past before the sound of the double doors moved and then the shuffling of footsteps. It was the forensics team entering.

“Hey, can you guys walk counterclockwise around to us?” requested Arquette.

“No problem sir,” replied one of the officers.

They moved around the room as he had requested to reach him. After they got there, they soon positioned themselves around Arquette and Ryan then sat their briefcases down on the floor. Seeing that there were items still atop of the body, they kneeled down and began to assist with removing them. After a few minutes, it became clear that this was the body of a young African American male.

It wasn’t until all of the items were removed from the upper body that allowed the team to identify the gender and

race. And that was because majority of the lower body was covered in blood.

“Ok. So we appear to have an African American male, possibly early to mid-20’s,” Arquette observed, while pulling out his pen and notepad to take more notes.

One of the officers, having his miniature flashlight in his right hand, shined it on the body and then began to assess and describe the current condition of it.

“Alright. What we got here appears to be a victim who’s suffered from many deep lacerations,” explained the officer, slowly scanning the corpse with his flashlight.

“So what we have here are deep incisions on both thighs, as well as the pelvis area, which likely caused both legs to slightly detach from the pelvis. Next, we have a deep, open incision on the abdomen that’s led to the discharge of the intestines. Now, observing the abdomen, there appears to be five small engravings which could likely indicate that a five-bladed object of some sort was used,” he continued.

Arquette and Ryan followed along with the officer as he pointed out the details of these injuries.

“Although, it appears that the upper body area and face only suffered some minor incisions,” he continued.

“Yeah. Well of course with the amount of glass in the front, and blood found near the registers, I’d say those marks were likely the result of that,” supposed Arquette.

“That’s possible Detective,” agreed the officer.

Ryan began to assess the chest area.

“Is there a name tag or something to identify him?” he asked.

“I take it, this guy was working here last night when things went really bad,” he continued.

“If there isn’t a name tag, maybe a driver’s license or ID,” suggested Arquette, writing his notes.

Another officer began to separate the body parts to place them into evidence bags. First, he dislocated the lower extremities, placing each one in an individual bag. As soon as Arquette saw him placing one of the legs inside a bag, he immediately stopped him and asked if he could hold the bag open.

“Hold-up officer!!” he demanded, pointing his pen at him to get his attention.

“Real quick, could you open that bag up for me? I wanna check the pants pocket,” he requested, while putting his pen and notepad back inside his left suit pocket.

Next, he removed the blacklight from underneath his armpit and sat it on the floor next to his computer case.

The officer approached Arquette and then opened the evidence bag. The other officer joined them to hand Arquette some extra-long gloves so he would not get any blood on his sleeves when he reached inside the bag.

“Here you go, sir! This oughta help keep your shirt sleeve clean,” the officer advised.

“Oh man, you’re the best! Good look’in out! Yeah, this is definitely more logical,” complimented Arquette.

He then took off his suit coat, moved next to Ryan, then placed it over his left shoulder.

“Uhh, I didn’t know I was a coat rack,” Ryan said, humorously.

“Sorry. Can you hold that for me?” asked Arquette, with a slight smile.

He then slid each of his forearms inside the gloves. Once they were on, he moved back over to the officer with the bag then reached his right hand inside. He eased his hand down slowly and began to feel his way around the bag to for the pants pocket. The officer assisted hm by tilting the bag in various directions for him to better maneuver within the bag.

The dense blood, which saturated the bag, made it extremely difficult for anyone to see inside. Thus, causing Arquette to rely on his intuition as he slid his fingers along the groove of the pants to locate the waistline.

“I think I almost got it,” claimed Arquette, speaking softly to himself.

Finally, his fingers caressed what felt like the waistline. He then moved them from right to left, trying to find the zipper. From there he would know which direction to go to finding one of the pockets.

“Alright. Here’s the button. Now I just need to go this way and...,” mumbled Arquette, quietly to himself.

He continued to move his fingers toward the location of one of the pants pockets.

“...and got it!!” exclaimed Arquette to the officer holding the bag.

A smile soon formed on his face while expressing a sense of satisfaction for his efforts.

“Ok Officer, could you tilt the bag to this side?” he requested, in an attempt to position the pocket center to the open end of the bag.

After locating the seam of the pocket, he then slid both, his index and middle fingers, inside then widened them simultaneously, to open it. Next, he slid them further down then clamped them together to grip what felt like a driver’s license, along with other cards. After securing them in his fingers, he slowly removed them from the bag to see what he had obtained.

“Is that it, sir?” the officer asked, still holding the bag open.

“Yeah, I think so. You could close it now. Thanks!” said Arquette.

The officer closed the bag then sealed it. Arquette placed the various cards in his left hand then began to sort through them using his right index finger, intently. These cards comprised of a debit card from Earnings Bank, a Food Lion’s discount card, another discount card for a video game store. And finally, underneath them, was the identification card of the victim. He placed this card on top.

“Alright. So, per this id card, we have a Michael Smith, age 25, who’s address is 342 W. Paulette St,” informed Arquette, while looking down at the victim.

“What?! That address! That’s downtown, or near it, right?” asked Ryan, observing the victim.

“I think it’s the projects,” he continued.

“Yeah, I believe you’re right!” confirmed Arquette.

“Though, I’m more interested in his age. It appears he’s 25-year-old,” he continued, expressing curiosity.

“What about it? He’s 25, so what?” Ryan inquired, unsure of why the victim’s age was important to the case.

“Well, if you remember the young girl killed nearly 24 hours ago, she was also about 25,” replied Arquette.

“Ok. I still don’t quite get it. But are you trying to say there’s a link between these two victims?” Ryan asked.

The forensics officer holding the bag, sat it down so he could assist the other officer with sliding the upper body into the black body bag. He went over then kneeled down and carefully lifted the left arm of the de cease, as the other officer lifted the right arm and then casually slid the body bag underneath.

“To be honest, I’m still unsure. Though I’m starting to find it very suspicious that these two bodies have similar wound patterns. Not to forget also adding the body of the bus driver we inspected over 48 hours ago. He, too, had similar bruises,” deliberated Arquette, reviewing the information on the id card.

“But first things first. After we finish here, we need to contact the de cease’s family and inform them of their loss. Then, we need to get through that bus driver’s files to find something that might link that them all together,” warranted he.

The other officers were continuing to place various body parts into evidence bags.

Arquette went over to one of the forensics briefcases and took out a small plastic bag and placed the id cards into it, then walked over to Ryan. After handing the bag to him, he decided to assist the officers with the upper body of the

corpse. He got on the right side of them and waited for the signaled to lift. As soon as the officer gave the signal, they lifted slowly, while the other officer widened the body bag. The corpse was then lowered casually into the bag. Once it was inside, the officer closed and zipped it up. The other leg had now been bagged and taped, with a red and black label sticker on the center of it that read, “Caution...bio-hazard waste.” Now that the corpse was secure, Arquette continued with inspecting the perimeter of where the victim laid. The two officers had gathered all the bags, along with the body bag, and started walking toward the double doors to exit the back area. Surprisingly, just before they could exit, the sound of a cellphone suddenly resounded. Both officers halted and listened for their cellphones, first. After realizing it wasn’t either of theirs, they then turned toward the plastic bags to detect if one of them had the sound coming from it. Right then, one of the officers instantly acknowledged the ringing coming from the bag which contained the other leg. He then hastily called for Arquette.

“Ah! Detective!!” he yelled, while quickly lowering the body bag and other bags down on the floor.

He then picked up the bag with the cellphone ringing inside.

“Detective, there’s a phone ringing in here, sir,” he proclaimed, now moving swiftly over toward Arquette.

Immediately, Arquette and Ryan both paused from inspecting and urgently rushed over toward the officer with hopes of retrieving the cellphone before it stopped ringing. The officer went ahead and pulled the sealed tape open for access to the bag. When Arquette approached him, he stuck

his right arm, still gloved, into the bag. The officer decided to widen the bag so Arquette could hastily move his hand around. But, before he was able to locate the cellphone, the ringing stopped. Arquette, however, still insisted on digging for it. He went from using one hand, to using both of them, pulling the appendage upward near the open end of the bag for a firmer grip as he searched for what would eventually be the other pants pocket. With a better perception of how he was holding the pants, he could now locate that pocket with less difficulty. After finding it, he slid his right hand inside the pocket, clamped the cellphone with his two fingers and thumb, then pulled it out. He then signaled the officer to close and seal the bag again.

With the it now in his left hand, Arquette asked for a sanitizer wipe to clean the blood from off the cellphone so he could see the power button. An officer pulled out a wipe from his left jacket pocket, took the cellphone, and started wiping it clean. After it was cleaned of blood, he then gave it back to Arquette. He took the cellphone with his left hand and began to observe it, trying to find the power button. As soon as he found what he believed was the button, he used his right index finger to press it. The cellphone; however, did not react.

“Ok. So how do you actually turn this thing on?” he asked, speaking aloud to himself.

“Here, let me see it. I might know how,” said Ryan, as he watched Arquette struggle to unlock the cellphone.

“Here you go. Yeah, I’m not familiar with these new phones,” chuckled Arquette, passing the cellphone to Ryan.

While Ryan analyzed the cellphone setup, Arquette removed the gloves from his hands. He then opened his suit coat that was still on Ryan's left shoulder and pulled out his pen and notepad. He wanted to be prepared to write down any information retrieved from the cellphone. After carefully assessing it, Ryan finally recognized that this cellphone was a LG Android model and the button was located on the back of the case.

"Oh! That's right. It's an LG. Their power button's on the back," Ryan explained, turning the cellphone onto its front to locate the button.

He pressed the button then turned it back around but quietly saw the word "locked" displayed near the bottom of the screen. Moreover, he also noticed that there appeared to be a photo in the background of a couple posing in front of a picnic table, possibly at a park. The African American male in the photo appeared to fit the description of the victim. He was wearing blue jeans and a yellow Polo shirt, along with a pair of black sneakers. His left arm was around a young lady, whom was also of African American descent, appearing to also be in her mid-20's. She was dressed in a blue sundress with a design of yellow and white flowering. And on her feet were a pair of yellow sandals which seemed to compliment the dress. Lastly, Ryan saw a message, "Missed call," that was displayed at the center of the screen near the top, just above the background photo.

"Well unless we get the password, we're not getting in this phone," he mentioned, handing the cellphone back to Arquette.

“Not necessarily. I mean, we got the lab. They could hack into it,” suggested Arquette, transferring his notepad and pen to his right hand while receiving the cellphone with his left hand.

Unexpectedly, the cellphone started to ring again. Arquette tried hard to juggle the cellphone, his notepad, and his pen in both hands while trying to write down the number from the cellphone’s screen. Tactfully, he used his left ring finger and middle finger to clinch the cellphone, while his thumb and index finger held the notepad. Now with his right hand, he was able to write down the number. After he wrote it, he paused momentarily to assess the name that was associated with the number.

“Chris?!! Now why does this name sound familiar?” mumbled Arquette, passing his notepad to his right hand.

He positioned the cellphone correctly in his left hand to answer it. There were two logos, one green and one red, displayed on the cellphone screen. To answer, Arquette had to use his finger to press the green button. After pressing it with his right index finger, he then answered.

“Good morning, this is Detective Arquette speaking. May I ask who’s calling?” answered Arquette, trying not to sound alarmed or upset.

“Detective?!...hey, hey sir, this is Chris!” greeted Chris.

“But wait, this is strange. Just exactly why are you answering Michael’s phone?” he continued, now incredibly perturbed after catching on to the fact that it was Detective Arquette who was answering Michael’s cellphone.

“What’s happened over there? Where’s Michael at? Is he ok? Oh God, please don’t tell me something happened to him!” he exclaimed, becoming slightly hysterical.

“Chris, Chris! Listen, I really need you to remain calm, sir,” counselled Arquette, in a calm, elegant voice.

“Can you do that for me?” he asked.

“Right now, I need you to answer a few questions. Can you do that for me?” he continued, while preparing to take notes.

Silence interrupted their conversation as it appeared that Chris had moved away from the phone. The only thing Arquette could only hear at that time was him speaking to himself in the background, sounding confused, angry, and paranoid. As he continued to speak to himself, tone growing louder, Arquette decided to try and ease his way into having a conversation with him.

“Chris, I understand how you could be feeling right now. And I want you to know that I’m here for you if you need someone to talk to,” confided Arquette, using a soft compassionate, supportive tone.

“However, at this time, I really do need to ask you a few questions,” he continued.

The background on Chris’s side became completely silent. And this continued for approximately three minutes, before Chris suddenly began to communicate with him.

“Cough, cough!” Chris coughed, clearing his throat.

“Sir, I’m sorry. I’m just dealing with a lot right now, you know? After Stacey...I...I feel like I can’t seem to hold it together,” he professed, in a penitent tone.

“I mean, right now, I actually feel like if I hear of another person I know being killed, I could actually snap,” he continued, sounding emotionally unstable.

Silence interrupted their conversation again, but this time it was on Arquette’s end. About three to four minutes past while neither person said a word. Then all of a sudden, Chris initiated conversation.

“Detective, can you tell me what happened?” he asked, seeming ready to accept the bad news.

Arquette cleared his throat, preparing himself to be as modest and sympathetic as the situation calls for.

“Well Chris, I plan to explain everything to you soon enough, but first I must ask you some questions,” redirected Arquette, in a delicate, sincere tone.

“Are you ready?” he continued.

“Yes sir. I think I can answer your questions now,” replied Chris.

“Alright! Well the first thing I need to know is when was the last time you saw your friend, Michael?” inquired Arquette.

“Well I actually saw him two days ago, about mid-afternoon Friday. Stacey and I were at the mall eating lunch when he showed up and sat with us,” Chris answered.

“Oh Ok. Did he seem worried about anything, like someone was threatening him, or maybe he received some alarming or tragic news?” probed Arquette, wondering if Michael had been stalked prior to his murder.

“No, he didn’t mention anything or seem concerned about anything. He was fine majority the time,” answered Chris.

“But Wait!” he requested, abruptly.

“Wait what?! What happened?!” Arquette inquired.

“I remember a news report came on while we were talking,” replied Chris.

“Yeah. And what was it about? You remember?” asked Arquette, now expressing strong curiosity.

“Well sir, the news reporter was giving an update about the bus driver, Mr. Osborn, killed the day before,” stated Chris.

“Ok. So when you said he was fine majority of the time; what, did he display any concerns after he heard the news?” Arquette probed, trying to put the pieces of Chris’s story together.

“Well yeah it did. And it seemed to’ve bothered him up until the time he left the table,” proclaimed Chris.

“Right. But could you maybe explain to me why this report would actually bother him?” questioned Arquette.

“Yes sir, and it’s because we all knew the bus driver from when we rode his bus a while back,” explained Chris.

“So as soon as Michael heard about his murder, it disturbed him as it did me,” he continued.

“Hold on!! Are you telling me you also knew the bus driver?!” exclaimed Arquette, shocked by this news.

“Yeah,” reconfirmed Chris.

The conversation went quiet for a brief minute. Then suddenly, Arquette began to talk with Chris again.

“Sorry about that. I was taking some notes here,” Arquette admitted.

“Alright. So let me get this straight. You, Michael, and perhaps even your late girlfriend, Stacey, all shared a

history with that deceased bus driver?” enquired Arquette, in disbelief.

“Yes sir,” replied Chris.

“Ok. So first we have Stacey who was just recently murdered; and now we have Michael, who’s also a friend of his,” pondered Arquette, speaking to himself in a low tone.

“So something apparently did happen to Michael,” assumed Chris, after overhearing Arquette’s last statement.

“Listen Chris, it’s really unfortunate to have to tell you this, but yeah, Michael was murdered late last night,” confirmed Arquette expressing sympathy.

At that moment, silence overtook their conversation for about five minutes. Arquette, now looking at the time, did not want to delay things any longer and decided to share his theory with Chris.

“Now, many believe this was just a robbery, but if I had to guess, I’d say there’s certainly a strong connection here, and that’s because I now find it hard to believe that this was just coincidental or random, especially with this being the second death of someone having ties with the bus driver killed two days ago,” declared Arquette.

“Ok Chris, here’s what I’m gonna do. After we clean up the scene, I’mma go to my office and read through some more of Mr. Osborne’s files from the school. The goal is to find any potential incidents which could’ve likely come back around to haunt him. I have your number written down, so if I find anything disconcerting that could involve you, or any others you might know, I’ll contact you immediately,” he avowed.

“Thank sir. And I hope you find out what’s going on, and really soon. I mean, at this point, I’m starting to agree with you. Apparently, there is a connection to all of this, and now it could possibly be pointing at me. It’s really hard not to panic now, you know? I mean I may be next...and I don’t even know why; or, who it is,” told Chris, expressing minor panic and anxiety.

“Chris, please just remain calm, ok? And know I’ll be putting in overtime to find this killer. It’s now in our best interest to resolve this case before anyone else dies. In the meantime, I’m gonna suggest you use special precautions by paying attention to your surroundings, and definitely contact either myself or the precinct if you happen to see anything suspicious,” advised Arquette.

“No problem. I’ll definitely be sure to do that. Shoot, that’s a no brainer,” replied Chris.

“Sounds good. And hey Chris, again, I want to offer you my deepest condolences for your loss,” told Arquette, expressing support and sympathy.

“Thanks Detective. I truly do appreciate your warm sentiments. And thanks so much for all the hard work you’re going,” Chris said, expressing appreciation.

“You’re more than welcome, Chris. It’s my honor,” responded Arquette.

“Alright then, I’ll be in touch,” he concluded.

They then disconnected.

Ryan approached Arquette and then asked him about the phone call.

“Ok. So what you find out?” he inquired, expressing great curiosity.

“Well Ryan, it seems Chris, whom I just spoke with, apparently knew this victim, along with the other one from yesterday...and now he just revealed that they’ve all knew the bus driver that was killed,” confirmed Arquette, handing Michael’s cellphone to Ryan while retrieving his coat from Ryan’s left shoulder to put back on.

“Are you kidding me? Really? Now that just can’t be coincidental,” Ryan said, expressing disbelief.

“With the way things been happening these past few days, it’s now more than likely not, and that someone these people know are targeting them. But who it is remains a mystery, seeing how there’s not much evidence to link us to a suspect. All we have are prints on the ground and walls from various scenes. And then there’s the bodies that were torn to shreds; but that’s it. I mean, it’s like this killer barely even touched the ground or anything else,” stated Arquette, observing the area where the recent corpse was discovered.

“So, what? We have a killer that knows how to fly, or float?” questioned Ryan, with slight humor.

“Well Ryan, although I know you’re joking, that’s actually an astonishing question,” complimented Arquette.

“I mean, to be honest, this may be the biggest riddle we’ll have to answer regarding these cases,” he continued.

“And you know, we can also assume for the time that some type of black magic or something’s being used,” he inferred.

“Of course, we’d probably have to consult a witch doctor about that,” he suggested, with a chuckle.

After their humorous moment, they started packing up their work gear to leave the scene. Now walking through the front area toward the entrance, Arquette decided to take a few more minutes to reassess the breaking windows. He then asked one of the assisting officers to contact and inform the store manager of the recent event at that location.

“Hey officer. Listen, now that we’ve gotten things somewhat cleaned up, can you have someone notify the store manager about this? Now, there’s a chance he or she may already be aware, thanks to the news, but I still would like to have them contacted,” requested Arquette.

“No problem Detective. I’ll call this in now,” replied the officer.

Soon after, Arquette and Ryan both headed out into the parking lot for their vehicles.

“Listen, at this point, we really gotta hammer down on those files; see if we can find a name or something to link to the case,” directed Arquette, as he approached his car.

“Yeah, I agree. But I was also thinking maybe we should check the backgrounds of each victim, too...to see if there’s anything we might be missing there,” recommended Ryan.

“That’s a good idea! I like that!” agreed Arquette, placing his computer case and binder in the back seat of his car.

“Thanks! Alright. Well I’m off to the station now,” proclaimed Ryan.

“Sounds good. I’ll see you there soon then. But first, I’m gonna grab a bite to eat,...if I can hold my food down anyway. This scene was morbid,” told Arquette, opening his driver’s door to get inside his car.

“Yeah, I know exactly how you feel right now. That was pretty sick,” Ryan empathized.

Arquette dropped down into his seat, put both legs inside his car, then pulled the door shut. Ryan then walked over to his car. Within a few minutes, they both drove away from the scene.

While driving, Arquette’s cellphone began to ring. With his right hand, he removed his cellphone from out his right pants pocket then read the caller ID. It read, “Chief.” Without hesitation, he pressed the call button and answered it.

“Hey Chief, how’s everything?” greeted Arquette.

“Everything’s going ok, Jackson. I just called to hear the latest on this case,” told the Chief.

“Well sir, so far we only have one deceased male of African American decent, possibly in his mid-twenties. The scene was completely destroyed by who we’re speculating was the attacker, leaving very little evidence to confirm what actually took place up to the murder. But, we did happen to find a few prints,” disclosed Arquette.

“Now there’s the good news I was looking to hear,” identified the Chief, sounding slightly roused.

“Yes sir; however, these prints were the same as the previous ones from the other two scenes,” revealed Arquette.

“Is that right? So, what? We have multiple murders from the same person, and within 2 days of each other? Do you believe that’s possible, considering these deaths were across town from one another?” the Chief probed.

“Well sir, as of now we’re just filling in the pieces to this mysterious puzzle, so it’s still uncertain if this was the same person. Though, what I’ve learned today was that all the victims happened to have known one another from the past, and that they’ve all had a history with that bus driver killed Friday,” explained Arquette.

“They knew each other? To what extent?” the Chief inquired.

“Sir, that I’m not entirely sure about, as of yet, but Ryan and I are heading back to the station to review more of the bus driver’s files, see if there’s a link between him and the other victims,” declared Arquette.

“And Ryan suggested that we should also look into each victim’s past, as well, to see if there were any threats or concerns back then,” he continued.

“Yeah, that’s actually a good idea. Alright. Well I won’t keep you. I understand you’ve got a lot of work ahead of you. Just let me know what you find out,” requested the Chief.

“Yes sir! I’ll definitely be sure to do that,” assured Arquette.

Arquette and the Chief concluded their conversation then disconnected.

The time was now 2:00pm. The weather was mostly cloudy with hints of sunshine which projected a warm breeze of 75 degrees. The traffic flow downtown was moderately heavy as many people traveled throughout, going to various locations during this Sunday afternoon. Chris got into his car and decided to take a cruise around town for some reflection time. With this recent, ill news regarding Michael bringing on more depression,

Chris felt he needed to get out to clear his head. Yet, although the dreadful thoughts of losing the girl he once loved and now best friend of many years were causing him overwhelming pain and sorrow, it was the gut-wrenching thought that he could be next to get killed which exceeded his distress, causing his head to spin, distraughtly. He decided he would go by the mall and sit in the food court as he lacked the desire of being completely alone. Now in the food court, the smell of the food made Chris hungry and so he decided to get something to eat. After choosing the type of meal he wanted, he walked over to that vendor and waited in line. Minutes later, he walked up to the ‘order here’ sign. But just as he approached the clerk to order, someone tapped him on his left shoulder unexpectedly. This caused him to jump instantly out of paranoia, as though something terrible was about to happen to him.

After he calmed down, he then looked to his left to see who it was that just tapped him. Surprising, there stood another friend from high school, Abigail Ramsey.

“Hey Chris!” greeted Abigail, with a huge smile on her face.

“Hey...Abigail, right?” replied Chris, tilting slightly away from her with a stunned and uncertain look on his face.

“Yeah, it’s me! Man, it’s been a long time,” declared Abigail.

“Yeah, it’s been a while,” agreed Chris.

“So, wha’cha been up to?” Abigail asked, looking at the menu.

But Chris did not respond. He just stared directly at her in disbelief. The food clerk waved his hand to signal for Chris’s attention.

“Ahh sir, you ready to order?” asked the clerk, while wiping around his register with a hand towel.

Chris snapped out of his state of shock then moved near the register to tell the clerk what he wanted.

“Hey. Yeah, I want the bourbon chicken meal. And can you add an egg roll to that?” he ordered.

“Is that all?” asked the clerk, calculating the price of the meal into the register.

“Yeah, that’s it,” confirmed Chris.

At that moment, he reached inside his left pocket to pull out his debit card and then gave it to the clerk. The clerk took it, swiped it on the register, then gave the card back to Chris after seeing that the transaction was complete. Chris reached his left hand out for his card then slid it back inside his left pants pocket.

Abigail moved up close to him and then placed her order. Still, Chris remained silent. He just turned toward the courtyard to find a place to eat. Once he decided where he would want to sit, he turned back around to the food vendor and waited for his order to be called.

After Abigail placed her order, she turned to her right and looked at Chris.

“Oh man! So wha’cha been up?!” she asked again, still expressing excitement to see him.

“You know, I honestly don’t know anymore,” Chris replied, expressing a sense of depression as he avoided eye contact with her.

He just looked straight ahead at the cook preparing the meals at the grill.

“Oh, ok,” responded Abigail, now showing a loss of excitement after realizing the lack of ambition and pleasure Chris was exhibiting.

The cook approached the front counter with the food.

“Ok. I have one bourbon chicken meal,” he shouted.

Chris waved his right hand while approaching him. The cook then sat his meal on the counter. Chris grabbed his white carton and drink then walked to the courtyard. Abigail watched him until he eventually came to a stop at the table he chose to sit. The cook suddenly approached the counter again and announced the next order. Abigail waved her right hand and approached him. She then grabbed her food carton and drink then walked over to join Chris. When she reached the table, she sat across from him. Chris was looking up at the tv while he ate. Abigail just sat there with food cart still closed. She stared at him with great concern.

“Chris, are you ok?” she asked, seeking to start a dialogue with him.

Just then, Chris’s eyes began to move, indicating that his concentration had been broken from the tv.

She reached her right hand across the table to grab Chris’s left wrist, giving him her undivided attention. Chris, now feeling ready to engage, took a deep breath, cleared his throat, and then looked at Abigail.

“I’m not sure,” he said.

“Wait! You’re not sure if you’re ok?” Abigail asked, trying to gain clarity of Chris’s mental state.

“What’s wrong?” she continued.

“I...I think someone’s after me, possibly tryna kill me,” Chris disclosed, tilting his head slightly to the left.

His eyes moved downward away from Abigail.

“Wait...what? You think someone’s tryna kill you?!” she asked, expressing a sense of shock.

“I don’t understand. What are you talking about?!” she continued, speaking in a low tone while leaning inward toward Chris.

“Have you been watching the news these past few days?” Chris inquired, as he looked back up at the tv.

“No. Not really. I work a lot, so when I’m off, I like to relax, you know, stay away from drama,” Abigail replied, with a smirk on her face.

“Well, if you were watching the news recently, you would’ve heard about three murders that happen within the past two days,” professed Chris, still looking at the tv.

“Wait, hold on. You mean there were 3 murders in this area in two days? I would say that’s strange; though, murders happen all the time.” Abigail declared.

“But perhaps my next question oughta be, are they thinking it’s the same person that’s doing this?” she asked, expressing curiosity.

“I mean, a serial killer would be a bit much,” she added.

“No, I don’t believe so. But I have met the detective investigating these cases. He seems really smart and devoted in finding out who’s doing this,” Chris revealed.

“Ok, so three people were killed, and? What makes you think you’re next? Did you know these people? Was it

something you were involved in?” Abigail probed, trying to get an understanding for Chris’s presumption.

For a brief second, he stared directly at Abigail but then looked back at the tv.

“And hold on! You said you met the detective? When was this?” she continued, expressing a sense of confusion as she leaned back in her.

She just stared at him with her head now tilted to the left.

Silence interrupted their conversation, momentarily. Before long, he reestablished direct eye contact with her, leaned forward slowly while crossing his hands in front of himself, then replied.

“I went over to my girlfriend Stacey’s house...,” he replied, but was immediately interrupted by Abigail.

“What?! Oh man, you guys actually got together?!” she asked, expressing gladness.

“Where is she? How she’s doing?” she continued, displaying strong enthusiasm to hear about Stacey’s current whereabouts.

Chris paused and stared at Abigail in silence. A hint of water glazed his eyes, indicating that he was about to cry. Abigail, after noticing Chris’s eyes, became serious again. Her facial expression went from delighted and pleased, to appearing sympathetic.

“What’s wrong, Chris?” she asked, confused to why he was displaying this melancholy state of mind.

Chris took a deep breath, cleared his throat, and then continued to explain how he met the detective.

“So yesterday, about noon time, I went by Stacey’s house to pick her up. When I got there, I saw a whole bunch of cop cars blocking her street. I decided to get out my car, thinking I could just walk to her house, you know, to avoid waiting for the cops to clear out. Surprisingly though, when I got close to her house, there was caution tape dividing her house from the street. I tried getting through, but the cops held me back. I yelled Stacey, Stacey!! Then, all of sudden, a detective came up and let me through the barricades. Next thing I know, he started asking me questions like how did I know her, when did I last see her, and did I know if anyone wanted to hurt her,” he recalled.

“So, hold on, are you telling me that Stacey was one of the people killed?” Abigail inquired, expressing disbelief.

“Yes. And that’s why the detective gave me his card, so I could contact him at any time if I have questions, or if I happen to hear any more about her murder,...or the murder of the other two,” he responded.

“So wait a minute. Ok. You mentioned three people killed; now the detective is seeking your help to solve these cases?” Abigail inquired, with her head tilted to the left and scratching her left eyebrow.

“So why, why is he asking for your help? What, did you know the other two who were killed or something?” she continued, now reaching her right hand out to hold Chris’s left forearm again.

Chris did not respond. He just lowered his head and stared at Abigail’s right hand on his forearm. Seconds later, he

looked back up at Abigail and then began to reveal who the other two victims were.

“There was a news report that came on a few days ago, Friday afternoon to be exact, that Stacey, Michael, and I watched while eating lunch here. The reporter talked about a bus driver who had been killed that morning, saying that the driver’s name was Mr. Osborne,” he disclosed.

“Wait! That name sounds so familiar. Mr. Osborne. Oh yeah, wasn’t he our...?” Abigail asked, but was soon interrupted by Chris.

“That’s correct! He was our bus driver,” confirmed Chris, leaning back from the table and placing his hands on both of his thighs.

“Did you tell the detective about him?” she asked.

“No, we really haven’t had a chance to talk much; but, now that you mentioned it, I really oughta tell him,” considered Chris.

“I mean with Michael gone now, I’m really starting to think we’re all being targeted,” he presumed.

“Michael? Wait! You mean Michael’s dead, too?! What the f...k!” Abigail exclaimed.

She then propped her elbows on the table and placed her head down into her hands, expressing utter disbelief.

“Yeah, he was the third one killed,” informed Chris.

“When did this happen?” asked Abigail, lifting her head up out her hands.

With both hands, she then slid her long blond hair back behind her ears.

“This happened last night, apparently, while he was at work,” replied Chris.

“I called his phone earlier today, and you know who picked up?” he queried, leaning forward at the table toward Abigail.

“Michael?” she presumed, feeling clueless.

“Nope! It was the detective I saw at Stacey’s house, believe it or not,” disclosed Chris.

“How’d that happen?” she wondered.

“Well it turned out the detective was investigating Michael’s death around the time I called, and he answered Michael’s cellphone,” he reflected.

“And that’s how I found out about Michael, through the detective. Of course, then he started asking me the same questions he asked about Stacey,” he continued.

“Oh my God! So is that the reason why you believe you’re gonna be next, because of the others you knew who were killed?” Abigail asked.

“Well, I didn’t really know Mr. Osborne...but yeah. I mean, at this point, I don’t see how I wouldn’t be next; we all knew each other,” Chris speculated.

“Right, but do you know of anyone who would want to kill you?” Abigail probed.

“No. No one I can think of” Chris proclaimed.

“And then to go through this much just to kill us, I just don’t see it,” he added.

“I mean, we have Mr. Osborne who didn’t seem to bother anyone. Yeah, Stacey was kind of high maintenance, but I’ve never known her to cause trouble with anyone that would’ve made them want to kill her. Then there’s Michael who’s

been pretty cool to hang out with. I mean haven't seen him in a few years before running into him Friday, yet during that time, he seemed like the same cool guy from high school. And then there's me, which I know for damn sure I haven't messed with anyone," he speculated, as he reflected on the temperaments of each person with great effort.

"Ok. So you're saying that none of you caused any problems with anyone, yet it's been horrifyingly obvious that someone's coming after y'all. Now, though you may not see it right now, there's a connection," Abigail advised.

"Come on, think! What could possibly connect y'all together to cause this person to want to come after y'all?" she asked, expressing a sense of urgency.

Chris leaned back in his seat and sighed.

"I've been trying to connect the dots, but I just can't see why anyone would want us dead," Chris replied.

"Well if these killings happened every day for the last two or three days, then that means today you could be next, right?" Abigail inquired.

Chris looked up at the tv and sighed again.

"Yeah, that could be the case considering how things been going," he concurred.

"So, what are you gonna do?" Abigail inquired, as she stood to her feet and started packing her food up.

"I'm not sure. I mean, what can I do at this point?" Chris proposed, seeking advice from Abigail.

"If it were me, I would of course stay vigilant, you know, continue being aware of everything around. Oh! And make

sure I contacted the detective if I saw anything out the ordinary,” she advised, hypothetically.

Chris nodded his in agreement with her, then cleaned up his trash to prepare to leave.

“Well here Chris, here’s my number. I want you to call me as well, in case you need anything, anything at all,” she offered.

“Now, normally when I’m at work, I’m on the phone reviewing customer service calls for insurance claims. But, this evening I’m off,” she mentioned.

Chris pulled his cellphone out his right pants pocket then inserted Abigail’s number into his contacts. After clearing off the table, they both headed toward the exit of the food court while continuing their conversation about Chris’s plans for that day. Once outside, Chris and Abigail said their goodbyes, then headed in opposite directions for their cars.

Chapter 12

Chief's Proposal

Meanwhile, back at the station. The office Arquette used was shared with his partner, Ryan. The entrance was a wooden door which had both detectives' names on it labeled in black lettering. Arquette's name was on top, with Ryan's name underneath. There were two desks which faced each other with about fifteen feet of space in between. Each desk had two chairs, one being an office chair for the detective, and the other for a potential witness or guest. Behind each desk were various pictures and photos of award ceremonies, degree placards, African American Abolitionists, and family portraits. Moreover, near the center window were three filing cabinets that contained open case files. Lastly, each desk had a lamp which the detectives used whenever they worked late.

After a few hours of reviewing files, both, Arquette and Ryan had finally reviewed more than half of them belonging to the bus driver. However, even with the amount of intel gained, nothing still stood out as potential leads to who would've wanted to kill him. Arquette was at his desk. His feet were propped up and crossed on the top of his desk as he leaned back in his chair, reading one of the files. As he neared the end of that file, he decided to ask Ryan if he had found anything significant.

“Anything yet?” he asked, peeking over top of the file in his hands.

“No, not yet. The files I have date back a few years, maybe five, but these reports are mostly about maintenance issues,” updated Ryan, flipping through the file he had.

“Yeah, that’s I’ve been coming across apparently, too,” confirmed Arquette.

Suddenly, the office phone on Arquette’s desk rang. He put his feet down on the floor and leaned forward to read the caller ID, and it read “Chief.” Arquette closed and sat the file on his desk, and then answered the phone.

“Yes sir!” he answered.

“Hey Jackson, have you all found out anything new about this recent homicide?” the Chief inquired.

“Well sir, the prints have been sent to the lab for a possible match, and the photos and security tapes are also in review for possible facial recognition. As for us, we’re currently looking over the rest of the bus driver’s files for possible links to the case, just as we talked about earlier,” updated Arquette.

“Alright. So tell me, what actually are you hoping to attain or uncover in connection with this bus driver?” the Chief wondered, expressing interest.

“Well sir, these murders began with the bus driver. So, I feel that maybe this was someone he might’ve had a history with, which is why Ryan and I are looking for past incidents that may lead us to a potential suspect,” explained Arquette.

“Wow! Now that sounds like a really smart approach to this case,” complimented the Chief.

“But how long do you think this’ll take? Remember, if these killings are consistent, which has been proven these past few days, then that means someone else could be next this evening,” he advised.

“I gonna need you two to move through these files expeditiously. Now, these latest victims couldn’t have been no more than 25 years old, correct? Do either of them have a history riding with this bus driver? If so, you may want to do a time adjustment reflecting their ages to find the year these kids might have rode his bus, then look for that file,” he proposed.

“Oh man! Chief, that’s a great idea, sir! I’ll do just that right now,” agreed Arquette, expressing excitement and admiration.

“Ryan and I will get on this, asap,” he continued, expressing a sense of assurance.

Just then, Ryan squinted his eyes while glancing over at Arquette, now interested in knowing just what made him overtly eager to want to start on abruptly. Arquette continued to conversate with the Chief while writing information down on his notepad. A few minutes later, he hung up the phone and then pulled off the first sticky note from his notepad and lifted it up to eye level with his right index finger and thumb. At that moment, he decided to share his conversation he had with the Chief, with Ryan.

“Alright Ryan, Chief gave me a good idea on how to review these files,” he stated.

He placed the sticky note on his desk, gathered all the files he had, then stood to his feet. Included in this stack were the two cases of the recently deceased that were on the left corner of his desk. He walked over to Ryan's desk to check the file dates, trying to get an accurate understanding of how far back these files went. Ryan, with his head turned slightly right, just stared at Arquette. He then leaned back in his chair and just observed what Arquette was trying to do.

After Arquette reviewed the dates, he then explained what the Chief suggested.

“Ok. So after explaining to Chief how we believe the bus driver and victims are somehow connected, he suggested we do an age differential with the victims to determine the year they all'd likely crossed paths,” updated Arquette.

“You know...that's actually brilliant!!” replied Ryan, feeling edified.

“Yeah, that's what I told Chief,” said Arquette.

“So here, take Stacey's file, and I'll put the you have on top of the filing cabinet. Yeah, the sooner we determine the age differences, the quicker we can link the time frame to the bus driver's files,” suggested Arquette, handing Ryan the file on Stacey.

Next, he gathered all of Ryan's files. Immediately, Ryan started reviewing Stacey's file. Once Arquette had all the bus driver's files, he walked over to the filing cabinet.

“Alright. So now we're trying to determine what age each victim likely was had they rode this bus?” asked Ryan, searching for the calculator on his computer.

“Yup! And had they ridden this bus, they should’ve been between the ages of 14 to 18,” Arquette suggested, placing each file in chronological order on top of the cabinet. After all the files on the cabinet were arranged, he went back over to his desk and then picked up Michael’s file.

After taking a seat, he pulled out his calculator and began an arithmetic design to pinpoint the connecting year the bus driver and the latest victim may have crossed paths.

“Now according to the age of both deceased, they’re connected history has to be less than ten years ago, but more than five,” pondered Ryan, factoring in Stacey’s birthdate to when she could have attended high school.

“That’s right, Ryan. So judging from Michael’s age and birthdate, that would likely place them both on this bus, around the same years,” contemplated Arquette, looking at Michael’s file.

“They both were around twenty-five. Birthdates are very close in comparison, also. So, they both should’ve been in either ninth grade or tenth grade. And, after looking at the bus driver’s files, he had been driving for over fifteen years,” examined Arquette.

“Alright. Well let’s begin reviewing the bus driver’s files starting back ten years,” suggested Ryan.

He then stood to his feet and walked over to the filing cabinet.

“And judging from my calculations, this should take us back to 2008,” stated Arquette, looking at his calculator.

“Ok. So let’s look at the files between 2008 to 2012. And reason I say this is because there’s no telling when an incident involving the driver and either of these victims likely occurred,” advised Ryan, shuffling through the files on top of the cabinet.

“That’s another great idea! Give me the files from 2008 to 2010, and you get the other two,” directed Arquette.

Ryan shifted through the files, looking for the dates that they agreed on. After finding them, he pulled them out then went over to Arquette’s desk to hand him the ones he requested. Arquette stood up then leaned forward to receive the files then sat back down. He placed the driver’s files on the right side of his desk then resumed reviewing Michael’s file. Ryan, having the remaining files, went back to his desk and began to read through them.

Chapter 13

Miracle Care Recovery Center

The time was 6:42pm and the image of the sun now resembled a dark, orange shiny ball descending downward. The sky reflected this orange glow, as the rays transcended beyond sun, stretching across the sky as far as the eye could see. The wind slowed down to a calm, evening breeze as the mood of day began to settle. In an area on the outskirts of Annapolis was a psychiatric center known as Miracle Care Recovery. It stood six stories high, expanded 70,000 square feet wide, and housed one hundred patients whom all were experiencing some type of serious mental health illness. In the front of this building was a set of electric double doors for the entrance. To the right of it was a buzzer which was used to contact security to gain access. Once inside, the front desk was located about forty feet ahead on the left. There sat one security officer and a mental health orderly who both worked the desk to assist visitors, as well as oversee security. Across from the front desk was a waiting area that consisted of ten blue chairs aligned at five rows to the wall. This area provided seating for fifty guests awaiting authorization to enter the main part of the center. And while they waited, they were accommodated with a 32-inch flat-screen tv on the wall to the left of the front desk.

Just past the front desk was a single security access door that only allowed authorized staff to advance forward. It was made mostly of reinforcement glass so if anyone were to gain access to the facility unauthorized, security could see pass this door to their location. Right past this access door were three elevators located on the right. Each one required a special badge to connect to one of the activation sensors located on either of the two elevator panels. After the sensor reads this badge, would then allow one to signal for an elevator. Then, once inside, he or she would have access to the residential floors. Across from the elevators was another security access door. It was a single door that was made of tinted reinforcement glass. Inside this room were computer desks for the administration team. The staff in this room had the ability to see outside, but no one would be able to see inside. The residential floors began on the second floor and escalated, eventually ending at the sixth floor. Each hall began at the elevator and stretched down to the end of the hall where it eventually cut left at a 90-degree angle and continued down. On each floor were 20 individuals who had their own room with a bed. All the rooms displayed the replica format of a white bed dressing and grayish coated walls. This color scheme was used to provide the hospital with a neutral setting. At the 90-degree point of each hall was a room for the residents to eat and converse with one another. Inside was a tv, foosball table, and a dining area. Lastly, down at the other end of each hall from this room, was a community shower and bathroom on the right.

Adjacent from the main facility was another building which was connected by a concrete corridor. This building was three stories high. The first floor had the entrance for new patients being admitted. This way if there were any major concerns while escorting them inside, visitors would not be at risk of harm. The electric power generator, along with other facility operation elements, were also housed in there. The kitchen and prep area were located on the second floor. And the third floor was where the maintenance and janitorial staff stored their equipment and cleaning supplies. The area around the facility consisted of miles and miles of trees in all directions, with only one road leading to and from the center.

Inside the facility, operations were in weekend mode, which only required half the staff. Their routine comprised of visiting hours, social events, and Sunday church services. Overseeing the facility was Dr. Khadija Daji-Patel. She was one of the few leading psychiatric clinicians. Routinely, she would come out to check on the staff and the visitors in the main lobby. After opening the access door outward from the right, she stood there with a black portfolio underneath her left arm. First, she glanced over at the visitor's area to her left for a head count, while also ensuring that everything was going well. After this brief observation, she then closed the door and walked over to the front desk for a status update.

“Good evening all! How's our visitor's day looking? Any concerns I need to be aware of?” asked Dr. Patel.

“No ma’am. Things are moving pretty smooth like always. We may have a few more visitors coming in, but I don’t expect anything to go wrong this evening. Many of the visitors know that if they cause any problems, security would escort them out of here. And I’m sure no one wants that after traveling this far out,” replied the tech.

“Alright! Well, I’m about to head upstairs to check on the patients and staff, see how things are running. If you guys need me for anything, please don’t hesitate to radio,” instructed Dr. Patel.

She then walked away from the front desk. Now at the access door, with her right hand, she scanned her badge to pass through. After opening the door, she entered and then closed it behind her. When she reached the elevators, she scanned her badge against the panel on the right. Right then, the elevator on the right resounded, then its door opened. She entered then pressed the button for the second floor which signaled the door to the elevator to close.

Nearly an hour went by and she had now completed her administrative check for both, the 2nd and 3rd floor. Now back in the elevator, she proceeded to the 4th floor. Once it stopped and the door opened, she stepped out of the elevator then turned right to reach another security access door. After passing through that door, she proceeded to the community room. This room was active as patients and quests were spending quality time with each other. Some were playing board games and other activities, while others were watching tv. There was one patient, thought, whom never had visitors, socialized with the

other patients, or watched tv. She just sat in isolation near the back window to the far left of the room, gazing out beyond the trees. This was her norm every time she came into the community area. Her name was Karman Anderson and she had been a patient at Miracle Care for almost 9 years. She was of European descent, stood about 5 feet 5 inches, and weighed about 115lbs. Moreover, she had long, silky black hair, eyes were of a black color, and lips were a dry, purplish color. And lastly, her skin complexion resembled that of a person who had lacked sunlight for a very long time.

Dr. Patel arrived at the community room and stood at the threshold to observe all the interaction taking place. With her black portfolio in her left hand, she soon opened it and began to take notes of what she was seeing. As she observed, she eventually noticed Karman sitting over near the window, secluded from the other patients and guests. At that moment, she closed her portfolio and then walked over to speak with her. As she approached her, Dr. Patel began to carefully scan Karman's physical and mental state status. In addition, she also observed her attire for any concerns. Now standing next to her, she noticed that Karman did not show any signs of response. She just remained motionless while staring out the window, like she was expecting something.

"Good evening, Karman! It's me, Dr. Patel," she greeted, standing close to her right shoulder.

"How've you been? I know it's been a few weeks since we last spoke, so I thought I'd come over to say hi," she said, while displaying a slight smile.

But Karman still did not acknowledge or respond to her remarks. Only silence engulfed the ambiance. This lasted for nearly two minutes before Dr. Patel chose to speak again. However, during those two minutes, she continued to probe Karman's physical appearance. Startlingly, she noticed that Karman's fingernails were dirty, and that her gray and white medical gown had signs of dirt near the bottom. Moreover, she also realized how Karman's interest for even having the slightest dialogue had diminished drastically since their last session.

Right then, she decided to contact security to address Karman's appearance. After putting her portfolio underneath her left arm, she slid the right side of her white lab coat back to pull her radio from her waist.

"Hello, yeah security, I need someone to meet me on the fourth floor, asap, in the community room," she directed.

"Copy that!" replied a security office.

She then put her radio back on her waist again then continued to speak with Karman.

"Karman, I know you hear me. Can you tell me how you got dirt on your nails and gown?" she asked, bending forward slightly and observing Karman's hands closely.

She then tried touching Karman's hand, but Karman instantly pulled them away.

"Oh, I see now! At least you responded. For a second there I thought you were dead," Dr. Patel chuckled, with slight humor as she stood upright.

"Wanna tell me how you got that dirt on you?" she continued.

“This facility stays clean, so I know you didn’t get that dirt from your room or from in here,” she proclaimed.

All of a sudden, the sound of keys began to clinch aloud from out in the hallway, heading toward community room. When she heard them, she turned toward the entrance and saw a security officer come from around the corner. He then approached Dr. Patel.

“Ma’am, what seems to be the problem?” he asked.

“Well I know that the patients very rarely go outside so I’m trying to understand how she got dirt on her fingers and gown,” told Dr. Patel, pointing her right index finger at these unexplained flaws.

“Really!? Let me take a look!” exclaimed the officer, stepping around to the front of Karman.

He grabbed both of Karman’s hands then lifted them up slightly so he could observe them. He didn’t feel any dirt on her hands; though, the dirt underneath her nails appeared almost clay-like.

“Humm...this is strange. This kind of looks more like clay, or old mud or something,” he inspected.

After observing her hands, he dropped them then got on his knees to inspect the bottom part of her gown. Taking his right index finger, middle finger, and thumb, he felt along the bottom seam of the gown. However, there did not appear to be any dirt gravel on the gown. But what did appear to be there was a dried stain.

“Dr. Patel, this gown looks dirty, but that’s not dirt. It appears to be a dried strain, maybe from water mixed with

something from the floor. I don't know. Maybe this happened from walking back and forth from her room to the bathroom multiple times," he presumed.

He then stood back to his feet.

"Ok. So even if the gown got wet from water, how did she get dirt underneath her nails?" probed Dr. Patel.

"Well ma'am, honestly, it's really hard to say since these residents can't leave their floors. But what I'll do is have the officers do an inspection of each part of facility to find out if she's been anywhere else," replied the officer.

"That sounds real good, officer, thanks!" replied Dr. Patel.

She then looked over at Karman, placed her left hand on Karman's right shoulder, and then told her that she would come back to check on her

"Karman, I'll be back to check on you later," she told.

"I want us to get together to talk anyway; find out what's been going on with you," she continued, expressing empathy and concern while

Right then, Dr. Patel and the officer left Karman's side and went over to the threshold of the community room.

"Have you noticed any changes in her, like causing any problems with the other residents or anything? Or has she shown signs that she's been trying to leave the facility?" questioned Dr. Patel, to the officer, with intent to learn about Karman's recent behavior.

"No ma'am. Every time I come in here, she's pretty much in the same spot, gazing out the window," replied the officer, looking to his left toward Karman.

“Though, there was one time, nearly two weeks ago, I believe, when I saw her speaking with a new resident. I remember this because I’ve never seen her socialize with anyone at this facility since she’s been here. Her and this new resident both seem to share similar character features resembling that Gothic, eerie mentality, so I just assumed they were old friends because they’d talk for quite a while,” he recalled.

“But I don’t see that patient right now. I don’t know. Maybe she’s with one of the techs, probably,” he continued, looking about the community room.

“Oh ok. Well I plan to meet with Karman later this evening. So hopefully I can find out what’s going on in her head. And maybe learn more about this new friend of hers,” mentioned Dr. Patel.

They both agreed and then left the community room. Dr. Patel processed to the elevators for the fifth floor, while the security officer went back down to the main lobby.

Chapter 14

Finding A Connection

Back at the precinct, the setting in Arquette's office was partially dim with only his lamp on. Ryan had already vacated for the night. Arquette was still reviewing the bus driver's files when his cellphone rang, suddenly. With his right hand, he picked it up from off his desk then read the caller ID. It was his wife, Linda. At that moment, he pressed the call button and then answered.

"Hello. Hey love," he greeted, placing the cellphone on his right shoulder then tilted his head to the right to hold the it in place.

"Hey honey. Listen, I know your busy, but I wanted to tell you I made fried chicken with macaroni and cheese and mixed vegetables. And since I don't know when you'll be home, your food'll be in the microwave," told Linda.

"Oh man! Now that sounds scrumptious! Thanks so much!" replied Arquette, expressing great appreciation.

"Listen, I'm actually about to leave the office now. I do have a few more things to do, but I'll do them when I get home. Though, when I get there, I first plan to spend time with you before you head to bed," he declared, while closing the file he was recently reviewing.

He then began to pack up his laptop.

"Oh baby, that would be really awesome! It's been a while sense we've cuddled. I can't wait to see you," replied Linda, expressing delightfulness.

“Yes ma’am. Can’t wait to see you either, love,” told Arquette.

“Alright. Well please be careful on your way home, please!” cautioned Linda.

“Yes ma’am, I will,” Arquette replied.

They both agreed and then disconnected.

Now set to leave, Arquette stood up from his desk, grabbed his computer case, and placed the strap over his left shoulder. Next, he picked up the files with his right hand and turned off his lamp with his left hand. Reaching the office door, he opened it then exited and closed it behind him. As he walked past the Chief’s office, he stopped by to tell him goodnight.

“Hey sir, I’m leaving now. If you need me, you know where I’ll be,” he said, while standing at the threshold of the Chief’s office.

“Alright Jackson. Have a goodnight. And make sure you get some rest. But just remember, if we’re right about these murders, we could have another one tonight, so...,” warned the Chief before being interrupted by Arquette.

“Sir, I understand. I do. I’m taking these files home with me to review,” stated Arquette, lifting the files up in his right hand.

“Trust me, I plan to stay on these files as if my life depended on it. And if I happen to find anything, I’ll contact you, asap,” he continued.

“Sounds good, Jackson. Thanks. Way to stay on top of things,” agreed the Chief.

“Well, have a good night, sir!” wished Arquette.

He then walked away from the door and headed for the entrance. Now out in the parking lot, Arquette put his computer case and the files in the backseat of his car, got in driver’s seat, and drove out the precinct parking lot.

Across town, Chris was home sitting on his bed home with his laptop on his thighs, looking through a photo album of Stacey and him. In a state of disbelief, he just couldn’t accept the fact that she was gone. Trying to make sense of both, her and Michael’s deaths, he soon grew agitated after realizing that no suspects had been caught; nor, did he have any idea who would want to kill them. Though, what was even more distressingly to him was his strong belief that his life would end on this very evening. However, even having this strong presumption about his life, he felt that contacting the police based upon his theory would be futile because he has no actual proof that his life is in danger. Unsure which direction to go, Chris closed his laptop and went downstairs to ensure his house was completely secure. First, he checked both, the front and the back doors; making sure they were locked. Next, he went around to check all the windows to confirm that they were all locked. Once he felt completely secure, he went back upstairs to his room then closed and locked his door. Soon after, he then laid a few heavy items in front of it for additional security. After that, he decided to open his window slightly in hopes he could escape out if anyone came through the door. He then sat on his bed with his back supported by a pillow against the headrest and legs

were on bed, crossed in front of him with his shoes still on. In this position, Chris felt that he would be more prepared to respond if he heard anything atypical. Moreover, he also had the detective's number on speed dial just in case something tragic occurred. He laid his head back against the headrest and then closed his eyes.

Now at home, Arquette and his wife were enjoying some quality time together as they ate dinner and had a fun conversation about family and friends. They sat side by side next to each other at the table. Arquette had his computer and one of the bus driver's files at the left corner of the table, this way he could get straight to work once he was finished eating. Unexpectedly, Linda asked Arquette about his cases.

"So, what does Chief think you should do about these cases?" asked Linda.

"Well right now he thinks I should get through these files, asap, with hopes of finding a lead," replied Arquette.

"And at this point, that's all I feel can do, especially since we still haven't found a match from the prints; nor do we have an image we could consider from the surveillance tapes. Although, we are beginning to believe that this was someone from these victims' past because they all seem to share a history together. I mean, I feel these deaths are not just coincidental," Arquette speculated.

"But what's even more disturbing about these cases is how these murders all took place back to back, suggesting that another murder may take place tonight. Unfortunately,

we're not sure who, when, or where this might happen," he continued, feeling troubled.

Linda stood up from the table and began collecting the dishes.

"Well then sir, that means you oughta get moving," she hinted, looking down to her left at Arquette with a slight smile on her face.

She then went over to the sink and placed the dishes down. Arquette reached for the files and placed them in front of him. After sorting through them, he resumed to review the file that he did not finish.

"I'll take care of the dishes in the morning, baby," assured Linda, while removing the apron from her waist and placing it on the counter to the right of the sink.

She then walked back over and approached Arquette on his left side, kissed him on his lips, then asked him if there was anything else he needed from her before she exited out the kitchen.

"Ok honey, before I leave to head upstairs, is there anything else you need from me?" she asked, while draped over Arquette.

"Nah love, I think I'm good now. You did amazing tonight. Thank so much! Your food was delicious," praised Arquette.

"You're more than welcome, honey. Alright! Well I'll be upstairs taking a shower if you need me. Love you," she concluded, kissing Arquette on the lips again.

"I love you, too," replied Arquette.

She then exited the kitchen to go upstairs. Arquette continued reviewing the pages in the file.

One hour had passed and Arquette, after reviewing a second file, still could not find anything significant to use for the case. Just then, his cellphone began to ring. He looked to his left at his cellphone on the table and read the caller ID. It read, “Ryan.” He then picked it up with his left hand and put it up to his left ear.

“Hey Ryan, what’s goin on?” he answered, sounding unperturbed.

“Hey Arquette, how’s your research going? Did you come across anything yet?” asked Ryan, sounding almost upbeat.

“Man, I’ve been going over these files for over an hour now, yet so far, I’ve only read about minor incidents involving the bus driver and some students. These incidents were filed due to misconduct toward the bus driver which eventually led to students getting suspended from the bus. There’s also some incidents of students fighting one another on the bus, which also resulted in suspensions. However, just because students got suspended from the bus then, doesn’t mean they’d wait nearly a decade to retaliate, you know, to murder the bus driver. At least I don’t think so,” presumed Arquette.

“Yeah, well I wouldn’t assume this just yet,” stated Ryan, seeming eager to reveal what he found.

“Ok. So what do you think? Did you manage to find something?” asked Arquette.

“Yeah actually,” Ryan replied.

“Alright. So in one file, I happened to read about an incident involving two students, which later resulted in one of them being suspended from the bus. Now the report states

that the bus driver disagreed with the suspension because he felt the altercation was overexaggerated by the other student who filed the complaint. The suspension, although, was not overturned,” Ryan divulged.

“Alright. And so, do you think that student who got suspended could be our potential murderer of the bus driver, because the bus driver failed to reverse their suspension?” probed Arquette.

“Actually no. And I say this because there’s no other reports of him being back on that bus. I can assume he was transferred to another bus or something,” Ryan presumed.

“However, as I continued to read through this file, I came across another report also involving two students, but this time no suspensions, only the bus driver’s report of what took place. In this report, he claimed that two students got into an altercation, that one of them claimed their hair was pulled by the other while also being called inappropriate or disrespectful names. However, the bus driver didn’t bother to provide the names of these students. Days later, the file reports another incident, this time involving three students and the bus driver. One of the students claimed harassment by two other students, stating one student kicked the back of their seat repeatedly, while the other in the seat in front of them was yelling derogatory comments and then took their backpack. The bus driver said he intervened, moving the two students to another seat, but also told the troubled student to request a transfer to another bus,” he continued.

“Then, per this file, some days later, another incident occurred involving three students. The one student claimed that pieces of their hair had been cut by another using a pair of scissors. And that later, they were pushed off the bus from behind by a second student while getting off. Again, the bus driver didn’t bother with putting names in his report, nor did anyone get suspended. This file continues with many more incidents which all seem fairly close to bullying, yet none of them mentioned suspension for those who’ve caused these problems likely targeting this one student,” he ventured.

“Humm...ok. So, we have an unknown student, not sure if it’s male or female, who seems to’ve been a victim of bullying on repeated occasions, per these incident reports. A bus driver who appeared to have tried resolving each of these situations; yet, didn’t seem to seek disciplinary actions against these disorderly students. Instead, he seemed to’ve only advised the distressed student about seeking a transfer to another bus,” Arquette reiterated.

“Nah. He honestly didn’t seem too supportive of that student, or students, who were dealing with those stressors. Though he did seem persistent in keeping those bullies from facing any type of punishment; as if he was defending them,” he deliberated.

“It seems so. And I tell you what Arquette, had I been that student having had to deal with all those issues, I’d sure would’ve wanted them to face some type of punishment. And had they not gotten punished, as these students seemed to’ve avoided, then I probably would’ve tried to get back at them my own way,” Ryan empathized.

“I agree. And maybe that’s it. Maybe, this student, if it is just one, anyway, has now decided to seek revenge on everyone who caused him or her pain from way back then. I mean, given the ages of the recent victims, this student would also be about their age now,” Arquette theorized.

“Now I’m definitely on board with this. But although we may have these interesting observations, there’s still two problems that remain. The first one is, we don’t have a facial match from the prints yet. And second, we don’t have a name to match a face,” reminded Ryan.

“Now, of course, there’s no way we can question the deceased about this, because they’re dead. Though we could question anyone who’s had a relationship with the victims, you know, maybe he or she could remember something, or someone back when these incidents took place,” he continued, offering recommendations.

“Ryan, you know what? You’re absolutely right. The one young man I speak with at one of the victim’s home. Yeah! Apparently, he was in a relationship with her at the time of her death. I actually gave him my card. Now, what makes this even more interesting is he was also friends with the recent victim, Michael. Remember that call during the food store investigation? That was him. His name is Chris and he called Michael’s phone at the scene. Now that you made that suggestion, I’ll definitely try to contact him. Who knows, maybe he’ll be able to recall at least one of those incidents. But even more important, see if he could give us the name of the student bullied,” proposed Arquette.

“Now it feels like we’re starting to get somewhere, you know, like we’re picking up some traction,” said Ryan, feeling a sense of accomplishment from their discussion.

“Yeah, I agree. I think we’ve finally found a strong lead tonight. Good job Ryan!” Arquette agreed, giving Ryan recognition for his findings.

“Alright. Well I’m gonna go now. But I plan to keep reading through my files for a little while longer. If I come across any more info that connects to this case, I’ll give you holla,” he added.

“Sounds good! I’ll be up!” Ryan replied.

They both agreed and then disconnected.

The Follow-up Session

Back at the psychiatric center, Dr. Patel was in her office getting ready for her follow-up therapy session with Karman. Her office arrangement exhibited a professional, yet, comfortable, therapeutic design. To the right of the door was a gray filing cabinet against the wall. Her desk was dark tan and sat to the right of the office. Directly across from it was a brown, leather couch to the left of the office. A few steps behind the couch stood a burgundy-colored bookshelf stocked with various medical encyclopedias and other books on mental health. A wooden chair with cushion padding on the seat and backrest was located at the right of the desk, near the window. This chair was for the patients. The office walls were painted a soothing, caramel tan color which matched the square-shape rug lying in the center of the room, between the desk and the couch. The office light was bright white, however, there was a lamp on the right, behind the desk, that had a dim, yellow shine in the corner of the office. Dr. Patel used this lamp when she worked alone. On the wall to the left, behind the desk, were Dr. Patel's framed credentials. These credentials ranged from a Bachelor's in psychology, a Master's in medicine, a Doctorate in Advanced Mental Health Treatment, and a licensure for mental health practice certificate. And lastly, there were various paintings that hung about the office that further captivated a tranquil, therapeutic environment.

Dr. Patel, while typing her notes, stopped briefly and leaned over to her left to press the red intercom button on her office phone as she was now prepared for her session with Karman and needed for an orderly to escort her to the office. With her left index finger, she pressed the intercom button.

“Hey, this is Dr. Patel, could you have someone to escort patient, Karman, to my office, please?” she requested.

“Roger! Be there shortly,” confirmed dispatch.

She then began to adjust her paperwork on her desk, trying to get organized. Next, she stood up and walked over to the filing cabinet to pull Karman’s file. After pulling the top draw open, she scrolled through the files alphabetically. She began with the A’s in order to find the name Anderson, which was Karman’s last name. As soon as she found it, she pulled it out and closed the draw, then she went back to her desk. After taking a seat, she opened the file towards the end and began reviewing her notes from their last few sessions.

As she read through them, it became apparent when their therapeutic relationship began to decline. She then took a yellow highlighter and highlighted some of the statements made by Karman during these sessions. Just then, there was a knock at her door.

“Come-in,” she instructed.

At that moment, her office door opened inward to the right. It was Karman, and she was accompanied by a male orderly. The orderly lead her inside the office with his right arm coupled with her left arm. There was a brown, leather

belt-like restraint bound to her hands to reduce any possible violent episodes. The orderly escorted her over to the patient chair, right of Dr. Patel's desk, and sat her down.

"Ma'am, do you need for me to stay?" asked the orderly.

"Nah, we oughta be fine. She's never really been an issue in any of our previous sessions, so I think we'll be ok today. Thanks," presumed Dr. Patel, extending her right arm out toward Karman with a polite smile on her face.

"Alright! Well ma'am, you have your radio, and I'll be right across the hall; so please just holler if you need me for anything," affirmed the orderly.

He then exited the office and closed the door behind him.

Straightaway, Dr. Patel began to evaluate Karman's state of being. She immediately noticed the disengaged and distant mentality of her which seem to result from a lack of interest to conversate. Karman just sat there quietly, looking out the window to her left. Without delay, Dr. Patel began to initiate a conversation.

"Hi Karman. How are you this evening?" she asked, using a subtle tone approach aimed at loosening Karman up.

Unfortunately, this approach seemed futile as there was still no reaction from her. Dr. Patel decided to go to her notes she marked before Karman arrived.

"Alright Karman, can you tell me when we last met? Or how about the last thing we discussed?" she continued, seeking to reengage where they last ended their conversation from their previous session.

Surprisingly, Karman's body showed signs of slight response as she slowly turned her head to the right to face her. Yet, silence continued to prevail.

"Karman, you know I'm here to help. So right now, I need you to tell me what's really going on with you. Can we talk about please?" she pleaded, placing both elbows on her desk, and chin on her fists, while staring at her.

Unexpectedly, Karman's mouth opened slightly as if she was about to engage, but no words came out. Dr. Patel lowered her arms and then looked down at Karman's file. Right then, she started reading her notes to recap on their last conversation.

"Ok. So Karman, a few months ago you told me that you were finally ready to overcome your pain, the pain you endured during high school when you were being bullied. Furthermore, you said that you would consider using those techniques of forgiveness we went over sessions ago to assist you in acquiring forgiveness from within yourself, first, then work to forgive those whom had abused you, horrendously," she recapped, reiterating Karman's words.

"Is this type of psychological rectification still a goal or desire?" she probed, looking directly at Karman.

Unfortunately, Karman remained mute. her eyes just shifted downward as if she was trying to look at her file on desk.

"Oh! And we also talked briefly about you attending church service. Have you been attending any of them?" she enquired.

All of sudden, Karman looked at her and replied.

“Yes,” she said.

But then she became silent again.

“Yes what, that you’re working on rectification; or that you’ve been attending services?” she inquired, trying to gain clarity from Karman’s reply, while also striving to start a dialogue.

Karman’s eyes shifted back towards her file on the desk.

“You’d like to tell me which one you were referring to? Was it yes to the rectification, or to the services?” she asked again.

Karman slowly opened her mouth and spoke.

“Church,” she replied, in a low tone, seeming almost ashamed to say it.

“It’s ok, Karman. That’s actually great news you’re attending services. I’m really glad to hear this!” Dr. Patel praised, while extending her right arm out toward her.

“You know, those services could also help with your spiritual being, you know, get you connected with a higher power,” she continued, trying to promote spiritual healing.

“Do you have a higher power or anything similar?” she enquired, wondering about Karman’s spiritual beliefs.

“Those sermons will also provide helpful messages which will accentuate the importance of attaining spiritual healing, redemption, forgiveness, etc.” she continued.

“Can you tell me what message was discussed at the last service you attended?” she asked.

Ominously, Karman locked eyes with her and then replied.

“Vengeance,” she said, in a dark, troubled tone.

Silence suddenly overtook the office for about five minutes before Dr. Patel began to reengage with her. First, she casually flipped through Karman's file, reviewing her previous notes. Then, she decided to question Karman about her latest actions.

"Ok. So revisiting the forgiveness tools discussed a few months ago, how have you been applying them to your life while working through this rectification process?" Dr. Patel probed, expressing strong interest to hear how Karman has been utilizing these tools provided.

Karman slowly turned her head to the left, away from Dr. Patel, looking back at the window. A few seconds later, she answered.

"I'm using the vengeance tools," she replied, in a low tone while staring out the window.

"Vengeance tools? Uh ah. I definitely don't recall us discussing tools for vengeance. No Karman, acting out of the propensities of vengeance will only result to the inner feeling of shame, or possibly even regret. And that would later lead to self-unforgiveness which could provoke or induce suicidal ideations," Dr. Patel advised.

"And I know you're not learning vengeance from a religious perspective because even I know that God declared vengeance His," she assured.

Just then, Karman turned her head to the right to look at Dr. Patel again; her eyes dropped down at her file.

"No. I'm learning vengeance from someone else," Karman disclosed, in a gentle voice.

“Really? Is that so? Ok. So who’s this person you’re referring to; and most importantly, what tools has he or she been teaching you?” inquired Dr. Patel, reclined in her chair.

She crossed her left leg over top of her right, then rested both of her arms on the arm rests. Karman remained silent. Getting no response from Karman, Dr. Patel decided to uncross her legs and leaned forward toward her. She then rested her forearms on her thighs.

“Karman, listen, I need for you to answer me! Please, tell me what it is you’re learning, why, and from whom!” she implored, growing impatient and concerned.

Karman lowered her head in silence and just stared at the restraints on her wrists while caressing them with her fingers. Though shockingly, after only a minute, she replied, “You don’t wanna know,” in a low tone.

PART III

Chapter 16

Recalling the School Bus Days

Meanwhile at Arquette's residence, he was having trouble locating the cellphone number for Chris. However, he did remember that when he last spoke with him, he had called his friend Michael's cellphone at the scene. And that's when it struck him to contact the morgue at the precinct where Michael's body was stored. He dialed the number to the morgue, but no one answered. The phone just rang. After the third attempt, though, someone finally picked up.

"Good evening! Annapolis PD Mortuary! How can I help you?" greeted the examiner.

"Hey, this is Detective Arquette. Listen, earlier we had a body, Michael Smith, sent there for examination..." explained Arquette before getting cutoff by the examiner.

"Oh yeah! I'm actually exhuming his corpse as we speak, sir," confirmed the examiner.

"Alright! That's great news!" exclaimed Arquette, with minor excitement.

"Well listen, could you tell me if you have access to his belongings, like his cellphone?" he inquired.

"Sir, if you give me a second, I'll check the lockers to see which one has his items," replied the examiner.

Just then, the phone call became an audio recording. In the background, music of soft, smooth jazz serenaded as the

voice of a female officer explained the various dialing options which would connect to specific services within the precinct. Minutes later, the examiner came back on the line.

“Detective, I have his items here,” she informed.

“Ok. Do you see his cellphone?” Arquette asked.

“I see it. It’s at the bottom of the bag. Give me a sec,” the examiner requested.

The phone went quiet, momentarily. The sound of a bag shuffling, however, was heard in the background. A few seconds later, she returned to the phone.

“Alright Detective, I have the phone, but it appears to be off” she confirmed.

“Do you see the power button?” asked Arquette.

“I believe it’s on the back of the phone,” he recalled.

A short pause occurred while the examiner searched for the power button. After locating and pressing it, she then turned the phone around and read to him what it was she saw on the screen.

“Ok Detective, the phone says locked. But if you give me a little time, I should have it unlocked,” she stated.

“That’s fine. Just call me once it’s open,” Arquette requested.

She agreed. They ended their conversation and then disconnected. Arquette placed his cellphone on the table to his left then returned to reading the bus driver’s file. About twenty minutes passed before he received a call. When he picked up his cellphone to read the caller ID, it read, “Lab.” He then pressed the call button to answer.

“This is Detective Arquette!” he answered, holding his cellphone up to his left ear.

“Detective, I have some great news! The cellphone’s now unlocked! What else would you like for me to do?” the examiner asked.

“Ok. So this victim has a friend, Chris, who I really need to speak with right now. If you could, I need you to find his number and read it to me,” replied Arquette, reaching his right hand across the kitchen table for his notepad.

Next, he rested his cellphone on his left shoulder and then titled his head left to hold it in place.

“Ok, so let’s scroll down the contacts. I’m in the C’s right now; let’s check there, first,” suggested the examiner, speaking softly to herself.

“Here we go!” I found a Chris. Are you ready sir?!” she asked, ready to read the number to Arquette.

“Yeah I’m ready. Go ahead,” Arquette confirmed.

Right then, the examiner began to read out the number. Arquette wrote it down but soon inquired about the evidence that was being processed. The examiner explained how they were still awaiting matches to link to the evidence, and that everything could be finished in another day or two. After the status of the evidence had been discussed, they then concluded with their conversation and disconnected.

With his cellphone now in his left hand, he dialed Chris’s number, with hopes that he would catch him before he fell asleep. The phone rang three times before Chris picked up.

“Hello,” he answered, sounding a bit tired.

“Hey Chris, good evening. This is Detective Arquette,” he greeted.

“Hey...hey sir!!” replied Chris, sounding as though this call had now stimulated him.

“How can I help you, sir?!” he continued.

“Well first I wanna apologize for contacting you this late,” Arquette empathized.

“I just have some info I wanted to share with you that might link all the victims together. The only problem we’re facing is not having a name of the person whom we believe could be our potential suspect,” he explained.

“Yes sir. Well this is great news, but I’m not sure how I can help,” replied Chris, expressing self-doubt.

“Well Chris, hopefully after we run through some of these reports, you’ll be able to recall something, or someone who wasn’t mentioned,” told Arquette, trying to buildup Chris’s self-confidence.

“Alright sir, what-cha got?” Chris inquired, sounding slightly motivated.

“Ok. I’ll start with the first few, you know, to see if you could recall anything from either of them. If there’s no sign of advancement, we’ll move on to the next few reports,” proposed Arquette, beginning to flip through his notes.

“Sounds good sir,” Chris agreed.

“Alright. So from these reports dating back nearly ten years, we came across a few which we’ve presumed to be episodes of bullying,” revealed Arquette.

“Starting out, we have one incident which lead to a student being suspended, then later removed from the bus. The report states that the bus driver, Mr. Osborne, did not agreed with this report as he felt this incident was greatly overexaggerated and that the student should not have been suspended; yet, the suspension was never reversed. The next few reports discuss other incidents, but these seem to involve different students. In addition, these reports presume to’ve centered around one student in-particular, or so we believe. This student, per these reports, filed numerous complaints about the way he or she had been suffering adversity from these other students on this bus. Yet it seemed Mr. Osborne refused to report the details of these incidents, such as the names of the students whom were causing this distress, or the name of the student that was in distress. Instead, these reports only read of minor specifics stated by him after he intervened. Again, no names were provided, so I can only assume his motive was to avoid having any more students suspended. His only interest I feel, per these reports, was to have the one student whom filed these complaints, file a bus transfer,” speculated Arquette.

“So now my question for you Chris is, do you recall being on this bus when any of these incidents took place?” he enquired, with hopes Chris had been present during those incidents.

And if so, it would likely lead him to recall the name of the student who was being bullied.

“Sir, honestly, it’s really hard to remember anything that far back,” Chris professed.

“Though I do believe I was riding his bus during that time,” he continued, as he tried recalling his experience on that bus.

“Alright. Now can you also recall whether Stacey or Michael rode this bus? Or, even more importantly, recalling whether either of them had ever caused any problems while on this bus?” investigated Arquette.

“Off top of my head, no. But again, it’s really hard to remember anything that far back, sir,” Chris declared.

“Alright. Well here’s another report which describes an incident where a student was being harassed by two other students; that their hair was pulled from behind by one of the students, while being called disrespectful names by the other student to their face. Now, I’m gonna assume that this student experiencing this was actually a girl. Though again, some boys have long hair to pull, also,” presumed Arquette.

Surprisingly, the phone went completely silent.

“Nothing? Ok. Well here’s another one which states one student filed a complaint for being harassed by another student. This report says that this student claimed that their hair was cut by the other student, then later he or she was pushed down the stairs of the bus by this same student while getting off. Does either of these incidents sound familiar to you, Chris?” Arquette probed, flipping through his notepad to read more incidents.

But the silence continued as Chris remained speechless.

“Chris, hello! Are you still there?” asked Arquette, as he stopped flipping through his notes and leaned forward at the

table while pressing his cellphone close to his left ear to listen in on Chris's background.

"Hello, Chris!" he called again.

All of a sudden, the sound of someone clearing their throat, softly, occurred on Chris' end.

"Chris, is everything alright?" he asked.

"You want me to call you back?" he offered, thinking that Chris could probably use some time to gather himself.

Another minute of silence went by, however, before Chris eventually responded.

"No sir, I'm...I'm ok. I just had a bit of nostalgia, is all," he replied, in a humble, yet regretful voice.

"Ok. So, can you recall either of these incidents, or any incidents at all?" Arquette re-examined.

Chris hesitated to reply. Although, as soon as he did, he disclosed the most essential information that would soon stream roll this investigation forward.

"Uhm. That last report sir...I remember when that happened," he replied, sounding disappointed.

"And the reason I still remember that was because I was standing at the bottom of the steps when that happened. My God, I felt terrible seeing that," he recalled.

"Alright! So you remember being there. But tell me, can you recall who that student was, perhaps their name?" probed Arquette, hoping the name of this student would soon be revealed.

But Chris just continued on discussing the moments of that incident, however.

“I mean I wanted to help; I did. But unfortunately, I was way too concerned about how the others would’ve saw me if I did. Well actually, I was more afraid of what Stacey would’ve thought of me,” reflected Chris.

“So Stacey was there that day,” Arquette perceived, writing this information down in his notes.

“And why were you worried what Stacey thought of you?” inquired Arquette.

“Stacey was a sweet person. I mean, she’d actually do anything for anyone,” Chris described, as he reminisced about her.

A few snuffles sounded out on his end of the phone, as if he were about to cry.

“Chris, can you tell me who this person was that got pushed off the bus,” insisted Arquette, having little interests in hearing about Stacey and more interests about the student pushed.

“But Stacey wasn’t the only one. I mean, we all did some bad things on that bus,” revealed Chris.

“There were four of us and we each did things we shouldn’t of. It’s just we wanted to feel cool, and tough, you know, like a gang. So, we picked on people, people who we felt were easily intimidated,” he added, sounding shameful, with a strong sense of regret.

“Ok! Well it sounds like we’ve established who most of these reports were about; you and your friends. And from what you’ve just told me, it seems you all apparently bullied the other students,” Arquette emphasized.

“Though Chris, as useful as this information is, what I feel would be absolutely vital to my investigation is getting the

name of that student y'all bullied, excessively?" claimed Arquette, seemingly at the edge of his seat for the answer.

"Well sir, we bullied quite a few people back then; though, there was one person I believe we might've messed with more than the others. I mean, it was like every week we did something to her," Chris reflected, envisioning the many instances when he and his friends traumatized this student.

"Yet, surprisingly enough, we never got punished. I mean it was almost like Mr. Osborne didn't want to see any of us get in trouble," he continued, sounding quite shocked over the lack of discipline.

"And that's what my partner Ryan and I concluded after reading these reports, that he seemed more concerned for you all that were doing the bullying and lacked support for the student that was being bullied, it seemed," reanalyzed Arquette.

"Ok. So we have you and your friends that were on this bus. We also have a female student whom you all seemed to've harassed, intensely, while on this bus. But we still don't have her name. Do you remember it?" he enquired, trying to finally get the answer he desired since the start of their phone call.

Silence interrupted the conversation again. Arquette soon heard Chris clearing his throat in the background once more. Seconds later, Chris got back on the phone, seemingly ready to finally disclose the name of that student.

"Sir, if I recall, I believe her first name was Karman. But I'm not sure about her last name. It might've been Anderson I think, but I don't remember," he disclosed.

The clock had now read a quarter to 11 pm. The moon was bright, resembling a fluorescent white circle high above the clouds. The sky was partially cloudy with the color of a pale blue background complimenting the shine of the moon, creating an image that could be depicted as a prestigious art design. The wind blew a warm, gentle breeze across the city at 20mph. And the traffic had reduced to a typical Sunday evening flow; less than moderate and leisurely. The city had now become a lethargic, empty version of its normal, high-functioning atmosphere.

Back at the psychiatric center, Dr. Patel and Karman were near the end of their session. Before it was over, Dr. Patel tried persistently to abstract as much information from Karman regarding her new interest in vengeance; however, Karman still would not reveal the name of the person who created such an influence, or any details about what she has learned.

“Alright Karman, I believe that’s all for our session this evening. Of course, after adding a little extra time to our session, I feel we’ve touched a few important points. Unless there’s anything more you’re willing to share,” affirmed Dr. Patel, with hopes Karman would discuss more details of her new interest.

Though Karman did not respond. She just sat quietly, while looking to her left toward the window.

“Well I understand there’s a midnight mass tonight. I think you should attend; you know. Maybe you’ll hear a

message that could help you manage this inner anger that's apparently resurfaced." recommended Dr. Patel.

"I just don't want you to abandon even the smallest glimpse of redemption you were showing a few months ago. I mean you actually appeared inspired and driven to make therapeutic changes then," she continued.

Karman sat in her chair, inertly, while gazing out the window. After observing her distant state of mind, Dr. Patel closed Karman's file then picked up her radio off her desk with her left hand and held it near her mouth. After pressing the intercom button to talk, she requested an orderly to come to her office and escort Karman back to her room.

"Hey, this is Dr. Patel. I need someone to come and take Karman back to her room, please. We're done," directed Dr. Patel, reclining back in her chair.

"Copy that!" responded an orderly.

Right after, she placed her radio back on her desk and then leaned over to her right, near Karman.

"Hey Karman. Listen. I need you to understand that having a vengeful heart could ultimately just send you down a dark path. It may even become an addiction because you might begin to enjoy it," she counselled, with her right hand atop of Karman's right forearm, expressing genuine concern and compassion.

Unexpectedly, there was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" authorized Dr. Patel.

At that moment, a male orderly walked in.

"Ma'am, I'm here to take Karman back," he stated.

"Come on, she's ready," confirmed Dr. Patel.

He then walked over to Karman's chair. Karman was still gazing out the window. He approached her from the left, slid his right arm underneath her left arm, then helped her to her feet. Though just before he could walk her off, Dr. Patel re-advised her to attend the midnight mass.

"Karman, I want you to have a good night, ok? And please, think about attending midnight mass," she insisted.

The orderly then continued on with assisting Karman around the chair, and then they left out the office, closing the door behind them.

Arquette had now made it home, but he was still on the phone talking to Chris. After Chris had revealed the name of the student who was bullied by him and his friends, Arquette asked him if he had any idea of her current location.

"Alright Chris, now that we got a name, we could go get her and bring her in for questioning. I mean, considering the traumatic history she's endured from you, as well as your friends; the other two victims, it's possible she could be our suspect," Arquette presumed.

"With that being said, the next question I have is, do you know where this Karman person could be located at the present time?" he inquired, now expressing a keen zealous interest to find Karman.

"Honestly sir, I haven't seen this girl in a really long time. There's no way I'd know where she's at." Chris stated.

"Yeah, I would agree. It's probably too much to ask for at this point. But what about someone else, like another friend

or someone from back in the day; is there anyone else you could think of that might know?" probed Arquette.

"No. I mean it's kind of hard to think that far back. I just remembe...well Stacey and Michael were the only ones I...wait...actually!" Chris answered, before coming to short pause mid-sentence.

He suddenly experienced a moment of 'deja-vous'.

"Actually what, Chris?" questioned Arquette.

"Well...it's funny you ask because I happened to've ran into another friend the other day I haven't seen since the high school days. She was also a part of our click. Yeah, her name is Abigail," Chris disclosed.

"Hum, Abigail. Alright," said Arquette, speaking to himself softly while jotting her name down in his notepad.

"Ok. So, you think she knows where Karman might be?" asked Arquette.

"Sir, I'd have to call and ask her. I mean, when we talked, I did tell'er about the others, and Mr. Osborne. And judging by her facial expression, I could tell she didn't like the news; and, seemed worried about me," Chris recalled.

"Well, considering what happened tragically to both of your friends, I don't blame her for being concerned about you. Now, you mentioned that she was a part of your click. Did she play a part in bullying Karman as well?" wondered Arquette.

"Well sir, I wanna say she did a few things like call her names, pull her hair a few times; you know, things like that," divulged Chris.

"Hum...well, if that's so, then I would highly advise you to be concerned for her safety, also," Arquette proposed.

“Why do you say that, sir?” Chris asked, developing a slight concern for Abigail’s safety.

“Look, if she caused Karman any hardship, like you and your late-friends did, then she’s liable to pursue her just as she’s likely to come after you,” warned Arquette.

“Oh man, you’re absolutely right! Ok. Well then let me call her now so I can warn her. And while I’m telling her this, I can also ask her if she knows Karman’s last name, and where she might be,” proposed Chris.

“Sounds great. Well please, as soon as you find out anything, give me a call back, asap. It’s getting late and the last murder, we believe anyway, took place late last night or early this morning. Plus, judging by the way these killings have been consistent, back to back, it’s a strong possibility that one of you could be next tonight,” warned Arquette.

“Ahhh man, this sh**t is getting f***king intense!” exclaimed Chris, sounding paranoid.

“Alright sir, I’ll call you back as soon as I can,” he affirmed.

Arquette agreed and then they disconnected.

After immediately hanging up, Arquette speed dialed the number for the Chief. The phone rang four times before he answered.

“Good evening. Chief Miller speaking,” greeted the Chief, in a soothing, serene tone.

“Hey Chief. Good evening, sir,” saluted Arquette.

“Sir, I apologize for calling so late,” he said, feeling slightly perturbed for calling the Chief so late.

“That’s alright, Jackson. What-cha got for me?” the Chief inquired, sounding interested in hearing the reason for Arquette’s late call.

“Well sir, I just received some new intel regarding this case,” declared Arquette.

“Alright! This is great news! Let me hear it,” replied the Chief.

“Yes sir. So, we finally have a name of a potential suspect,” professed Arquette.

“Really?” replied the Chief, sounding very intrigued with this latest update.

“Oh yes sir! It’s Karman Anderson, I believe; but I’m currently awaiting confirmation on the last name, though,” revealed Arquette.

“Karman, huh? And how did you come up with this name?” probed the Chief, interested in learning of the source for which Arquette received this latest intel.

“Well sir, if you remember the last victim, it was his friend, Chris, who told me about her. Apparently, Chris and the last two victims were all apart of some click that used to bully other students on their school bus back in high school. Now, Chris told me he and his late friends bullied Karman, excessively, allegedly causing major physical and emotional anguish. The bus driver, Mr. Osborne, who was killed a few days earlier, was the driver for their bus. Now Chris says the driver knew of these bullying incidents because he reported them; however, he never sought punishment against them. Though Chris said Mr. Osborne

told the student, we believe to've been Karman, to file a bus transfer to get off that bus," divulged Arquette.

"Is that right? Humm...I wonder why he didn't seek any type of punishment for that sort of behavior," the Chief contemplated, speaking softly to himself.

"Right! That's what Ryan and I said earlier today," told Arquette.

"I mean basically, from majority of these reports, it just seemed like that bus driver didn't want these friends to get into any trouble," he continued.

"Alright Jackson, so if I understand correctly, Chris and his friends were on this bus with this student, Karman, whom they apparently bullied to great extremes, which may have resulted in some type of psychological trauma, highly likely. Mr. Osborne, the bus driver, never sought any type of punishment for these them during that time, so now, nearly a decade later, Karman's returned, seeking each of them out and killing them out of some sort of vengeful rage. I take it this is where you're heading with this, correct?" the Chief implied.

"I mean, first, we had the bus driver. Then, there was the female victim who was a friend of Chris. And right after, we had the male victim, who was apparently also a friend of Chris," he continued, re-evaluating all three cases to gain a lucid understanding of the connection for which Arquette is basing his theory of his investigation, overall.

"Yeah, that's about right, sir," confirmed Arquette.

“Oh! But hold on! This evening, I also found out that another friend of his who was involved in these bus incidents is still here in Annapolis,” he revealed.

“Is that right? Do we have a name? And also, what’s their current location?” the Chief asked.

“Sir, I was told her name is Abigail. Her last name’s unknown at this time, though. But I’ll be sure to get it as soon as I speak with my source, Chris, again. He told me they met at the mall earlier today, unexpectedly. And know what, now that I think about it, I may even find out where this Karman person is, because while we were talking, I asked him if he could ask her if she maybe knew where Karman might be,” he disclosed.

“Yeah, I agree. That information would definitely be substantial, likely stream rolling this investigation forward, especially if we’re able to interrogate her and find out she’s our suspect,” hypothesized the Chief.

“Sir, I couldn’t agree more, either,” said Arquette

“After Chris speaks with Abigail, he plans to call me back. Now if I don’t hear back from him soon, then I’ll just call him,” he proclaimed.

“Sounds good Jackson. Well, let’s get together early in the morning to go over any additional updates,” requested the Chief.

“Yes sir! Sounds good! Well listen sir, I want you to have a good night,” wished Arquette, feeling a strong sense of accomplishment.

“You as well, Jackson. Have a goodnight!” replied the Chief.

They then disconnected.

Across town, Chris and Abigail were talking on the phone. While discussing the latest events in their lives, Chris eventually brought up the conversation he had recently with Arquette.

“Listen, I really don’t mean to keep bringing up the past, especially the time we all acted like a bunch of ignorant asses on the bus; but I happened to tell the detective about those bullying days, especially towards that girl, Karman,” disclosed Arquette, nervous of how Abigail would react.

“You did? Why?” asked Abigail, sounding calm, but a little curious.

“Well, he was telling me the things he found in Mr. Osborne’s file. He talked about the reports filed, but saw no names of those involved, especially for the person who these complaints were supposed to help. Now at first, I wasn’t sure what reports he was referring to. But after he read a few of them, it struck me that these were the ones that involved us, and they all, if I my memory serves me well, centered around Karman. I mean when you think these recent killings, at this point anyway, it’s really hard to deny that she might be after us,” Chris speculated, feeling a sense of sureness.

“Look, I’m not exactly sure where you’re going with this. I mean yes, back then we were young and stupid; and yes, we probably did some dumb things to people, but that doesn’t mean someone from back then is now trying to kill us,” Abigail reputed, expressing disbelief.

“Abigail, I can definitely understand why you would doubt this. Hell, I’ve even had doubts about this for a while, too,” Chris empathized.

“But I now feel pretty confident that these deaths are affiliated to Karman,” he reassured.

“Listen Chris, please know I want to believe you, but the reason I have doubts is because I know that this just isn’t possible,” insisted Abigail.

“Ok. So why, why do you think this isn’t possible? I mean, we don’t even know where she is right now, much less if she’s capable of doing anything like this,” Chris posited, growing frustrated with Abigail.

“Actually, what you just stated isn’t true at the least. And this is more likely the reason you sound pissed off at me because of how I think of this whole situation,” told Abigail, in a calm voice.

“I mean, if you only knew where Karman was today, I believe you’d probably laugh at yourself for even having the slightest inclination that she had anything to do with any of this,” she presumed.

“Hum. Well you sound confident as if you know. So do you, do you know where she is right now?” asked Chris, feeling puzzled and uncertain of what to believe.

“Yeah, I do, actually. And the last I heard she’s been there for the last 8 years, Miracle Care Psychiatric Center,” Abigail revealed.

“Wait, wait! Hold on a second! You’re kidding me, right?” Chris exclaimed, in disbelief.

“So, she’s at a psych ward?” he asked, ensuring that what he just heard was correct.

“Yup! That’s right! And she’s been there for quite a while, too,” Abigail confirmed, sounding rather arrogant and prideful for possessing this knowledge.

“A psych ward. Man, what could’ve happened to her for her to’ve ended up there?” asked Chris, in a low tone to himself.

“I mean I know what we did to her was bad, but that shouldn’t have made her psycho, should it?” he wondered, trying to gain clarity from Abigail.

“Look. At this point, I’m not sure what happened to her. All I can is she’s been in a secured building this whole time which means there’s no way she could’ve been killing anyone,” Abigail assured, sounding very confident.

“Miracle Care Psychiatric,” whispered Chris, softly to himself.

“Alright. Well I’ll let you go then. I need to call the detective now and let him know what you just told me. I’m sure he’ll wanna change his theory, too,” he supposed.

“Alright. Well you know where to find me; and now where you can to find her. But still, I ask that you please be careful and watch your back,” advised Abigail.

“I will. And you do the same,” replied Chris.

“Oh wait! Before you hang up! Karman’s last name, do you know it by any chance?” he inquired.

“Uh, I believe it’s Anderson,” replied Abigail.

“That’s what I told the detective, but I wasn’t 100%. Thanks.” said Chris.

Then, they said goodnight and then disconnected.

Chapter 17

The Visit to Miracle Care Recovery

Chris lowered his cellphone from his right ear then immediately scrolled through his call log for Arquette's number. As soon as he found it, he pressed the green send logo and then held the cellphone up to his right ear again. The phone only rang once before Arquette picked up.

"Hello! Detective Arquette speaking," he answered, with a little zeal in his voice after reading Chris's name on his caller ID.

"Hey Detective, this is Chris. Sir, I got that information you were looking for," he said, feeling constructive and useful with the intel he was about to divulge.

"Really?! Now this is great news!" exclaimed Arquette.

"Alright, what-cha got?!" he asked, grabbing his notepad and pen. He placed his cellphone on his left shoulder, and then tilted his head left to hold it in place.

"Ok. So, Abigail told me that Karman's currently at Miracle Care Psychiatric, where she's apparently been for the past seven or eight years. So of course, when I heard this, I'm now doubting whether she killed anyone, not if she's been locked up in that secured facility the whole time. I mean, unless she escaped or something, but I know places like that don't make it easy their patients to get out," divulged Chris, feeling definite about that secured facility.

“Oh man! Now this is really good information, Chris! Thank you so much for all your help!” replied Arquette, expressing tremendous appreciation.

“And you know what, I agree with you. I mean if this facility is secured tight, it would be difficult for Karman to escape, hence, making her involvement in those murders questionable. Although, it’s still essential that I confirm this info to be absolutely sure. For it’s imperative we detectives follow are leads to the very end,” counselled Arquette.

“For me, I just don’t wanna assume anything. I’d rather have the facts. And besides, at this point, she’s the only one who we feel would have a strong motive. So, as of now, I got to at least interrogate her, you know? And not only that, but I’ll need to speak with security there and check out previous recordings of their facility to ensure she wasn’t sneaking out,” he continued, trying to enlighten Chris on why further investigation into Karman is crucial.

“Yes sir, I understand. And you’re right, just because someone is locked up, doesn’t mean they can’t escape. But here’s the thing, sir. Say you find her at the facility, if she did escape, why would she go back?” Chris inquired, still having doubts about her being the killer.

“Chris, to be honest, I couldn’t answer that question, or any others at the moment. Right now, I need to head out to that facility to locate and question her, or speak to someone in charge regarding her,” recommended Arquette.

“As soon as I hear something, I’ll let you know,” he continued.

“Oh! And did you happen to find out her last name? Did your friend Abigail remember it?” he asked.

“Yes sir. She said it was Anderson. But she seemed a little unsure,” replied Chris.

“Ok. Well, I’ll just go with Anderson for now. I’m sure once I get out there and explain the reason for my visit, they’ll help me locate her,” presumed Arquette.

“But in the meantime, I need you to stay near your phone. It’s getting pretty late. Now, if you happen to see or hear anything suspicious, again, please don’t hesitate to call the police or my cellphone. Oh! And be sure to tell your friend Abigail to do the same,” he requested.

“Yes sir, I’ll definitely will,” Chris agreed.

They then concluded their conversation and then disconnected.

Arquette placed his cellphone down on the table to his left then pulled his computer up towards him. Next, he typed in the name in the search engine for the address of the facility. As soon as the address appeared on the screen, he wrote it down in his notepad. After that, he began to pack up his computer case. As soon as everything was packed, he stood up, grabbed his gun belt and computer case, and then exited the kitchen. Now in the living room, Arquette stopped at the loveseat to put his gun belt around his waist. Next, he sat his case down then picked up his suit coat from off the back of the loveseat. After putting his coat on, he picked up his case again then walked over to the fireplace for his wallet, badge, and car keys. After

placing these items in his pockets, he walked over to the bottom of the staircase to inform Linda that he was leaving for the psychiatric center.

“Linda! Baby, I have to go,” notified Arquette, looking up the stairs.

But Linda did not reply. He decided to call for her again.

“Hey Linda! Love, I’m heading out for about an hour or so. I need to visit this psychiatric center,” he reiterated.

All of a sudden, there was a thumping sound upstairs as if something heavy was moving towards the staircase.

“Wait, what!?! Leaving!?! Did something happen?!” asked Linda, moving swiftly toward the top of the staircase.

“No baby, nothin bad’s happened. I just received some new information; a lead that may help us solve these murders,” told Arquette.

“Well this is really great news, baby! I’m glad to hear it!” commended Linda, expressing gladness.

“Yeah, but unfortunately, this intel has me going out to this psych ward this late. I was told apparently there’s a patient there fitting the description of someone whom we may find to be our potential suspect. And, because these murders took place overnight, I wanna try to prevent the next one before someone else gets killed,” disclosed Arquette, explaining the updates he received.

“I understand, honey. Just please be careful with your health. You know you need your rest,” warned Linda, concerned for Arquette’s mental and physical health.

“Yeah, I know, love. I don’t expect to be there too long. It should be just an in and out visit. I just want to speak to

whoever's in charge and find out if there's been any breach in security, or any other concerns with this patient leaving the facility unauthorized. But, also while I'm there, I'm gonna try to question this patient," acknowledged Arquette.

Linda didn't respond. She just stared at Arquette with a concerned look on her face.

"What?! Lind, honey, I'll be fine," he avowed, in a meek tone, hoping to reduce her worries about him.

"Listen love, I have everything I need with me, so I'll be fine," he added.

Feeling that his words were insufficient in reducing Linda's concerns, he decided to walk up the stairs to get close to her. When he got to the top, he gave her a strong, passionate kiss to try and ease the tension for which his conversation created. After kissing her, he then smiled and turned around to walk back downstairs. Linda wished him off.

"Goodnight baby! Please be safe and call me if you need anything," advised Linda, leaning against the right side of the wall near the stairs.

"Yes ma'am! Will do! I should be home soon," replied Arquette, now leaving out the front door.

Linda just stood at the top of the staircase as Arquette started the car and drove off. She then took a deep breath and then went back into the room.

While driving, Arquette used his right index finger to begin the navigation system on his radio. After pressing the search button, he pulled out his notepad from his left pants

pocket. With it in his left hand, he flipped it open to the address and held it above the steering wheel. With his right index finger, he entered the address then pressed start to begin a search. A few seconds later, the location of the facility appeared on the navigation map. The voice of a woman in a soft tone revealed the name of the place and the distance it would take to reach that location. Centered at the bottom of the navigation map was a button labeled “navigate.” With his right index finger, he pressed the navigate button to begin the route. Suddenly, the screen adjusted, narrowing in on Arquette’s current location which now resembled a red arrow. Then, a woman’s voice from the navigation system began to guide the way. Arquette placed his notepad back in his left pants pocket and proceed along the route. The streetlights were glowing bright, giving the highway a golden shine, which resembled the effect of a dark underground cave with numerous lanterns along the wall. Because the sky was clear, the stars and the white full moon were shining high above, creating another spectacular art piece. To add to this amazing scenery, the wind was blowing a calm, cool, and romantic breeze. When Arquette reached the main highway heading north bound toward the psychiatric center, he decided to give Ryan a call to update him on the recent information he was provided; and, to also inform him of where he was heading.

Arquette pulled his cellphone out of his right pants pocket and lifted it up above the steering wheel to view the screen. Simultaneously, he went from looking at screen to

looking at the road, to ensure his safety. While scrolling through the call log, he eventually stopped at Ryan's number then pressed the send button. Right after, he held his cellphone against his right ear. The phone rang three times before Ryan answered.

"Hello, Detective Harding speaking," he answered, sounding alert and focused.

"Hey Ryan, it's Arquette. Listen, I got some a new lead on the case, and I'm currently on my way to check it out," informed Arquette.

"A lead? What lead? What information did you get?" inquired Ryan, very interested to learn about the latest development in the case.

"Ok So, you remember that kid, Chris, right? Well, he provided me the name of the young girl who was bullied on the bus. And come to find out, it was actually him and his friends who did majority of those things reported in the bus driver's files," Arquette disclosed.

"Get out of here! Are you serious?!" exclaimed Ryan, in disbelief

"Yeah! But that's only have of it. Guess who those friends were," hinted Arquette, slightly eager to reveal the names.

"Uhhh. Let me guess. Was it the two recently killed?" asked Ryan, taking a guess.

"Yup! You're absolutely right. Now, there apparently were four friends, two of which are still alive; Chris and his friend Abigail, who Chris stated he reconnected with recently after so many years," disclosed Arquette.

“Right. Now I do remember you mentioning Chris, but this is my first time hearing about Abigail. So, is she aware of what’s going on?” Ryan asked.

“Uh, I believe so. I mean, Chris told me that they spoke a few times, and that she doesn’t believe Karman is the killer, so,” replied Arquette.

“Hold on. Karman? Who the hell is Karman? And why doesn’t Abigail believe she’s the killer?” inquired Ryan.

“Ok. So, during our discussion over those reports, Chris revealed some of the things he and his friends did to a young girl, Karman Anderson. When I asked him if he knew where Karman might be today, he said he’d have to ask around. Eventually, when he did call me back, he said he spoke with his friend Abigail who apparently knew where Karman was, which is the reason why she doesn’t believe Karman did these killings,” explained Arquette.

“Alright. So, my next question is, where exactly is this Karman?” Ryan asked.

“Well Ryan, I’m glad you asked because that’s the reason I called you, to let you know I’m actually heading there now. The place is called Miracle Care Recovery Psychiatric Center; and per Abigail, she’s been there for nearly 8 plus years. I’m about twenty minutes away,” divulged Arquette.

“Hum. Ok. So a psychiatric center, huh? Well, I’d probably have to concur with that friend Abigail, then. I mean, how would this Karman girl have killed anyone if she’s been at this psych ward the whole time?” Ryan probed, now expressing doubt of Karman’s involvement in the case.

“Yeah, it’s a puzzler, but that’s why I’m goin out there. First, I wanna see if she’s still there. And if she is, then, I’ll check to see if there’s been any security breaches or recordings of anyone caught entering and exiting the facility unauthorized in the past week. My guess is, if she did leave the facility, they’d have it on tape. And with us having the dates and approximate times of each murder, this should narrow it down to specific security tapes,” suggested Arquette.

“Alright. Well let’s just say she is there, right, and she did escape. How the hell would she have come all this way, committed these murders, and then returned to the facility each night?” asked Ryan, feeling a bit befuddled with this probing attempt.

“Look. Right now, I’m just tryna to find out if she got out. After that, I plan on interrogating her. Hopefully during this interrogation we’ll find out these additional details that could answer your question,” replied Arquette, uninterested in answering those questions at that moment.

“I understand. Well do you need me to do anything tonight?” Ryan offered.

“No. Not right now. Just stay near your phone, though, in case I need help with something in this area,” requested Arquette.

“Sure thing. I’ll be up for a while anyway,” agreed Ryan.

“Sounds good. I’ll be in touch,” concluded Arquette.

They concluded their conversation and then disconnected.

At Chris's house, Chris suddenly woke up after dozing off for almost an hour. He looked at his watch on his left wrist and realized it was really late. But after looking around his room, he did not notice anything out of the ordinary. Yet, although nothing seemed troubling in his room, he still did not feel completely safe. Right then, he got out of bed to check the rest of the house for any suspicious activity. When he reached his room door, he unlocked and opened it very quietly. This way he would not draw attention to anything that could be waiting for him. The hallway light was off, making it difficult for him to see. Chris stepped out of his room, turned right, and slid his right hand against the wall to find the light switch. As soon as he felt the switch, he immediately turned on the light only to discover nothing out of the ordinary. He stepped back toward the threshold of his room and looked straight ahead, down the hall. Again, everything seemed normal near the other bedroom and the bathroom. At that moment, he looked to his right, again, then proceeded toward the staircase located down on the left. Once he reached the top of staircase, he stood there and stared down the stairs. Darkness had engulfed the living room. Of course, the light from the upstairs hall made it even more challenging for him to see downstairs. At that moment, a feeling of paranoia came over him as he realized that he would eventually have to go downstairs. But just before he headed down, Chris listened intently for any type of noises indicating that something abnormal was occurring. After hearing only silence, he began to walk downstairs slowly, one step at a time.

Now at the bottom of the stairs, Chris looked to his left and scanned the living room. He quickly realized how difficult it was to see the room as his eyes still needed time to adjust to the darkness. Seconds later, his eyes finally gained a faded vision of the living room. The streetlights in front of his house created a dim light through the white linen window shades to his right. This made it possible for Chris to find the lamp on the end table next to the couch in front of him. He walked over to the lamp, reached his right arm underneath its shade, and twisted the switch to turn the light on. Now that the room was lit, he was able to observe the area for anything suspicious. First, he walked over to the front door to see if it was tampered with. After seeing no signs of damage, he began to search each window, looking for signs that indicate someone tried to come through. Again, he found no evidence of tampering. He then continued observing the rest of the living room. Seeing that everything appeared normal and in order, he decided to now check the kitchen.

In the kitchen, Chris flicked on the light switch to his left and went to observe the back door, first, looking for signs of meddling. But again, there were no sign of attempted intrusion. Next, he moved over to the window to his right. Needing to get up to the window to see outside, he had to prop his knees up onto the ledge of the sink. With both hands on the windowsill, he carefully observed the window but found no signs of suspicious activity. He then climbed down from off the sink and paused for a moment to think.

Suddenly, confusion and doubt overwhelmed his mind as he felt extremely positive that he was next to be killed. Although now having doubts, Chris still asked himself why anything hasn't happened to him yet.

"Ok, now I'm confused. When I watched the news, they said that Stacey and Michael were both attacked late at the night. Well it's late, but everything seems to be fine here. Hum. Maybe it'll happen later," he pondered, speaking to himself as he stood in the kitchen.

"Or, I could just be overthinking this. I mean after all, Karman has been locked up in a psych ward for a long time, right?" he continued, expressing doubt about Karman's involvement in his friends' murders.

As he tried to rationalize things, he began to think of whom else Karman would possibly seek to attack. Just then, it hit him.

"But, let's say for a second Karman did escape. If she isn't coming after me, who else would she go af...", he speculated, before the instant thought of Abigail entered his mind.

He quickly felt his pants pockets for his cellphone, but soon remembered that it was still upstairs. Without delay, he exited the kitchen, ran through the living room, and darted upstairs, stumbling on a few of the steps along the way. Now upstairs, Chris entered his bedroom and grabbed his cellphone from off the bed then immediately began to scroll through his call log. As soon as he highlighted Abigail's number, he pressed the send button, promptly. The phone rang, but Abigail did not pick up. Chris hung up

and then tried again. During his third attempt, he became nervous because he had no idea of what to do next as Abigail's phone just rang. He then thought about contacting Arquette but didn't want to seem like he was overreacting to a situation he simply was unsure of. Yet, even though he had an awful feeling about Abigail, he had no proof to confirm these uncertainties. Instead, he decided to try her number again. The phone rang three times before Abigail finally answered, surprisingly.

"Hello!" exclaimed, sounding drained and irritable.

"Oh finally!" cried Chris, now feeling relieved after hearing Abigail's voice.

"Hey, it's me, Chris!" he greeted.

"Yeah, I know who it is. What the hell do you want? I was sleep," asked Abigail, sounding short-tempered from being awakened by the many calls.

"Yeah, sorry about blowing your phone up. I just wanted to check on you, see if you were ok. I mean, you didn't pick up, so I started to think something happened to you. I didn't mean to bother you," Chris apologized, feeling embarrassed for his many call attempts which ultimately woke her up.

"Ok. So, I'm guessing this Karman thing still got you worried, am I right?" asked Abigail, now expressing empathy for Chris.

"Listen, I told you she's locked up. She's no threat to either of us, or anyone else for that matter. Whatever happened to the others were just unfortunate circumstances they couldn't avoid. It's life. Now, can you please stop worrying about her?" she counselled.

“Yeah, maybe you’re right. And believe it or not, I’m actually starting to agree with you,” told Chris.

“Although, I did tell the detective what you told me about Karman. And he said he would go out there to see if she’s still there. He also said he plans to find out if she’s been getting out,” he divulged, feeling slightly at ease regarding his theory about Karman.

“Well, I’m sure he’ll find her right there where she’s been for years, with no chance of getting out,” assumed Abigail.

“Hopefully anyway. Alright! Well please get some sleep. Again, I’m truly sorry I woke you up. I was just concerned about you, that’s all,” said Chris, offering his apologies again.

“Lol! It’s ok, Chris. Please feel free to call me though. We should hang out some time,” offered Abigail, expressing appreciation for Chris thinking about her safety.

“That sounds good,” Chris replied.

They then said goodnight and then disconnected.

Out beyond the city limits, the streetlights became scarce, resulting in absolute darkness. The bright, white shine from the full moon casted a silhouette over the trees. A mist, which gathered abundantly within the woods from beyond the psychiatric center, created an uncertain and unpredictable view of the road leading up to the facility. Suddenly, out from the woods appeared a pair of headlights; it was Arquette’s unmarked sedan now driving out from beyond the trees and heading toward the psychiatric center. Just before reaching the facility, there was a white security gate made of metal bars gapped ten inches apart and stood

about 30ft tall. This gate stretched completely around the facility's perimeter in a square-like border for security. Driving up to this gate, Arquette saw an intercom system on the left. The button for the intercom was within a medium sized, gray metal box which also exhibited a motion censored security camera. An LCD screen was just beneath the camera to display any activity that occurred at the intercom. So, as soon as Arquette approached the intercom, the security camera began to record him. The LCD screen displayed him rolling his window down and extending his left arm out to press the intercom button. Inside the center, a security officer at the front desk responded to the intercom's ring and then immediately examined the security monitor to see who was at the gate. As he observed, the he saw a professionally dressed African American man in a suit coat with a white dress shirt underneath.

Soon after, the officer pressed the button to answer the intercom.

“Good evening sir! How can I help you?” greeted the officer.

“Good evening! My name is Detective Arquette with Annapolis PD. Listen, I'm here to speak with your head of security,” informed Arquette, leaning slightly out of his window to get close to the speaker.

“Do you have an appointment Detective?” asked the officer.

“No, but I am here on official business,” notified Arquette.

“Roger that sir. Give me a second and I'll buzz you in. When you come through the gate, just proceed up to the main building ahead. You can park in administration parking. There's a parking spaces for official personal,” instructed the officer.

“Sounds good. See you inside. Thanks!” replied Arquette.

He brought his head back into his cruiser and prepared to enter through the gate. Suddenly, a buzzing sound rang out from the intercom. Shortly after, the gate then opened inward, slowly, separating in the middle. Arquette put his car in drive and then advanced forward. While driving up to the facility, he noticed another high-raise security fence surrounding the building for extra security. At the top of this fence was spherically entwined barred wire in place to prevent anyone from climbing over.

Finally, Arquette reached the front of the facility. The main parking lot was located on the right, directly across from the main building. As he passed the building and the main lot, he saw a notice sign ahead indicating where the administrative parking was located. It was right next to the main parking lot but was separated by a fence. After passing the main lot, Arquette turned right and entered the administrative parking lot. Now inside, he immediately turned left and began to drive slowly through the lot. At first, he only saw the signs above the parking spaces for facility admin and staff. These signs included facility manager, psychiatrist, security, and orderly. As he continued on, though, Arquette eventually saw the parking signs for city officials. He chose one of the spaces on his left and then parked. After he cutoff the engine, he exited the car, then opened the back door to access his computer case. Next, he opened the case then removed his work binder. Now ready, he closed the back door and he began to walk through the lot

toward the facility. As he casually approached the building, he began to assess its structure, trying to imagine how the inside would look compared to the outside. In addition, he tried finding possible weak points for which someone could elude security to escape. Of course, he knew he would eventually have to inspect the whole perimeter; but in the meantime, he figured he could observe this part of the building he had to walk past.

Arquette had now reached some steps that led up to a pair of double doors. After walking up these steps, he immediately noticed an array of warning signs posted to his right, advising of various precautions. Some of these signs instructed visitors and other officials on how to proceed once they have entered the facility. There was another sign stating that the doors would be secured after 9pm every day following visitation hours. On his left was another intercom for visitors to use in order to gain access to the facility after 9pm. In the top left of the entrance was a security camera monitoring the front doors. Arquette saw the red button on the intercom and pressed it with his right index finger while holding his binder in his left hand. Within a few seconds, a security officer answered the intercom.

“Good evening. How can I help you?” asked a security officer.

“Ahh, yeah, this is Detective Arquette. I’m here to speak with the head of security,” replied Arquette, leaning slightly forward near the intercom.

“Standby,” requested the officer.

An electric buzzer resounded, indicating that one of the doors was temporarily unlocked. Arquette placed his binder underneath his left arm and pulled the right-side door open with his right hand. The door opened and he entered the building.

Now in the main area, Arquette took his time to observe the front lobby layout. First, he noticed the chairs for the visitors down on his right. Then, across from these chairs on his left, he saw the administration counter. Arquette then proceeded towards the counter for assistance. When he approached the counter, he saw two personnel, one orderly worker and one security officer, overseeing administration.

“Good evening, sir. How can I help you?” asked the officer.

Arquette placed his binder down on the counter in front of him then reached inside his left pants pocket for his badge.

“Good evening. I’m Detective Arquette and I came to speak with your supervisor or head of security, please,” he requested, while holding his badge and identification open in his left hand.

The officer stood up to observe the badge, ensuring that Arquette’s identification was official and authentic.

“Thank you, sir. Hang-on while I contact our head officer,” responded the officer, after approving Arquette’s identification.

The officer then sat back down in his chair and then reached for the phone to his right to call for the head officer. Arquette closed his badge case and placed it back inside his left pants pocket.

“Sir, you can have a seat in the waiting area. The head officer will be with you shortly. He’s currently overseeing the setup for late-night mass,” reported the officer, holding the phone up to his right ear.

“Thanks,” Arquette replied.

At that moment, Arquette grabbed his binder, turned around, and then walked over to the waiting area to have a seat. He sat his computer case in the chair to his left.

About ten minutes went by before the head security officer wearing a light blue uniform shirt and dark blue khaki pants stepped out from beyond the access door and into the lobby. He was of Hispanic descent, stood about 5-foot 10-inches, and weighed approximately 260lbs. After entering the lobby, he first proceeded to the front counter to provide updated information to the personnel there. Arquette noticed that the officer behind the counter pointed towards him as if he was informing the head officer where he was in the lobby. Shortly after, the head officer turned around and walked over to Arquette. Arquette stood to his feet with his binder in his left hand and greeted the officer.

“Good evening, Detective. I’m Officer Hernandez,” he introduced himself, extending his right hand out to shake Arquette’s.

“Apologizes for the wait. How can I help you?” he enquired.

“Good evening, Officer Hernandez. It’s quite alright,” replied Arquette, shaking hands with Hernandez.

“Well I apologize as well for my late visit. But just so you know, I am here on official business,” he continued.

“In the past few days, there’s been a few murders, and after some careful investigating, I found a lead that’s brought me to your facility. So far, it’s been understood that all the victims seemingly shared a history nearly 10 years ago. And that part of their history, which I’m now investigating, apparently brought about great anger and trauma to a person we believe is our suspect. Now, after speaking with a friend of the two victims, we were informed that this person of interest is a patient here. However, there are some challenges with these cases as we’re still unable to collect substantial evidence or place a suspect at any of the scenes. But the good news for us is that this friend, whom I just mentioned, believes our suspect has been here for over 5 years,” he expounded.

“Now of course, after learning about this facility, there’s been growing doubts to whether it was this alleged person, and that’s because of all the security this place has. Yet, on the other hand, that’s what brought me out here tonight, to confirm whether or not there’s been any type of security concerns in the past week, especially during the nights. But more importantly, I was also hoping to speak with this patient, if she’s still here away,” he concluded, with hopes that he provided enough information to encourage the officer to assist him.

“Oh wow! Detective, this is an interesting case you got here. To be honest, I normally work the after-hour shifts from evenings to mornings, so I can confirm that during the past few nights we haven’t had any security issues,” assured Hernandez, trying to recall any security mishaps in the last week.

“Well that’s really comforting to hear because we believe these murders took place sometime in the middle of the night

or early morning; possibly between 1am to 4am. But the time frame is still uncertain,” Arquette stated.

“Surprisingly though, after working many years in this field, I can tell you that nothing is absolute; that there’s always a small window of opportunity, even with the cameras and high security fences. I mean, you’d be really impressed with the way criminals think,” he continued, trying to convince the officer of a criminal’s frame of mind.

“Now that, sir, is the truth. Hell, even some of our residence were found with prohibited items which I’m still not sure how they managed to get in,” Hernandez agreed.

“Alright. So tell me what you need from me?” he asked.

“Well if it’s possible, I’d like to review some of your security footage from the last few nights. This would be a tremendous help to me,” entreated Arquette.

“Sure thing! Oh, is that all?!” Hernandez probed, trying to offer all he could.

“Well no. You see, because this patient is a part of the investigation, I would also need to interrogate her, if possible,” insisted Arquette.

“Humm. Well sir, midnight mass is about to start, and some of the residents do attend that. Do you have the name of the patient? I mean I could call for an orderly to have her available for you,” told Hernandez.

“Ah, yeah! I believe her name is Karman Anderson,” Arquette disclosed.

“Oh Alright! I know her. And according to her records, I believe she’s been here for about 8 years now,” Hernandez revealed.

“Alright! And that’s one of the reasons why she’s a potential suspect. You see, the victim’s friend told me they all use to do a lot of bad things to her in high school; things that may have caused her psychological trauma today, hence, probably the reason she’s been admitted here,” Arquette insinuated.

“Yeah, that’s a real possibility. So, you believe she’s been escaping from the facility to murder these people who’ve caused her psychological issues in the past?” asked Hernandez.

“Well, I guess I can see why this would make sense Detective, but if she’s been here under lock and key the whole time, how could she have murdered anyone? More importantly, if she had escaped, why would she come back here?” he continued, feeling slightly doubtful of Karman’s involvement.

“Officer Hernandez, believe me, I’ve been back and forth with this for a few hours myself. The doubts are there. Yet, all I can do at this point is try to alleviate these doubts which is done by taking steps like reviewing the security tapes and interrogating the patient, Karman Anderson,” advised Arquette.

“That’s actually pretty smart! You’re right. If you find out that she hasn’t left the facility, then you can remove her from your list of potential suspects,” complimented Hernandez.

“You see, I have a strategy here,” said Arquette, slightly humorous.

“Well sir, without further ado, please follow me and I’ll escort you to the security room,” invited Hernandez, reaching

into his left shirt pocket with his right hand and pulling out his access badge.

Arquette grabbed his computer case strap with his right hand and put it over his left shoulder. Then, they both proceeded toward the access door. Hernandez scanned his badge on the card reader to the right of the door, unlocking it, temporarily. He then opened the door outward from the right with his left hand, and with his right hand, directed Arquette to proceed inside. He then followed closely behind Arquette, pulling the door closed, to ensure it locked behind them.

Now in the hallway, Arquette and Hernandez both approached an office door on their left, across from the elevators. Hernandez rubbed his badge against another card reader to the left of the door and it unlocked. He opened the door inward from the left and walked inside, first. Arquette followed directly behind him. As soon as Arquette entered, Hernandez closed the door and then they both proceeded down the center of the room, passing a number of office desks arranged on both sides as they headed toward the back. Once they reached the back wall, they turned left for another door. Hernandez opened this door and entered first. As Arquette entered behind him, he immediately recognized that they were now in the security room. He first noticed eight average size computer monitors, four stacked atop of the other four monitors to the left, against the wall. Each monitor was assigned a specific location of the facility, outside and inside. The security system was on a

timer, having each camera record various points of the facility per 60-second intervals. At the base of the monitors was a control panel which consisted of various buttons and other controls used to maneuver and navigate through the security cameras. After observing the left, Arquette then looked to the right of the office. On the that side, posted on the wall, was a blueprint of the facility which had each area labeled a specific zone. Underneath the blueprint was an office desk with various security books and binders placed horizontally on top. Officer Hernandez took a seat at the desk with the monitors. Arquette moved up near him and stood to his left then sat his binder down on the desk near the control panel and opened it to the various investigation dates he had documented.

“Ok. Where would you like to start?” asked Hernandez, prepared to enter the dates into the control panel.

“Well, I’d like to start with two days ago, Friday. That’s when the first victim was killed. We project that this murder to place between 2am and 4am, according to the autopsy,” suggested Arquette, reviewing his notes.

“Now, had someone left this location, judging from the distance, and no type of transportation, they would’ve had to leave between 11pm and 12am, presumably,” he continued, while slowly observing each monitor.

Hernandez entered the date and time into the computer. Instantly, all the monitors switched from present to past recordings. Arquette noticed that majority of the cameras revealed the inside of the facility. At that point, he recommended changing them to reflect outside. This way,

if anyone where to have escaped the facility, whether by car or on foot, the cameras would have had a better chance of revealing it.

“Alright. Give me just one a second to reprogram the monitors for the outside cameras,” requested Hernandez, pressing various buttons on the control panel.

Shortly, one by one, all the monitors displayed images from various locations outside the facility.

“Here we go. These are all the outside cameras,” he disclosed while pointing his right index finger at the monitors.

“Ok. We’ll start with the first monitor at the top left. Then we’ll move from left to right until we’ve reached the last one at the bottom right,” suggested Arquette.

Hernandez placed his left hand on the left joystick while pressing the various buttons to zoom in on each camera monitor with his right index finger. At the top left monitor, Hernandez explained the location of the camera footage, while adjusting each camera’s view from left to right, slowly. Arquette lifted his left wrist to look his watch, then recommended fast forwarding through each video feed periodically to hopefully catch something out of the ordinary.

“Ok. Well if I want to get through these security footages and interrogate your patient, I really need to get a move on. Is it possible to fast forward through some of these videos? Chances are if someone moves in front of one of these cameras, we’ll see it,” suggested Arquette, leaning in close to the monitors.

“Sounds good,” replied Hernandez. He then pressed the fast-forward button on the control panel and began to skim through each recording.

It was now a few minutes passed midnight. The community room had been prepped and ready for midnight mass. The orderlies have been active with escorting some of the patients from their rooms to the community area. Finally, Arquette and Hernandez had completed their review of all the camera recordings from the past two days; yet, after careful screening and maneuvering through each footage, there were no signs of suspicious movement or unauthorized breaches to or from the facility.

“Well sir, those are all of our outdoor cameras. You sure you don’t wanna review the inside ones?” offered Hernandez.

“No, because I figured it would’ve been easier to spot Karman, or anyone for that matter, trying to leave or get back into the facility. And so, since we didn’t see her on any of the cameras, my suspicions of Karman being the killer has lowered because she more than likely never left the facility during the murders. I mean, how could she’ve done these murders if she was here the whole time?” presumed Arquette.

“Yeah, that’s a really good point! I mean, after viewing all the tapes, we should’ve at least saw one attempt of her either leaving or coming back. So yeah, I’m gonna have to agree with you on this one, Detective,” assented Hernandez.

“Alright. Now, since you didn’t find anything in the tapes, are you finished here, or is there anything else you’d like for us to look at?” he inquired, preparing to reset the cameras back to the present time.

“No, I believe I’m done here. My next approach is finding out if maybe she had someone help her escape, possibly by car. Come to think about it, do you know if she has any friends here, perhaps someone she’s close with in security, administration, or staff?” probed Arquette, while reading through his notes in his binder.

“Why? Do you think anyone from here would do something like that?” asked Hernandez, looking up to his left at Arquette.

“I apologize. I don’t mean to seem disrespectful for implying that anyone on staff would do such a thing; but, if Karman didn’t escape on foot, then it’s possible someone could’ve given her a ride. And since only the employees have vehicles here, I have to go with this theory, next,” reevaluated Arquette.

“I agree Detective. But to assume a staff member or security would risk their job to commit such a crime is a bit over the top, don’t you think?” asked Hernandez, looking back at the monitors.

“Officer, as a detective, again, it’s important I consider assessing all possible scenarios before removing a potential suspect from my list,” responded Arquette, using his pen to jot down notes in his binder.

“This way, when the investigation is over, I can say I’ve covered all my bases,” he continued, looking down to his right at Hernandez.

“Well Detective, I seriously doubt anyone on staff here would help any of these clients commit murder or do anything else illegal for that matter. And removing them from this

building, hell, we worry about our lives while we're here. It definitely wouldn't be smart taken a client off the premises without backup; especially with a history of psychological trauma. I mean, how would we get help if they were to become aggressive with us then?" declared Hernandez.

"Officer Hernandez, I understand. And, again, please don't take this with disrespect, I'd just like to talk with a few more staff, or anyone else who's been around her the most. Perhaps he or she might've seen something out of the ordinary," advised Arquette, looking at Hernandez.

"Oh, no sir. No disrespect felt here. I just want to ensure you that we never had staff do anything like this in the past, so it's really hard to imagine anyone doing something like this now," said Hernandez, expressing confidence in his staff.

"But honestly though, I can actually say that Karman's been showing signs of improvement for a few months, well until about a month ago; then she became secluded from the rest of the residents," he recalled.

"Since then, the only person who's been able to get a reaction out of her is her doctor," he continued.

"Ahh-huh. And what's her doctor's name? Oh! And how long has he or she been working with her?" probed Arquette.

"Her name is Dr. Patel and I believe she's been working with Karman ever since she got here about 8 years ago," disclosed Hernandez.

"She shares an office with other administrators, which is just across the room from this office. But if she's not there, she'll more than likely be in her other office on the 4th floor.

That's where she does her therapy sessions with her clients," he continued.

"Alright. Well I believe I'm ready to go when you are," affirmed Arquette.

After completing his notes, Arquette closed his binder, and then placed it underneath his left arm. Hernandez took one last look at all the monitors to ensure that they were all returned to the present time. As soon as he confirmed that they were all set, he stood up from the control desk and escorted Arquette out of the security room. Arquette walked out, first, followed by Hernandez to close the door behind them. They proceeded across the back room for the other office door. Hernandez opened the door from the right and lead the way inside the office. Now inside, Arquette immediately noticed that no one was there. However, the office light was on, allowing him to view the setup of the office. There were three administrative desks, two of them were across from one another, one on the left and the other on the right side of the office. The third desk was straight ahead from the office door, near the back wall. All three desks faced the center of the room. Behind each one was a computer desk with bookshelves connected. Each computer desk had a computer monitor and keyboard. On the walls were various inspiring pictures which offered an encouraging, cultivating ambiance.

"Now this is the office Dr. Patel normally is in during regular work hours. But seeing that she's not here could only mean she's up in her other office. She doesn't normally leave to go home until mass is over," divulged Hernandez, now facing Arquette.

“Alright sir. Lead the way,” insisted Arquette, turning towards the entrance to walk out the office.

Hernandez followed behind him, closing the door after they exited. They headed back through the large room towards the main door to reach the elevators. Now in the hallway, they moved over to the elevators. Hernandez, with his right hand, removed his badge from his shirt pocket again and scanned it against the elevator panel on the left.

“Do these patients have a scheduled time to go to sleep?” inquired Arquette.

“Honestly, not really. And that’s because these clients suffer from various psychological disorders. Some would sleep sporadically throughout the day and would later be up throughout the night. Plus, when you factor in the different medications they take, they may make them sleepy or cause them to be very active,” explained Hernandez.

“Well that’s great news to hear. This way I might have a chance to question Karman, maybe,” assumed Arquette, softly to himself.

The elevator rang twice, indicating that it reached the 1st floor where its service was initially requested. Suddenly, the elevator on the far right opened and Arquette and Hernandez both walked over to enter it. After Hernandez pressed the button for the 4th floor, the elevator door closed and began to move upward.

As soon as it reached the 4th floor, the elevator stopped. This time it only rang once to indicate it reached the floor requested. Just then, the door opened, and Arquette and

Hernandez exited. After they stepped out, they turned right and then proceeded down the hall. The restrooms for the visitors were on their left as they passed by them. At the midway point of the hall, they approached a door within a wall which divided the hall. A sign “No firearms or sharp objects pass this point” was posted on the lower portion of the door. The door had a clear, thick glass window for staff to see through to the other side in case of an emergency. In addition, there was a card reader to the right of the door for authorized staff to enter and exit. Above the card reader was a button. If visitors pressed this button, it would buzz for an orderly to allow them access.

“Alright! Here we go, detective!” stated Hernandez, preparing to scan his badge at the door.

He pressed his badge against the scanner with his right hand, then instantly, a small beep resounded which indicated that the door was now unlocked, allowing them access to proceed through.

Just passed the door on the right was an administration counter where an orderly monitor’s that corridor. Centered underneath this counter was a sign that read Orderly Station. Across from the station was an administration office. The door was made of solid brown wood and had Dr. Patel’s name plate at the top center of it. Hernandez and Arquette approached her door. Hernandez knocked twice with his left fist and then listened to hear for Dr. Patel’s voice. The music from the Catholic mass; however, was echoing through the hall, making it very difficult to hear if anyone was speaking from inside the office.

“Wait here a second, sir. I’ll have the orderly call her office,” proposed Hernandez.

He left Arquette at the door and walked over to the Orderly Station. The orderly behind the counter was on the computer but looked up to acknowledge Hernandez as he approached.

“Hey, could you call Dr. Patel’s office, please,” requested Hernandez.

“I knocked twice but it’s hard to hear if she’s in there,” he continued.

“No problem. Well wait! Come to think about it, I don’t remember seeing her coming back to her office, which means she could still be down at mass,” replied the orderly, rolling his chair slowly to the left to pick up the phone.

Just to be sure, the orderly picked up the phone with his left hand then dialed the office extension with his right index finger. He then held the phone to his left ear and listened. A few seconds went by before the orderly removed the phone from his ear to inform Hernandez that no one answered.

“Yeah, she didn’t answer, so you should try the community room. She might be there,” he recommended.

Hernandez left the counter and walked back over to Arquette.

“Ok. So, the orderly called her office, but she didn’t pick up. He suggested we check the community room, see if she’s there,” told Hernandez, while pointing his right index finger towards the community room.

Just then, they proceeded down the hall. Hernandez decided to explain how the hall was arranged.

“This hall eventually turns left as you can see the wall ahead, but the community room is down here on the right, just before the turn,” he described, using his right hand as a pointer.

When they reached the end of the hall, they came to the threshold of the community room. They enter; however, they just stood at the entrance and scanned the room for Dr. Patel. The stage for which the service was being conducted was off to the right of the room. The seating area was arranged from the stage leading back toward the entrance. All the chairs at each table were positioned to face the stage for the patients to participate in the service. Arquette scanned the room slowly, starting from the back. As he observed, he only saw a few patients sitting at the back of the room. But this situation, nonetheless, made it easier for him to notice one patient, in particular, whom was sitting near the back window, staring out. He grew curious about this patient because she was a female who resembled someone in their early to mid-twenties. But it was difficult to determine this from behind. At this point, however, he just remained silent and did not bother mentioning her to Hernandez. Instead, he chose to speak with Dr. Patel first about Karman’s history at the facility.

As Hernandez looked about the room for Dr. Patel and didn’t see her, he decided to step pass the threshold for a full view around the entrance. That was when he noticed the back of a white lab coat near the wall. It was Dr. Patel. She was standing against the wall on the right, leaning against it,

and facing the stage. Hernandez slowly moved around the entrance towards Dr. Patel, trying not to disturb the patients. Arquette, after seeing Hernandez move inside the community room, decided to enter behind him. Yet, with him walking directly behind Hernandez, he was unable to see Dr. Patel. Hernandez approached Dr. Patel from behind and tapped her on the left shoulder. Just then, she turned her head slightly left to see passed her left shoulder. When she realized who it was, she turned toward him.

“Excuse me, ma’am. I’m sorry to bother you, but there’s a detective here wishing to speak with you,” notified Hernandez.

Right after, she leaned slightly to her right and saw Arquette just passed Hernandez’s left shoulder. She then stood upright to inquire about his reason for requesting her.

“Yeah, well what does he want?” she asked, expressing a lack of interest in speaking with Arquette.

“Well ma’am, it seems to be about one of your patients, Karman Anderson. He says he’s working on a case he believes may involve her,” informed Hernandez.

“Are you serious?! Ok. Humm, well this ougta be interesting,” she chuckled, expressing slight cynicism and wittiness.

With relative ease, she then moved around the left side of Hernandez to greet Arquette.

“Dr. Patel, and you are?!” she greeted, extending her right hand out toward Arquette.

“Good evening, ma’am. I’m Detective Arquette with the Annapolis Police Department. I do apologize for this late

visit, but I really need to speak with you about one of your patients,” he replied, while shaking her hand.

“Ok. We can go to my office, it’s around the corner, if you would follow me,” directed Dr. Patel.

She then proceeded around Arquette. He stepped to his right so she could pass him and then began to follow right behind her. Following directly behind the both of them was Hernandez. But just before Arquette reached the threshold, he took another glimpse at the female patient near the back the window.

Now out in the hall, Dr. Patel reached her office door and then took out her key from her right lab coat pocket. Arquette was not far behind talking with Hernandez.

“Detective, I’ll be over here at the orderly counter. So once you’re finished, I’ll escort you back downstairs,” told Hernandez.

“Sounds good!” Arquette agreed.

He then left from Hernandez’s side to join Dr. Patel near her door. She opened her door and entered her office with Arquette following immediately behind her. Once inside, she walked over to her desk and sat down.

“You can have a seat here,” she directed him, pointing her right index finger at the patient’s chair to the right of her desk.

“Thanks,” replied Arquette.

He took a seat, sat his computer case on the floor, then opened his binder in his lap.

“Ok Detective, how can I help you?” enquired Dr. Patel.

“Well Doctor, currently I’m in the middle of investigating a random of murders. In the last three days we’ve had three people murdered; all of which had one thing in common in their past, and that’s the high school they were affiliated with. Now, the reason I’m here is because the name I was provided matches a patient here. And although she’s here, her history ties with those whom were murdered. Of course, although I’ve been told she’s been here for nearly 10 years, I still have to follow protocol in order to remove any potential suspects from my list,” he unveiled, hoping his information would inspire Dr. Patel to support his investigation.

“Huh. Boy, that’s quite an interesting situation you have there, Detective. So tell me, who’s the patient you’re interested in, may I ask?” inquired Dr. Patel, fairly confident of the answer.

“Uh, I’ve been told the patient’s name is Karman Anderson,” disclosed Arquette, while looking down at his notes.

Dr. Patel paused briefly and stared at him. He, in turn, stared directly back at her with uncertainty of why she paused. A few seconds passed before she suddenly exhaled and then began to conversate with him again

“Ah yes, she’s one of mine. Ok. So, now that we’ve disclosed that, what is it that you need from her?” she offered.

However, just before Arquette could reply, she abruptly warned him about their patient confidentiality practice.

“But first, please know that any information regarding Karman’s psychological profile is strictly confidential...unless you can provide a warrant,” she continued, assuring that she had warned him about their protocol for patient confidentiality.

“Well no ma’am, I’m not here to read her file. I’m actually here to interrogate her, you know, have her answer some questions reflecting the past few days. Of course, depending on how she answers them, may prove whether she’s done these recent crimes or not,” advised Arquette.

“But more importantly, if I find any reason to believe she’s connected to these crimes, I will have to take her in,” he continued, ensuring he provided her of his official protocol.

Dr. Patel sat back in her chair to reflect on what he just told her.

“So, let me get this right. You want to ask her questions that may or may not prove she killed people in the past few days, even though you know she’s been here for almost 10 years?” Dr. Patel recapped, in a mildly appalling tone.

“Detective, my question to you is, do you really believe an interrogation is necessary?” she continued.

“Well again, I can definitely see how this might look. I mean, she’s a resident here under tight security, so there’s no possible way she’s been able come and go without being seen, right?” said Arquette, expressing a fair-minded view.

“However, because I’ve been doing detective work for a very long time now, I’ve seen all sorts of possibilities for how one could commit a crime. For instance, another possibility could be that Karman, if physically unable to walk out of this facility, could’ve known someone here who might’ve drove her off the premise. And if that happened, then that would explain how she’s been undetected leaving and returning,” he continued, providing insightful possibilities on how one could escape a secured location.

“Well Detective, I have to admit, that’s very astute of how you could venture on with the assumption that a staff worker would actually carry Karman to and from this facility. But let me ask you this, why would any of my staff jeopardize their career and safety to take any patient off this compound without following security procedures; more importantly, why would they want to help anyone commit a crime?” questioned Dr. Patel, with desire to have Arquette retract his theory of staff involvement.

“Doctor, I can see why you’re having doubts. It’s a normal reaction. But if you’ve seen half the things I’ve seen, you’d be open to any possibilities. Again, I have doubts, but that’s why I’m here, so I can remove the doubts to find the facts. Yet, to reach that point, I’ll need to ask Karman some questions which, depending on her answers, may remove her from being a suspect,” explained Arquette.

Silence overtook the office for a minute or two as Dr. Patel sat back in her chair and quietly pondered about what her next step should be.

After giving this diligent thought, she looked over at Arquette and told him what she had decided.

“Alright Detective. Listen, I would really like to help you with your case. I mean you seem to have a very challenging investigation, especially when your suspect’s been locked behind a secure facility for years. Yet, with that being said, I just don’t find it necessary for you to speak with my patient. I mean as far as I can recall, we never experienced any issues with her trying to escape; nor has she ever displayed any type of violent behavior toward

staff. But more importantly, there's no history of our staff assisting any patient with absconding from this facility. And so, I find the reason for your visit otiose," told Dr. Patel, now leaning forward with her elbows placed on her desk with her fingers interlocked.

"Dr. Patel, if it wasn't an emergency, I would honestly be at home right now; however, I'm on a time crunch here. These murders have all taken place every day, for the last three days, between midnight and 5am," disclosed Arquette, growing frustrated.

"It's very important I speak with Karman before another murder occurs," he insisted, expressing a sense of urgency; hoping that by mentioning this Dr. Patel would change her decision.

"Yes Detective, I can perceive your sense of urgency, but I'm gonna stand by my decision. I just don't see any reason for this interrogation to happen," Dr. Patel reaffirmed.

"But I'll tell you what I will do. Karman is at mass now. As soon as it's over, I'll check on her before I leave to ensure she's not displaying any signs of suspicious behaviors or concerns. Well...nothing we're not use to seeing, anyway," she suggested.

Her decision disappointed him. He then closed his binder with a sense of frustration and just stared at her. After about a minute, he took a deep breath, stood to his feet, and then grabbed his computer case. Next, he walked around the left side of the chair then headed for the door to leave. Though, just before he reached the door, he turned around toward Dr. Patel.

“Look Doctor, tonight it’s absolutely vital you all keep an eye on her, especially during the times I mentioned earlier,” advised Arquette.

“Detective, I’m actually going to be leaving here shortly. Although, what I could do, just for this evening, is have an orderly monitor her throughout the night to ensure she’s not leaving the facility. And, as an extra precaution, if the orderly doesn’t see Karman in her room for whatever reason; or, if he sees disturbing behaviors beyond her typical state, I’ll have him contact myself, as well as you,” proposed Dr. Patel, as she stood up from her desk to follow him out the door.

Right then, Arquette reached into his left pants pocket for one of his business cards and gave it to her.

“Well I guess that’s better than nothing. Here. It has my office and cellphone number on it. Please, you can call me anytime,” told Arquette.

Now out in the hall, Dr. Patel shut her door and then turned to shake Arquette’s hand.

“Well Dr. Patel, I really do appreciate you taking the time to speak with me,” thanked Arquette.

“You’re more than welcome, Detective. And again, sorry I couldn’t have been of more help,” replied Dr. Patel.

After they shook hands, Dr. Patel headed back to the community room, while Arquette went over and stood to the right of Hernandez at the orderly counter. The moment he reached the counter, Hernandez and the orderly stopped conversing to acknowledge him.

“Well Detective, did you get the help you were looking for?” asked Hernandez.

“Honestly! Not really. But at least I can go to sleep knowing someone will be watching the patient I came here about,” replied Arquette, glancing down the hall toward the community room.

“Alright sir! So, are you ready?” asked Hernandez, reaching into his left shirt pocket for his access badge.

“Yeah, I think so,” confirmed Arquette.

As they began to walk toward the access door, the orderly wished both, Hernandez and Arquette, a good night.

“You gentlemen have a good night,” he wished them.

“Thanks. You too,” replied Arquette.

Hernandez lead Arquette through the security door and back down to the lower level for the main entrance. In the community room, Dr. Patel pulled her left sleeve back to read her watch. The time read fifteen minutes to 1am in the morning. She decided it was now time to head home; though, after speaking with the Arquette, she first wanted to personally check on Karman before heading home. Moving quietly along the back of the room, she eventually approached Karman who was facing the back window. She whispered Karman’s name aloud in hopes of a response. Karman, however, did not respond. Instead, she sat motionless while staring out the window into the dark night. Dr. Patel decided to walk around the right side of her to get in front of her. She did this to see if it would cause a reaction. Surprisingly, this actually did trigger a response as Karman’s eyes turned slightly to the right, towards Dr. Patel.

“Hey Karman. How are you feeling?” she asked, placing her left hand on Karman’s right shoulder out of a sign of compassion. Again, to her surprise, Karman’s mouth formed what appeared to be a smile. Or, perhaps a smirk mistaken for a smile. Dr. Patel wasn’t really sure. And so, she just returned a smile back at Karman.

As she analyzed Karman’s mental health state, she now felt that Karman’s behavior had become very peculiar as she sat there with a grim, dark smile on her face.

“Karman, are you ok? It’s hard to make out this look you’re giving me. Do you have something you want to tell me?” she asked, trying to examine Karman’s inexplicable body language.

Yet Karman still remained silent. Dr. Patel removed her left hand from Karman’s right should and then turned to her left to observe mass. The Priest had begun the closing prayer. At that moment, Dr. Patel decided to bow her head in respect of the prayer. While her head was bowed, she placed her right hand on Karman’s right shoulder. Disturbingly, Karman soon grew agitated as she started trying to avoid Dr. Patel’s hand by shifting her shoulder, testily. Dr. Patel felt her reaction but did not think anything about it. After he had finished his prayer, the Priest wished the attending patients a good night, then began to pack up his religious artifacts. A few seconds went by before an orderly suddenly entered the community room and began assisting the patients back to their rooms. Now that service had concluded, Dr. Patel decided that she would speak with the Priest about Karman. She noticed that he was still busy packing up his belongings

and chose to give him a few minutes to finish before she approached him.

As soon as he finished packing all of his supplies, Dr. Patel walked over to him at the front of the room.

“Good evening, Dr. Patel!” greeted the Priest, wearing his all-black priest attire.

“Did you enjoy service?” he continued, coming down off the stage to meet her.

“Good evening, Father. Yes, the service was amazing as usual” replied Dr. Patel.

“Listen, if you have a few minutes, there’s someone I need you to pray over this evening. I have a slight concern regarding her mental health, or spiritual being, for that matter. I’m not really sure; but what I do know is that lately she’s been associating herself with a troubled patient that appears to display this Gothic, Satanic psychosis whom I feel has been influencing her,” pleaded Dr. Patel, looking over her left shoulder, back at Karman.

“I see. And is that the patient you’re referring I pray over?” asked the Priest, looking over Dr. Patel’s left shoulder at Karman.

“Yeah Father, that’s her. But I should warn you; while you were saying the closing prayer, I tried placing my hand on her, but she didn’t seem to like it,” confirmed Dr. Patel.

“Well thanks for the heads up,” thanked the Priest.

“Alright. Well as soon as she’s in her room, I’ll stop by and pray over her. But as a precaution, I’ll also have an orderly to assist me,” he suggested.

“That sounds really good, Father. Thank you so much!” agreed Dr. Patel.

“You’re welcome. And God bless you my child. Please, have a good night!” the Priest concluded.

“Amen. And good night to you as well, Father!” replied Dr. Patel.

The Priest then walked back onto the stage to grab the rest of his supplies.

Dr. Patel turned around and noticed that Karman was the only one left in the room. The orderly suddenly appeared in the community room again. This time he was set to take Karman back to her room. Dr. Patel quickly whispered to the orderly to meet with her first. The orderly heard her voice and then proceeded to the middle of the room to meet with her.

“Alright listen, I just spoke with Father and he said he would stop by Karman’s room to perform a prayer ritual. Could you oversee this to ensure he remains safe?” requested Dr. Patel.

“Sure thing, ma’am!” the orderly agreed.

“Ah, when is he planning to do this, do you know?” he asked.

“I’m not entirely sure, but it couldn’t be too much longer. If you get with him, I’m sure he’ll tell you when he plans to do it,” Dr. Patel recommended.

“Will do, ma’am!” the orderly concurred.

“Oh wait! There’s one more request. If it’s possible, I’m going to have you check on Karman quite often throughout the night. I’ll say, maybe stop by her room every thirty minutes. This is to ensure that she’s not leaving her room,” proposed Dr. Patel.

“And lastly, I’ll want to know if anyone from staff removes any patient from their dorm overnight. You can email me this information. Or, if it’s an emergency, call me,” she concluded, ensuring she covered all the concerns she and Arquette had discussed.

“Yes ma’am, I’ll be sure to keep a close eye on Karman tonight, as well as the other patients,” told the orderly.

After they concluded their conversation, Dr. Patel left the room for her office. The orderly then resumed with assisting Karman back to her room. He approached her from her left side, placing his right hand on her right shoulder, gently, while informing her that he was going to escort her back to her room.

“Hey Karman, I’m here to take you to your dorm now,” he said.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

There were no signs of response from Karman. The orderly, however, still proceeded with assisting her back to her room. First, he slowly eased his left arm underneath her right arm. Then, he lifted her upward to a stand. After that, he walked her to the right, around her chair, and then lead her toward the threshold of the room. Now out in the hall, the orderly looked to his left and noticed Dr. Patel locking her office door. The Priest appeared at the threshold and

asked that the orderly if he could inform him of when Karman was back in her room.

“Uh, excuse me. Could you let me know when she’s back in her room? The doctor wants me to pray over her before I leave,” he requested.

“Will do, Father. Just give me a few minutes, sir,” the orderly replied.

The orderly and Karman then continued down the hall. Moments later, he finally reached Karman’s room. With his right hand, he removed his keys from his right pants pocket. After finding the universal key, he unlocked the door then put his keys back into his pocket. Next, he opened the door outward from the right and then slowly walked Karman inside her room. She sat on her bed without any signs of vivacity or interaction. The orderly just stared at her, temporarily. As soon as he presumed that she was likely going to remain in this immobile state of being, he decided to leave her in this condition.

He turned around then walked toward the door. Before stepping out the room, though, he stopped and turned slightly to his left to take another look at Karman. Surprisingly, he saw that her head was now turned to the left, toward at him, and had this eerie smile on her face. Because he didn’t understand why she had this look on her face, he simply smiled back, politely. He then left out the room then closed and locked the door behind him. Soon after, he returned to the community room and stood at the

threshold. As he leaned to the left, rounding the corner of the entrance, he informed the Priest that Karman was now back in her room.

“Hey Father, Karman’s back in her room. But I thought I’d let you know that before I left out, I noticed she had this weird smile on her face. Now, I’m not really sure what that was all about, but I thought you oughta know,” he cautioned.

“Thanks for the heads up. I think I’ll head down there right now. But if you wouldn’t mind, I would like you to check on me in a few minutes, you know, just to ensure things are ok,” requested the Priest.

“I’m already on top of it, Father. Dr. Patel wants to make sure you’re safe, so she asked me to check on you while you’re in with Karman. And, of course, I told her I would,” replied the orderly.

“Sounds good. Thanks,” said the Priest, expressing appreciation for the orderly’s support.

The Priest went back into the community room to ensure that all his supplies were packed and ready to go.

As soon as his supply bag was ready, he carried it to the entrance of the community room then placed it on the floor to the left of the threshold. He then stepped pass the threshold and requested the door keys from the orderly.

“Alright. I think I’m ready now. Do you have the keys?” he asked.

“Yeah, they’re right here,” replied the orderly, reaching into his right pants pocket again to retrieve them.

He removed them from his pocket and placed them in the Priest’s right hand. The Priest secured them firmly in his hand

then started walking toward Karman's room. The then orderly went back to the orderly counter. When the Priest approached Karman's door, he first looked through the small window to assess her current activity. As he observed, he noticed that she was just sitting on her bed and gazing at the wall in front of her. Having no concerns of her, he then searched the key ring for the universal key. As soon as he found it, he unlocked the door. Slowly, he opened it, trying to avoid appearing hostile or unwelcomed. Once inside, he then closed the door behind him with grace, then put the keys in his right pants pocket.

As he eased up to her, he heard a low-pitch mumbling, groaning sound which seemed to have been resonating from within the room. At first, he thought it was coming from Karman, yet it was difficult for him to determine this because her mouth did not appear to be moving. However, as he moved closer, he saw her lips quivering as if she was trying to speak. He listened intently to learn what it was that she was trying to communicate. After a few minutes, he decided to move directly in front of her and lean his right ear near her mouth. To his surprise, when he looked her face, he noticed her eyes were inverted upwards in her head. Instantly, he assumed that she was practicing some sort of witchcraft or supernatural enactment. Right then, with his left hand, he hastily grabbed his crucifix that was hanging around his neck, while also kindly placing his right hand directly on top of her head. Because this moment brought extreme anxiety, it caused interference in his ability to recall the most effective scriptures for such an occasion. He knew, however, that he needed the scriptures in

support of casting out wicked, unholy temperaments. To better concentrate, he closed his eyes to slow down his mind, and then tried mentally skimming through his bible. Finally, he was able to evoke various scriptures to included Acts 16: 16-18, Luke 4: 33-36, Mark 16: 17, and Mark 3: 11. As he recited aloud these random verses, Karman's body began to revolt and shiver as if she was having convulsions. The Priest, though, did not cease from speaking or remove his hand from her head. Instead, he continued to recite these scriptures with hopes this would soon be over.

During his random safety check, the orderly stopped by Karman's room to check on the Priest's well-being. When he peeked through the small window, he saw that the situation was slightly unstable, triggering him to grab the door handle, immediately, to enter the room. He opened the door then closed it behind him just in case the situation intensified. He then asked the Priest what was happening.

"Father, what's going on? What happened?!" he inquired, feeling nervous and troubled about the situation. Briefly, the Priest paused from reciting verses so he could explain the situation.

"Ka...Karman!! I think she's possessed or something. She was sitting here chanting some sort of ritual, I believe. And when I heard it, I immediately started performing an exorcism, trying to remove whatever wickedness that's inside her," he explained.

"Where...Where's Dr. Patel?" he asked, hoping she could assist with Karman's critical mental health eruption.

“Father, she’s already gone for the night. Do you want me to call her back?” asked the orderly, displaying a sense of anticipation to dial her number.

“No, but if you could, I need you to lay her down on the bed and restrain her while I continue,” replied the Priest, still holding his right hand steady atop of Karman’s head.

“No problem!” agreed the orderly.

He moved around to the left side of the Priest and stood in front of Karman. Next, he forcibly grabbed both of Karman’s arms and laid her down on her back, hastily. Consequently, the force he applied to her arms set off an aggressive response from her. Karman’s eyes suddenly reappeared from inside her head and she assertively began to fight back to avert the efforts of being physically restrained. In addition, the words she once mumbled softly, were now spoken in a riotous and sinister tone. The Priest had to stop his ritual temporarily so the orderly could take charge of her.

After a confrontationally writhing with Karman for a few minutes, the orderly finally got her down on the bed. To ensure adequate stability, though, he climbed on the bed, putting himself on top of her and pinning her arms down on the mattress. Yet, Karman continued to struggle to get free as she aggressively kicked her legs about underneath the orderly. The Priest placed his right knee on the mattress near Karman, then leaned forward to place his right hand back on top of her head. He then resumed with his ritual once more, quoting bible verses and singing spiritual helms. Astoundingly, after about fifteen minutes, Karman’s aggressive body movement finally began to

dwindle down. The loud words she once shouted had reduced to a faint, undistinguished mumble. In addition, her eyes had no longer reflected any type of anger or wickedness. Finally, she began to display a sense of restfulness and docility as her body muscles relaxed and her eyelids lowered, resembling a sign of tiredness. When the orderly noticed these signs, he turned to his right and whispered to the Priest.

“Psssh. Hey Father, I think you did it,” he said, using a soft, casual tone to avoid another traumatic episode

After the Priest acknowledged her settled state, he decided to pause from reciting scriptures. Inquisitively, he asked the orderly to reduce the amount of force he was applying on Karman’s arms.

“Perhaps. Could you do me a favor and ease up off her a little? I want to see what she does,” he requested, curious to see how Karman would respond under minimum restraint.

The orderly agreed then reduced the amount of weight he had on her arms. After he saw Karman’s mental state appearing stable without restraint, he slowly stood up from the bed. The Priest, however, remained on the bed with his right hand still atop of her head. Of course, he planned to continue reciting verses, but after asking the orderly for another favor.

“Hey, do you have any sedatives or anti-psychotropic drugs that could put her out for the night?” he asked, in a relaxed tone.

“Yeah! The shot we administer to patients has the medicine benzodiazepines that’ll do the trick,” confirmed the orderly.

“Now that sounds like a true blessing right about now. Go ahead and get it. I’ll stay with her just in case she stirs up again,” the Priest recommended.

The orderly moved swiftly to the door to leave the room. As soon as he exited, he closed the door behind him and then sprinted to the orderly counter. The Priest decided to begin his ritual again. With his right knee on the bed and right hand on top of Karman’s head, he began to recite scriptures again. A few minutes later, the orderly returned holding a clear needle with an orange cap in his right hand. He opened the door, pulled the cap off with his teeth, and then he rushed around the Priest to administer the shot into Karman’s right arm. He ensured to deplete all of the medicine from this needle. Once he was finished, he pulled the needle out of Karman’s arm and replaced the cap back onto it. They then waited patiently as the medication took effect. Five minutes had passed before Karman’s body began to fully react to the shot. First, her body became extremely relaxed, seeming almost motionless. Next, her breathing reduced from heavy rapid, panic attacks, to a state of relaxation. Soon after, her eyes appeared awfully heavy as she struggled with keeping them open. Ultimately, this shot, which caused this drowsy, lethargic condition, had now brought Karman to a deep, unperturbed state of being...sleep.

“Ok, I think she’s out for now,” the Priest verified, as he leaned forward above Karman’s face.

He removed his right hand from the top of her head and used it to assess her eyes. With his thumb and index finger, he widened her left eyelid and noticed that it was enervated

and unresponsive. After a few seconds, he released her eyelid and then stood to his feet.

“Man! Now that was quite an experience,” the Priest said, expressing moderate humor.

“Yeah Father, I agree! You know, I’ve helped out with a lot of situations, but never have I been in one that involved casting out demons,” told the orderly, seeming mildly excited, yet still traumatized about the incident.

“Yeah. Well I have to admit this was my first time, as well. I mean, I’ve heard stories of these situations, but never have I actually experienced one, personally,” disclosed the Priest, as he stood over Karman, looking at her in disbelief.

“I wonder if she has a history of this. Or, if she’s learned this behavior here,” he pondered aloud.

“I’m not really sure, Father. I mean, with so many mental disorders here, it’s hard to determine if a patient’s behavior is a result of their past circumstances, or new ones picked up while being here. But whatever the case, I know this situation with her will most definitely be reviewed by Dr. Patel,” conveyed the orderly.

“Well let me go cause now I need to write-up an incident report regarding this. But of course, this one I plan to sit right on Dr. Patel’s desk. This way as soon as she gets in, she can see about her, first thing,” he continued.

“Now that’s a really great idea! Oh! And please add in your report that she can contact me anytime about this matter, anytime. I’d like to speak with her more about Karman’s history anyway, if possible,” advised the Priest, removing the orderly’s keys from his right pants pocket.

“I’ll definitely add that for you, Father,” the orderly agreed.

The Priest then handed the keys back to the orderly, took one last look at Karman, and then exited the room. The orderly placed the keys in his right pants pocket then glanced over at Karman. After noticing that her feet were hanging off the bed, he decided to lift and turn her legs to the left to get her completely on the bed. In addition, he repositioned her arms and head for better comfort to ensure she wouldn’t hurt herself while moving about in her sleep. As soon as he felt positive that she would be ok, he exited the room, locked the door behind him, and then returned to the orderly counter to file his report.

Ten minutes later, the light in the community room flicked off and out came the Priest carrying his supply bag in his left hand. He then proceeded to the orderly counter. When he approached the counter, he noticed the orderly typing up his report.

“Alright. The lights are off in the community room. I’m gonna take off now,” he said, while searching for his car keys and access badge in his bag.

“Yes sir. Well, have a great night and get some rest. You definitely deserve it after tonight’s interesting debacle,” replied the orderly.

“Amen to that! Well, you to have a good night also, son. And I’ll see you Wednesday evening for mass,” the Priest concluded, pulling the strap of his bag over his left shoulder.

He placed his car keys in his right pants pocket and held his badge in his left-hand. Now ready to go, he proceeded toward

the elevators. Ten minutes had now past, and the orderly was finished his report. Using the computer mouse, he clicked the print button on the screen to print his report, then he walked over to the printer to retrieve it. After confirming that the information on this report was correct, he held the report in his left hand while removing his keys from his pocket with his right. He got the master key ready then left the counter for Dr. Patel's office. When he reached the office door, he unlocked it and entered. Now inside, he walked over and positioned his report on her desk in a manner that would instantly draw her attention as soon as she would take a seat. Feeling content about how it was positioned, he then left her office and locked the door behind him. Shortly after, he took a seat back at the counter and decided to review the security taping for that floor.

Back in the city, Arquette finally reached home. As soon as he parked his car in the driveway, he noticed that Linda had left the living room light on. He got out of the car, grabbed his computer case from the backseat, and then walked up to the house. With his keys in his right hand, he unlocked the door and went inside, then closed and locked the door behind him. After that, he walked over to the fireplace and sat his badge, wallet, and keys on top of it. Next, he placed his computer case down on the recliner and then went into the kitchen. After flicking the on light, he walked over to the refrigerator, grabbed a snack, then sat down on the left side of table. Although he knew it was well past 1 am, he still decided to contact the Chief. He pulled his cellphone out of his right pants pocket then scrolled through the contacts list to find his

number. As soon as he highlighted it, he pressed the send button and held his cellphone up to his right ear. The phone rang four times before the Chief's voicemail answered. After the beep resounded, Arquette began to explain the reason he would be late to work in the morning.

“Good evening Chief. This is Jackson. Sorry to be calling you so late. I just wanted you to know that I had a late visit at the psych ward to follow up on a potential suspect, and I'm just getting in now. With that being said, I plan to be in late around mid-morning, today. But, if for some reason you absolutely need me, please don't hesitate to call. Talk with you tomorrow, sir,” he informed.

He pulled the cellphone away from his ear, pressed the end button to hang up, then placed the cellphone down on the table to his right. After finishing his snack, he got up from the table and grabbed both, his cellphone and trash, threw his trash in the trash can, then walked over to the threshold of the kitchen and turned off the light. Now in the living room, he stopped by the lamp near the sofa and turned it off. The hall light upstairs was still on which made it easy for him to see the staircase. He then proceeded up the stairs to the bedroom. Now in the room, he took off his clothes, used the bathroom, and then went out into the hall to turn that light off. After that, he got into bed. Linda was already fast asleep. He rolled over slightly to his left and gave her a kiss on her right cheek then laid down and embraced her in his arms and went to sleep.

We're Still Alive

The sun arose over the horizon, resembling a high yellow bulb brightening the sky. The streetlights had now been turned off from block to block, systematically. Traffic began to flow into downtown as many people were heading to work to start their Monday. Across town, Chris had awakened with a sense of restfulness; however, he also felt very confused about why he was still alive. As he laid in bed, he began to ponder about what might have taken place last night for him to still be alive.

“Ok. So it seems nothing happened to me last night. Humm. Maybe the detective arrested Karman. Or worse possibility, something happened to Abigail. I should call her to see how she’s doing,” he pondered to himself, while staring directly up at the ceiling.

But first, he decided to get out of bed and go downstairs to assess the rest of the house. When he got downstairs, he quickly acknowledged that everything was ok. He then decided to return to his room to get his cellphone. After entering his room, he walked over and picked his cellphone from off the left side of his bed, near the wall. With it now in his right hand, he stood up and read the time. It read a quarter to eight. With no delay, he scrolled the recent calls list for Abigail’s number. As soon as the search bar highlighted it, Chris pressed the send button then held the cellphone up to his right ear. The phone rang three times, but

Abigail did not answer. He hung up and then redialed her number. Yet again, the phone simply just rang. Although there was no answer, Chris hung up once more but continued to call her a few more times.

Surprisingly, on the sixth attempt, the voice of a tired, groggy female answered the phone.

“He...hello,” answered Abigail, sounding lethargic and confused.

“Hey Abigail, this is Chris!! Oh man, I’m so happy to hear your voice right now!” he greeted, seeming a bit energized now that Abigail had answered her phone and sounded ok.

“Yeah, what do you want, Chris? It’s early,” Abigail inquired, sounding slightly annoyed that he called her so early.

“Well, I thought I’d call to check on you. You know, after what happened to our friends, and then me believing one of us was next, I thought this time it was you. I mean, after seeing that I was ok, I thought something might’ve happened to you,” Chris confessed, expressing genuine concern for Abigail’s safety.

“Yeah, well now you know I’m ok. And that could only mean your theory’s a bit off, don’t-cha think? I mean, like I said before, the things that happened to those guys were unfortunate, freak accidents, that’s all. Now please, I gotta get more rest because I work this evening,” told Abigail, sounding uninterested in hearing anymore of Chris’s theory.

“Yeah, that’s my fault. I apologize for waking you up. And now that I see we’re both fine, I’m, too, starting to believe my theory was wrong, obviously,” Chris admitted.

“Anyway, I never asked you where you worked,” he continued, trying to change the mood of their conversation.

“Oh. I work at TeleCast, a tele-communication service agency. I’m a manager there and I oversee their sales processing, customer concerns, and installation authorizations,” Abigail divulged.

“Alright! Man, that job sounds really interesting!” said Chris.

“Yeah, it’s ok. But to be honest, the job sucks, and that’s mainly because I deal with a lot of customer complaints...and I mean, a lot,” stated Abigail, sounding weary of her responsibilities.

“Oh, ok. Well as for me, I’m just goin to school right now. Yeah, I’m goin for my Associate’s in Criminal Justice,” Chris disclosed.

“Really? That sounds good, Chris! I’m proud of you!” told Abigail, inspired to hear this news.

“Thanks!” replied Chris.

“Alright. Well let me go; gotta get some more rest,” insisted Abigail, losing interest in their conversation.

“Alright then. Sounds good. Yeah, please get more rest. And again, I apologize for waking you up,” Chris empathized.

They then said goodbye and then disconnected.

He put his cellphone in his right pants pocket and just stood in place thinking about his theory regarding the recent deaths.

“Alright. So Abigail’s fine, and I’m ok. Maybe she’s right. Maybe what happened to the others were just freak accidents,” he pondered to himself, softly.

He then decided to leave his bedroom to go downstairs. Now in the living room, Chris turned on the tv then opened the window blinds for some sunlight. After that, he went into the kitchen to make himself some breakfast. He decided to make something quick but that also would not create a huge mess for himself to clean up afterward. When he approached the refrigerator, he pulled out a box of waffles from the freezer, then took two eggs out of a yellow egg cart from the refrigerator. After he closed the refrigerator door, he then walked over to the counter to sit these items down. Next, he walked over to the cabinets for a plate and cup. As soon as he placed these items on the counter, he opened the silverware draw for cooking and eating utensils. He then placed these items on the counter next to his plate and cup. Next, he stooped low and opened the cabinet to the right of the sink and reached his left hand inside for a small pan. He sat the pan on the front left eye of the stove, then closed the cabinet.

Startlingly, the thought of Karman, his friends who were murdered, and the detective all began to cross his mind, abruptly, all at once.

“Ok. So Abigail is fine, and so am I, apparently; yet, the detective has a theory to his investigation also, that links us all together. Maybe I oughta contact him to see if he’s got any new information,” he contemplated, suddenly developing a strong desire to hear about the detective’s latest findings.

He pulled his cellphone out from his right pants pocket and searched the recent calls list for the Arquette’s number. As soon as he highlighted it, he pressed the send button and

held his cellphone up to his right ear. The phone rang three times before Linda answered.

“Hello. Good morning, this is Detective Arquette’s phone. How can I help you?” she greeted.

“Oh! Hello! Yes ma’am, this is Chris. Can I speak with Detective Arquette?” he replied, while standing in his kitchen.

“I’m sorry Chris, but he’s unavailable at the moment. Would you like to leave a message?” Linda offered.

“Well ma’am, I just need to speak with him about something. It’s really important. Could you please have him contact me as soon as he can?” Chris requested.

“Sure thing, Chris. I’ll have him call you the minute he’s available,” assured Linda.

“Is there anything else?” she continued.

“Actually yeah. Can I ask who this is I’m speaking with?” Chris inquired, expressing polite curiosity.

“Sure! This is his wife, Mrs. Arquette?” she replied, with a giggle.

“Yes ma’am. Well Mrs. Arquette, I appropriate your help, and it was nice to meet you,” told Chris, in a gratified tone.

“Well it was nice meeting you, too, Chris,” Linda responded.

“The Detective should be calling you back soon,” reassured Linda.

“Yes ma’am,” said Chris.

They then said goodbye and then disconnected.

After he hung up, Chris placed his cellphone on the table and began to prepare his breakfast.

At Arquette's house, Linda placed Arquette's cellphone back on the nightstand and leaned over to give him a kiss on his left cheek. She then left the bedroom and went downstairs to prepare breakfast. Before she began to gather all the food items and other necessities, she picked up the remote and turned on the tv. She turned it to the news station then placed the remote down on the counter next to the tv. After that, she then went over to the refrigerator, opened the door, but stood there pondering about what breakfast dish to create. As she scanned each shelf, Linda finally decided that she would make pancakes with sausage and eggs. Just then, she grabbed the blue carton of large eggs from the refrigerator. Then, from the freezer, took out a pack of sausage containing eight links, and sat them both on the counter near the stove. Next, she walked over to a cabinet and opened it for the box of pancake mix. Again, after she grabbed the box of mix, she walked over to the counter and sat it down next to the eggs and sausage. Now ready to begin, she went for the various cooking supplies underneath the sink. She removed three pans and sat them on three stove burners. Then, she turned the stove on low and started prepping the food. About fifteen minutes had passed before she had the various food items cooking. Ultimately, this blended aroma of foods ironically resembled that of a southern-style kitchen. Another few minutes went by before all the food was finally done. Linda grabbed some plates and eating utensils and placed them on the table. Shortly after, she took each of the cookware and transferred the food items onto both plates. Then, she put

all the cookware in the sink once they were empty. Feeling self-assured that breakfast was ready, Linda decided to go awaken Arquette. She exited the kitchen and she walked through the living room for the staircase. As soon as she started up the stairs, she heard his cellphone ringing. She decided to move quickly to try and answer it; however, after getting halfway up, she suddenly heard his voice.

“Cough-cough. Hel...hello, Detective Arquette speaking,” he greeted, in a groggy, hoarse-like tone.

“Good morning Arquette, it’s Ryan. Where are you? You still at home?” he asked, wondering why Arquette was sounding as if he had just woken up.

“Yeah. I got home late last night. I went out to that psych ward I told you about and didn’t get back until a little after 1,” explained Arquette.

“Oh! Well I definitely apologize for waking you up then,” Ryan empathized.

“Alright. So, what time do you plan to be in? I can talk to you when you get here,” he continued.

“No, no. It’s ok. We can talk now. I was gonna get up soon anyway. My wife’s breakfast is smelling really good right now,” replied Arquette, being humorous while sitting up in the bed.

“So, what’s the latest?” he inquired, expressing interest.

“Ok. So, when I got to work this morning, I checked my messages and found one from the lab. They said they’ve concluded that the prints from the earlier scenes matched the ones from the last two murders. I plan to get with the lab this morning and have them run all the prints through

the data base. It'll be very interesting to see what we find," disclosed Ryan.

"Yeah, that is great news because if this is the same person that's done all these murders, then we can narrow our search and go get this perp off the streets," avowed Arquette.

"Speaking of which, did you hear of any murders last night matching the previous three?" he continued, expressing great curiosity; yet, a little anxious to hear the answer.

"Oddly enough, no. When I got in this morning, things seemed normal. I mean, there was crime of course, but there weren't no new cases that we've been assigned to," Ryan affirmed.

"Oh man! You mean to tell me not one new case? Now this is shocking. Humm. I wonder what could've happened last night then. Because based on the other murders, there should've been one last night, that is, if the friend is still in the area," presumed Arquette.

"Wait! You know what? I have that young man's number. So, what I'll do is give him a call here in a little to check on him," he continued.

"That sounds like a plan, Arquette!" agreed Ryan.

"Yeah. Well let me get up, eat, then I'll be on my way to the office. And when I get there, we'll look over those prints," avowed Arquette, now turning to himself to the right and placing both feet on the floor.

"Alright then. I'll see you when you get here," Ryan concluded.

They then disconnected.

Arquette sat his cellphone on the nightstand to his right and then stood to his feet. He went into the bathroom then shut the door. Linda came upstairs to let him know that his breakfast was ready. When she entered the bedroom, she noticed that he was not in the bed to her left. She then looked to her right and saw that the bathroom door closed. Right then, she walked over and knocked on the door.

“Hey sweetie! Good morning! Are you up now?” she asked, leaning her left side against the door, with her left ear close enough to listen for his voice.

“Yeah, I’m up honey,” replied Arquette, sounding disgruntled and unenthused about being awake.

Shortly after, what sounded like the shower, commenced.

“Oh. Alright. Well just let me know when you’re finished. Your food is ready,” notified Linda.

“Thank so much bae, but could you please make mine’s to go? I think we got a lead, so I’mma need to get to the office,” requested Arquette, explaining his reason for leaving the house abruptly.

“Sure thing. I’ll have it ready by the time you’re dressed,” she replied.

“Oh, and while you’re in there, make sure you take your meds. I can’t remember you having any recent problems with bad dreams or anything, so I’m gonna assume you’ve been taking them as directed,” she presumed.

“Love, let me take a shower now. We’ll talk when I get downstairs,” proposed Arquette, wishing not to discuss anything through the door.

“Oh, ok Jackson. Sorry. Go ahead. I’ll see you downstairs,” she responded.

She then walked away from the door and went back downstairs to the kitchen. In the bathroom, Arquette took his time to shower, applying soap all over his body. This tranquil cleansing experience suddenly kindled a theoretical moment as he began to probe for possible reasons for why no new murders took place last night.

Minutes later, he turned off the water then stepped out of the shower. Now in front of the mirror, he opened it outward from the right and grabbed an orange prescription bottle from off the middle shelf. He removed the white cap and held the bottle in his left hand. With his right hand open, he tilted the bottle forward slightly for two pills to fall into his right palm. Immediately, he opened his mouth wide and leaned his head back, projecting the pills into his mouth. Next, he cupped his right hand under the faucet for water and then drank some to help the pills go down smoothly. He waited a minute or two for the pills to settle before replacing the cap on the bottle and putting it back on the shelf. Now finished with his pills, he closed the mirror and then resumed with brushing his tooth and grooming his hair. Moments later, he exited the bathroom then went over to his closet and picked out a gray suit with a white dress shirt, along with some black shoes. Now fully dressed, he put his gun belt on, grabbed his cellphone from off the nightstand, then proceeded downstairs for the kitchen.

He entered the kitchen then approached Linda from her left side as she sat at the table eating her breakfast and watching tv. He then kissed her on her left cheek. At that moment, she paused from watching tv to conversate with him.

“Honey, have you been taking your meds like the doctor instructed?” she asked, expressing concern for Arquette’s health.

“Yes ma’am. And, I have noticed a decrease in my nightmares,” confirmed Arquette, picking up his clear plastic container from off the table that stored his breakfast.

“Oh wow! Now that’s really great to hear, honey! I mean, I haven’t noticed you having any problems either, but that didn’t mean there weren’t any. So, I thought I’d ask, just to see how things actually were going,” Linda explained.

“Yeah, it’s been pretty good so far, love. Thanks for staying on top of things,” affirmed Arquette, expressing appreciation for Linda’s support.

He then placed his container on the counter then grabbed a blue cooler bag from off the top of the refrigerator. Next, he walked back over to counter and placed the container inside. After zipping the bag closed, he adjusted its shoulder strap and then placed it over his left shoulder. But just before he exited the kitchen, Linda abruptly remembered the phone call she answered earlier.

“Oh baby, I almost forgot! A young man called you this morning while you were sleep. He told me his name, I just forgot it. But if you check your call log, you’ll see the number,” she informed him.

“Humm. A young man? Did he sound like he was in his mid-20s? I mean, the only person I can think of would be Chris,” pondered Arquette, aloud.

“Chris! Yes, that’s his name, I believe! Chris! Yeah, he asked if you could call him this morning,” exclaimed Linda.

“Oh, ok. Well, I was actually planning to call him this morning, believe it or not. Thanks again, love,” replied Arquette.

He decided to walk back over to the table to give her another kiss on her lips.

“I’m going to church this morning to help with their food drive for the homeless. As soon as I’m done eating, I’mma head out there,” told Linda.

“Sound good, baby! Please be safe and say a prayer for me that I close this case soon. Oh! And also, tell the pastor I said hi,” Arquette requested.

“No problem. I’ll definitely do that, honey,” agreed Linda.

“Alright baby, I need to go now. I shouldn’t be home too late tonight, hopefully,” presumed Arquette, leaning over Linda with his right hand on the back of her chair, and left hand on the table.

“Well hopefully not. You didn’t seem to get much sleep last night. Anyway, call me later and let me know how things are goin. I’ll likely prepare dinner around six,” said Linda.

“Yes ma’am! Ok, I’ll talk to you later,” agreed Arquette.

He then exited the kitchen and went into the living room for the rest of his work items. First, he walked over to the fireplace for his badge, wallet, and keys, placing them inside both, his right and left pants pockets. Soon after, he went for his computer case that was on the recliner. With the cooler already

over his left shoulder, Arquette picked up his computer case with his left hand and carried it by the handle. He then walked over to the front door and opened it with his right hand.

“Linda, I’m leaving now. Call me if you need anything. I love you!” he concluded.

“Love you, too. Have a good day at work, hun!” wished Linda, aloud from the kitchen.

He then exited the house and closed the front door behind him. Now at his sedan, he opened the backdoor, first, to place his computer case and cooler on the backseat next to his binder. After closing that door, he removed his keys from his right pants pocket then got into the front seat and started the car.

As he drove on the main road, Arquette waited for the first chance to get his cellphone out to call Chris. As soon he stopped at a red light, he quickly pulled his cellphone from out of his right pants pocket, scanned for Chris’s number, then pressed the send button after it was highlighted. Next, he held his cellphone up to his right ear and listened for the ring. The phone rang two times before Chris answered.

“Hello,” he answered.

“Hey Chris, this is Detective Arquette. I didn’t wake you, did I?” greeted Arquette, with hopes he did not disturb him.

“No sir, I’ve been up for a while now,” replied Chris.

“Good, good. Well I tell you, it’s really great to hear your voice right now. I mean, I didn’t really know what to expect this morning, considering these pasts few days,” humored Arquette, expressing great gladness and relief.

“Yeah, I totally agree, sir. Believe me, when I woke up, I didn’t know what to think, either. Hell, I even called Abigail and woke her up. Turns out, she’s doing fine, too!” mentioned Chris, sounding shocked but grateful.

“Oh, alright! Glad to hear it!” said Arquette, expressing contentment.

“And just as you mentioned before, she also caused this Karman woman some problems in the past,” supposed Arquette.

“Well...yeah. I mean, we all did,” told Chris.

“But again, I spoke to her this morning and she seemed fine. Although, she wasn’t too happy with me waking her up. And that’s because she works evenings, she said,” he continued.

“Yeah. I can understand that. So, what kind of work does she do?” Arquette enquired.

“She said she works for a tele-communication company. I think she called it TeleCast,” replied Chris, trying to remember the name of the company.

“Oh alright! Yeah, I heard of that company,” told Arquette.

“Ok. Well again, I’m really glad you’re doing fine...and your friend, too, by the way,” he continued.

“But still I’d like to ask that you all remain vigilant because we’re still unclear what actually happened last night,” he cautioned.

“Right now, I’m on my way to the office. Yeah, we got some new information to review for this investigation. Hopefully it’s enough for us to make an arrest,” he said, providing minor updates about his investigation.

“Yes sir. And of course, if I hear or see anything, I’ll be sure to contact you, first. Please have a good day, Detective!” proposed Chris.

“Sounds good. Thanks! Take care and we’ll talk later,” concluded Arquette.

They then said goodbye and then disconnected.

Chapter 19

Forensics

The sun had now reached mid-sky, causing the temperature to rise another five degrees. The sky portrayed a royal blue color with white partial clouds that headed in an eastern direction. The traffic flow was congested, resembling a train station having multiple trains lined up to depart. Arquette finally made it to the off ramp and then proceeded down the street for the precinct. Fifteen minutes passed and he had finally arrived at the station. After he parked his car, he got out and quickly gathered all his work equipment then headed inside. Now inside, he decided that he would first stop by the Chief's office. He approached his door to tell him good morning and that he had just arrived.

"Hey sir! Good morning! I'm just getting in now," greeted Arquette, standing at the threshold of the Chief's office.

"Oh, hey Jackson, glad you're here. Listen, go ahead and get settled first. I'll be by your office in a little to get caught up," replied the Chief, pausing briefly from typing his notes.

"Thanks sir! I appreciate that. See you in a little," replied Arquette.

He then stepped away from the door and began walking toward his office. As he passed a few fellow officers, he gave his salutations, wishing them all a good morning. Once he reached his office, he went inside. Ryan was in there. He was leaned back in his chair with a file in his hands. Right then,

he looked up and to his right at Arquette as he entered. Arquette said good morning while walking toward his desk.

“Hey, hey, Ryan, good morning!” he greeted, approaching his desk.

“Hey Arquette! Good morning to you as well!” replied Ryan, seemingly upbeat.

Arquette placed his cooler with his breakfast on the left side of his desk. Then, he sat his computer case at the center of the desk and unzipped it. After he removed the computer from the case, he gathered the other essential supplies from the case before hanging it on the back of his chair.

As his computer booted up, Arquette decided to eat his breakfast. Ryan looked over at him and presumed that he was still not quite prepared to start his day yet; and so, he just continued reading the file he had. About ten minutes passed before Arquette’s breakfast appeared depleted. He turned to his computer and saw that it was fully operational. At that moment, he decided to begin with checking his emails to see if any new information had been sent. After reviewing each one, he then turned to his right for his office phone to check his phone messages. With his right hand, he picked up the receiver and held it up to his right ear. Next, he used his left index finger to dial the voicemail access code. As he listened to the messages, he eventually heard the one from the lab explaining the new evidence that was found. After reviewing all the messages, he then looked over at Ryan to discuss the latest updates.

“Alright Ryan, I think I’m ready now. So, what were you gonna tell me about the new lab results you mentioned

earlier?” he inquired, while placing his breakfast container back into the cooler.

He then sat the cooler on the floor to the left of his desk. Ryan turned the document over that he was reading in the file to mark the spot where he stopped, then closed the file and leaned forward to grab another piece of paper from off his desk. This document in his right hand was from the lab which provided additional findings from the previous cases.

“Ahh yes. Here we go. Ok. So, this report from the lab states that after reviewing all the evidence from each of the scenes, all the victims apparently shared similar patterns of markings which likely aided in their deaths. In addition, there’s also possible strands of fabric found on each of the victims which they believe belong to the suspect. Those fabrics will be sent off for further analysis. And when the results come back, we should know what type of fabric it is, as well as the type of clothing it’s used for,” he updated, with his elbows propped on the desk and document in both hands.

“Oh wow! Now that’s definitely a good break for us. Have you been to the lab yet to look at those marks?” wondered Arquette, sitting forward at his desk with his hands folded.

“No, not yet. When I got in this morning the lab was still closed. But, to be honest, I wanted to wait for you, you know, so we could look over these results together,” replied Ryan.

“Alright! Well let’s head over then! They oughta be open now,” proposed Arquette.

Just then, both, Arquette and Ryan stood up from their desks, hastily, and walked over to the office door to exit. Arquette exited first, followed by Ryan.

When they reached the door of the lab, they saw a sign posted on it that read, “please knock.” Arquette knocked three times. A few second went by before a lab tech opened the door inward from the right.

“Hey detectives, I was hoping you’d come by this morning. Listen, we’re still setting up, but you can look at what we have already ready,” greeted the tech, holding the door open for Arquette and Ryan to enter.

As they walked past the threshold, the tech pointed her left index finger toward the area were the bodies would be placed.

“As soon as we get everything setup, we’ll have the victims placed over there,” she added.

After closing the door, she then pointed at the table to the right of the room with the documents of the fabrics on it.

“And at that desk we have the documents of the fabrics that were found at each scene. We’ll be running them through our system shortly,” she concluded.

Assisting in the lab were three additional techs whom were prepping the various evidence. It seems, though, that of all the evidence in the lab, the photos of the prints, by far, were the most unusual.

“Now, as you can see, we’re still pulling the corpses out. So, for the time being, you could either review the fabric documents over there or look at the other evidence we got,” offered the tech, walking backwards as she led Arquette and Ryan further into the lab.

Arquette stopped then turned to his left to speak with Ryan on how they should proceed forward.

“Ok Ryan, this is how we can do this. If you want, you could look over the prints and other evidence, while I review the fabric documents,” he suggested, trying to strategize a time efficient approach that could speed up their efforts.

“Yeah, that’s cool. I’ll take a look at the prints and whatever else they have other there. If I see anything new, I’ll call you over,” said Ryan.

They separated from one another and headed toward their areas of choice to begin their inspections. Arquette approached the table with the fabric documents. This table was actually a small, high-top desk made of metal off-set from the middle of the room. A miniature lamp hung over the left side of this desk for additional lighting to ensure accurate visibility during the review of the evidence. Arquette sat down at the desk, opened a vanilla folder, removed the fabric documents, and then fanned them out on the desk. Under the observation lamp, he held up one of the documents in his right hand, reviewing each line carefully to understand the details about the findings. Almost finished with his review, he called the tech over to learn of her interpretation of these fabrics.

“Hey, could you give me your insight on these fabrics, please?” he asked, while continuing to read through the documents.

The tech walked over to him and stood close to him on his left side.

“Sure Detective,” the tech agreed.

“Ok, so the fabric strains found on each victim, we believe, could’ve come from a shirt or dress,” she interpreted.

“However, at this point it’s unclear what type of fabric it’s from. But when the results come back, we’ll be able to link the fabric to the type of clothing,” she continued, expressing great confidence in the pending results.

“Right. But how long will it take for the results to come back?” Arquette inquired.

“Umm...normally it takes a couple of days. Like three. Now, I did send the first set off two days ago,” the tech affirmed.

“Well that’s good news because we don’t have a few days, unfortunately. No, we need all the results back, asap,” mentioned Arquette.

“I understand Detective. Well what I can do is get on the phone and request that these results are top priority. I now see that time is against you, so I’ll be sure to emphasize this as well,” proposed the tech, expressing empathy for Arquette’s time-table.

They then continued to review the fabric documents together.

At the right side of the room, Ryan was at another observation desk reviewing the photos from the scenes. He had them scattered out on the desk but placed into specific piles. One pile had the images of all the victims; the second one had the photos exposing the various damages from all the scenes; and the third one had the images of the prints left by the potential killer. The damages from

the scenes were not of Ryan's interest because he was at each location to observe them, personally. His primary focus was to observe the incises found on each of the victims. While examining each victims' photos, he further posited that the wounds were caused by a five-bladed object. Now, although these slashes all had some similarities, each body appeared to have been struck in different areas. Interestingly, however, there was one gash that was consistent on all the victims, and it appeared to be located at the lower part of each victim's chest, leaving a massive incision within the stomach area which was likely the fatal strike. Ryan called the lab tech over for her interpretation of these wounds.

"Hey, when you're able to, could you come over and give me your thoughts on these photos," he requested.

The tech told Arquette that she would return.

"Give me one minute, Detective. I'll be back," she told.

She then walked over to the right side of the lab to join Ryan. After approaching him on his left side, she began to review the photos with him.

"Alright. So, as I assess these wounds, I'm noticing that each victim has multiple cuts by what appears to be from a knife. Of course, looking closer, I wanna say it was a knife, but with five blades possibly, considering the incisions. Now the reason I say this is because I don't know anyone who'd cut this close with such accuracy," Ryan described.

"But this is why I wanted your take on this. Did you ever determine if this was done by a single blade, especially considering the mutilation of the lower chest area?" he

inquired, holding one of the photos up in his left hand for the tech to analyze.

“Well Detective, it appears these victims did suffer from lacerations from a knife; however though, I have been back and forth with this theory for a few days now. And the reason is I, too, wanna say it was done by a single blade; yet, like you, I find it difficult for anyone to cut precisely this close together with just one blade. So, I decided to research knives having more than one blade. I came across a few, yet they could only retract in a single file motion, like nail clippers for example. There weren’t any with the capability of expanding outward in a parallel motion, simultaneously, to create a five-bladed object,” the tech divulged.

After overhearing the tech’s discussion about her research on knives, Arquette decided to walk over and review the photos with her and Ryan.

“Alright, so what are we looking at?” asked Arquette, now standing on the right side of Ryan.

“Well, we were trying to determine what type of knife was used on these victims. Perhaps if we could identify the type of knife, we could research where the knife was purchased or stolen, and then link it to our suspect,” Ryan hypothesized.

“Yeah. But just like I told him, I couldn’t find any knives capable of doing this,” confided the tech.

Suddenly, Arquette picked up three of the photos and held them in his left hand; flipping each one back behind the other with his right hand. As he examined each one with a careful

eye, he began to doubt whether in fact these wounds were the result of a knife.

“Humm...well from the looks of it, it does seem like cuts from a knife. However, if such a knife that’s capable of making these types of incisions doesn’t exist, then that could likely mean another possibility,” Arquette speculated, looking to his left at the tech’s hands.

“What, what does that mean?” inquired Ryan.

Just then, he looked to his right at Arquette to see why he stopped talking, abruptly. After seeing the way Arquette was staring slightly downward at the tech, he immediately looked to his left at her. Once he positioned his eyes at the same angle as Arquette’s, he soon realized that he was staring at her hands.

“Wait a minute. So...you’re thinking all of this was done by hands?” he queried.

The tech brought her hands up to eye level and began to ponder about whether Arquette’s theory was possible.

“Uh...well it’s hard to say if that’s actually possible or not, and that’s only because you’d need some unbelievably sharp nails to do something like this,” the tech presumed, expressing doubt as she picked up one of the photos with her left hand to analyze.

Arquette sat the photos he had back down on the desk.

The three of them continued to speculate on what possibly caused these wounds. While talking amongst themselves, Arquette paused for a second to think about Karman. When Ryan noticed Arquette’s blank facial expression, he asked him if he was ok.

“Hey Arquette, are you ok? What’s wrong?” he inquired, looking to his left at Arquette.

“No, nothing’s wrong. I was just thinking about this girl who I’m discovering has a very close connection to these cases. I mean, the more I look into her story, the more I’m learning about her disturbing history with these victims. And that alone makes me believe that if she has a motive and the capability of causing this type of harm, then maybe she did it. Hence, it’s the reason I find her a potential suspect,” told Arquette, now browsing through the rest of the photos on the desk with his right index finger.

“Hold on! Wait...wait! The girl you’re referring to is locked away at the psych ward, and yet, you’re considering her a potential suspect?” Ryan wondered.

“Well yeah! And that’s because so far, she’s the only one I believe has a motive for wanting those people dead,” Arquette presumed.

“Ok. So when you went to the psych ward, did you see anything about this Karman woman that at least heightened your suspicions of her being the killer?” Ryan probed.

“To be honest, I didn’t even see her. I mean, I think I saw what she looks like from across this community room, but I didn’t get a chance to interrogate her because her doctor didn’t allow me to,” admitted Arquette.

“Oh! Well that’s not even promising then. Hell, for all we know, the killer could still be out there, you know, getting ready for his or her next victim. Yet in the meantime, we’re pursuing a girl who’s been locked away for a number of years,” stated Ryan, expressing slight frustration.

“Hold-up! A psych ward?!” exclaimed the tech.

Instantly, both, Arquette and Ryan looked to their right at the tech.

“Yeah, what about it?” replied Ryan, unsure of her curiosity about the facility.

“Detective, does their patients wear garments or gown-like clothes?” the tech asked.

“Uhh... I believe so. Actually, yeah. When I was there, I had a chance to see a few of their patients, and they were all wearing white gowns, kind of like at a hospital. Why do you ask?” replied Arquette, trying to understand the tech’s interest.

“Well sir, you know were still waiting for the results from the fabric strands. Maybe these results are the one thing that could confirm if that Karman patient did do it,” hinted the tech.

Right then, Ryan simply rolled his eyes and returned to assessing the photos, showing no interest in the conversation about Karman being a possible suspect.

“Well in that case, let’s see if we can get those fabric results back, asap. Of course, I’m not exactly sure what tonight will bring. I mean, maybe we’ll get lucky and not have another murder again. Though, I would prefer to have something concrete like a positive print match or clothe fiber for an arrest to help ensure this. But either way, we need to find this killer,” stated Arquette.

“I understand, sir. Let me make some calls and see if there’s any way to speed things up on their end,” offered the tech, displaying support and alacrity.

She walked over to her desk near the entrance and got on the phone. Arquette looked down to his left at Ryan.

“Ryan, I can understand your reason for doubting my theory, but I have a strong notion about this Karman patient I just can’t explain yet. So, as of now, I’m gonna go with my gut feeling on this,” told Arquette, expressing compassion in hopes that Ryan would continue to support his theory.

“Listen Arquette, you’re the lead detective on this, so I’m gonna support you on whatever you decide. But know, had I been running things, I would’ve been looking in another direction by now. I mean, even if the fabrics comes back positive and it points to the psych ward, there’s still not enough proof to corroborate your theory. But again, it’s your investigation, and I’m here to assist you. So please, keep going in the direction you feel certain,” confided Ryan, expressing his willingness to support Arquette.

They gazed at one another, shortly, with a feeling of mutual respect, and then continued assessing the photos together.

While scrolling through these photos, Arquette saw a pile that exhibited the various prints from the scenes. With his right hand, he picked them up and began to review each one slowly.

“Oh yeah, did we ever find out anything regarding these prints?” Arquette wondered.

“I don’t believe so. Not yet anyway. But what I could do is get the original carbon paper with the prints from the tech and run them through our database again,” suggested Ryan

“Hey, this could also speed things up, too, you know, if we found a match. That would lead us right to our killer,” he continued.

“That’s true. Alright, so you’ll take care of the prints; she’ll try to get the fabric results back today; and I’ll work on trying to get an interrogation setup with Karman,” directed Arquette, handing the photos to Ryan.

“You know, one of the reasons they’ll refuse to let you interrogate her is because of that HIPPA nonsense,” supposed Ryan, looking to his right at Arquette.

“Yeah. Although, if I have something solid linking her to any of these crimes, I could get a warrant allowing for an interrogation,” acknowledged Arquette.

“Yeah, perhaps. But those normally take some time to get approved,” advised Ryan.

“Not if Chief gets involved. I’m sure he, and the mayor I might add, are very interested in catching this killer now. So, I think they’ll be extremely enthusiastic about approving a warrant with great expedience,” replied Arquette, expressing optimism about the Chief’s support.

“What time is it anyway?” he wondered.

He pulled back his left coat sleeve to check his watch.

“Ok, it’s almost 10:30am. Let me get up to Chief’s office before it gets late,” he continued.

Ryan agreed and then told Arquette that he would call him later if he receives the results from the prints.

“Well listen, as soon as I get these prints ran through the system, I’ll let you know what I find,” told Ryan.

“Thanks. That would be great news if we hear something soon,” Arquette agreed.

He then exited the lab for the Chief’s office. Ryan got up from the desk and walked over to the freezer lockers

where the corpses were held. There, another tech was reviewing the examination sheet for the various corpses, preparing to place each of the victims on an examination table. Ryan approached the tech from her left side and asked for the carbon copy prints.

“Hey, do you by any chance have access to the original carbon copy prints from any of the scenes? I wanna run them through the system?” he requested.

The tech stopped writing and looked to her left at Ryan.

“Detective, those prints you’re asking about have already been ran through the system, twice; a little over a day ago, if I’m not mistaking. Nothing was found,” the tech declared.

“Really? Humm. Well maybe that just means this suspect doesn’t have any priors,” said Ryan, expressing doubt about the findings.

Shortly after, he returned to the desk and continued to inspect the photos for additional clues. The other tech was still talking on the phone, continuing to push for the expedience of the fabric results.

Back upstairs, Arquette had arrived at the Chief’s office. The door was slightly open, so Arquette knocked and then leaned slightly right to poke his head through the door. Inside the Chief’s office was one brown desk which sat in the center of the room, facing the door. Directly behind the it stood a dark marron bookshelf with various books along each self. The office window was offset to the left of the bookshelf with tan linen window curtains to match the office color theme. In front of the desk were two upscale, dark

marron chairs for guests. On the left side of the office, hanging on the wall, were various pictures of achievement ceremonies. Underneath these pictures was a dark brown wooden filing cabinet with three drawers. Lastly, on the right side of the office were the portraits of both, himself and the Mayor of Annapolis.

“Chief!” called Arquette, sliding his head passed the door.

The Chief was typing at this computer but suddenly answered after he heard his name called.

“Yes. What’s up, Jackson?” he asked, pausing from his work to acknowledge Arquette.

“Hey Chief, sorry to bother you sir, but it’s really urgent. I’m facing an extremely time sensitive matter and it’s gonna require a great deal of your support,” Arquette proclaimed.

“Alright Jackson, let me just finish this email and then we’ll talk,” requested the Chief, as he resumed typing.

He completed his message then used his computer mouse to click the send button. After confirming that the email was sent, he then acknowledged Arquette again.

“Alright Jackson, what can I do for you?” he asked, leaning back in his chair with his arms on the armrests. Arquette entered the office and sat in the chair to right of the desk, facing the Chief.

“Sir, last night I went out to the psych ward where our prime suspect is currently located. When I asked to speak with her to perform an interrogation, her doctor told me no due to the privacy and confidentiality act. Now, I believe if I go out there again, but with a warrant this time, I would have the authorization to speak with her,” explained Arquette.

“So that’s what this is about? You need me to get an authorized warrant for you?” the Chief reiterated.

“Jackson, those warrants go through a process of approval,” he continued.

“Yes sir, I understand there are many factors to this process, but please, I’m asking if you could use your persuasive influence to push things,” pleaded Arquette.

“My goal is to interrogate this woman today, if possible. I feel it’s absolutely vital that I complete this interrogation and ask her the questions regarding each of these cases so I can determine if she should remain our primary suspect based on her answers,” he continued.

“Well first Jackson, before I even consider trying to expedite any kind of warrants, I wanna know who else is on your list as a possible suspect,” requisitioned the Chief, sitting forward at this desk with his hands folded on top.

“To be perfectly honest sir, I only have one suspect, her. And the reason I’m solely focused on her is from the many conversations I’ve had with the friend of the two recent victims. Believe it or not, he was actually dating the female victim up until her death,” disclosed Arquette.

“I see. And these conversations you’re referring to actually revealed how your source, his friend Michael, and his girlfriend all treated this suspect in question with extreme prejudice and hostility during their high school days,” the Chief recollected.

“And the bus driver that was killed, apparently drove their bus during that time,” he continued.

“Yes sir! And remember after Ryan and I read through the bus driver’s files, we also learned that although he was aware of these bullying issues, he didn’t seem to put much effort into keeping the suspect safe from these bully attacks,” added Arquette.

“Yeah I remember. You stated, per the reports, that it seemed as if he tried handling the issue without the school’s involvement. But I take it, that only prolonged the bullying which led to more trauma for the suspect,” the Chief recalled.

“Alright. So, basically your theory is, your suspect is killing the same people who bullied her out of some sense of revenge, am I right?” he probed, trying to summarize the reason Arquette is only pursuing Karman as a suspect.

“That’s it sir! That’s my theory thus far. I mean, until I have a chance to speak with her and find a reason to remove her as a suspect, she may continue to be my main priority,” declared Arquette.

“But hold on a minute. Let’s back up. Now you stated that this Karman woman is currently residing at a psych facility. Do you really believe she’s left there to kill each of those people and then returned back to that facility, after each murder? I mean, doesn’t this place have security? I’m sure it does. So how is she able to come and go when she wants?” the Chief inquired.

“And my ultimate question is, why on earth would she go back to the facility after getting away?” he continued, rationalizing the complexities Karman would have had to face in order to commit each murder.

“As of right now, sir, that’s where I’m stuck. I’m not entirely sure how she’s getting out, I just feel that she’s our prime suspect; so, my goal is to interrogate her. I mean who knows, she could have some sort of powers or something,” stated Arquette, being moderately comical.

“All I know is, right now, I need to have this interrogation done so I’d know how to move forward with this investigation. I mean, if it turns out that it’s not her, then perhaps I’ll start looking into these last two friends, Chris and Abigail,” he continued, offering two more suggested suspects.

“Well, I’m sure you know how to handle this case, with the experience you have in all. So, with that being said, I won’t doubt your theory, Jackson. I just wanna be sure you’re heading in the right direction, that’s all,” the Chief explained, expressing trust and confidence in Arquette.

“So, how soon do you need this warrant?” he asked, using his mouse to open a new window on his computer screen.

“Sir, the sooner you have it ready, the sooner I can make my way to the facility. I believe the doctor works mid- to late evenings,” replied Arquette, expressing gratitude and anticipation.

“Sounds good, Jackson. I’ll call you as soon as I have it done,” the Chief affirmed.

They continued to talk for a few more minutes about their wives and families. As soon as they were finished with their conversation, Arquette left the office.

Karman's Session

Meanwhile at the psychiatric facility, the patients had just finished lunch in the community room. It was now time to transition the room from lunch to game time. First, two members of the dining staff wearing sky blue attire with black shoes stopped at each table with a silver, three-layered food cart to collect the brown food trays. Once they were all collected, and tables were cleaned off, three orderlies then entered the room carrying various board games and other activities. They went around the room and placed a game or activity on each table. The patients remained at the tables where they ate their lunch, waiting patiently for the orderlies to finish. As soon as the orderlies had all the games placed, the patients got up and moved about the room, choosing the table with their game of interest. Karman, however, remained in the chair in the back of the room near the window. Peacefully, she just gazed out at the trees beyond the facility. Shortly after she detached herself from the social environment around her, she was interrupted by a tap on her right shoulder from behind. She turned slightly to her right just enough to see past her shoulder and saw the patient whom she became acquainted with over the past few weeks, standing directly behind her. She was a middle-aged Caucasian woman with curly, blond hair, stood about 5'6, and weighed nearly 120lbs. Moreover, on her face and arms were dark brown freckles. And because of her many years of

smoking, the sound of her voice was slightly rough and grated. Shockingly, this patient was the only one who Karman socialized with at the facility. Their acquaintance developed over a short period of time after she taught Karman the practice of channeling her inner-being, while detaching her spiritual-self from her physical-self through means of sorcery. After she saw Karman turn and acknowledge her, she then gave her a small, friendly smile. Surprisingly, Karman gave her a smile in return.

The patient turned to the table behind her for a chair then placed it on the right side of Karman and took a seat. Right after, she then looked to her left at Karman while displaying this odd, eager energy as if she was anxious to talk to her about something; perhaps hear how her latest out of body experience went the previous night. Moreover, she also wanted to find out if Karman needed any help with her sorcery exertions.

“Hey Karman, what’s up?! So, how did things go last night? Did you get the person you wanted?” she inquired, appearing overwhelmingly curious and vindictive.

Karman did not reply. She just gazed forward at the window.

“Hey, did you hear me?! How did it go last night?” she repeated, now leaning slightly forward to get in Karman’s view.

Yet, Karman still did not answer. Just then, the patient sat back in her chair and turned her head to the right to observe the other patients interacting with one another. Unexpectedly, Karman suddenly replied to her question.

“I don’t remember much from last night. I just remember sitting here at mass, but after that, I don’t know. I think I got

a shot in my room because I kind of remember someone holding me down on my bed,” she recalled, trying to remember if she used her sorcery.

The patient looked to her left back at Karman.

“I believe someone caught me using it. And if they did, then I’m sure that’s why I got that shot,” she presumed.

“This is the first time it’s happened, though. The other nights I used it, I had no problems,” she confirmed, turning her head to the right, toward this patient.

“Alright. But still, how was it so far? I mean, when you went after those people, how did it feel?” the patient inquired, expressing strong interest while leaning forward in her chair again.

It was clear that she really wanted to hear just how Karman was affected by the sorcery.

“Well, I’d have to say I felt free, like a spirit. It was like I was one with the wind going after those wicked people. I didn’t have to run or walk much at all. And when I attacked them, I felt stronger, like I had the strength of ten men. I mean, just with my hands I was able to tear them apart,” described Karman, looking back toward the window and reminiscing while staring at her hands at eye level.

“Oh man! Now that’s what I’m talking about! This sounds so freakin awesome! You know, it’s almost like watching a movie, but better. Man, I wish I could’ve been there,” responded the patient, becoming obsessively intrigued in their conversation.

She then leaned herself to the left to get closer to Karman.

“So you used your hands, huh? Can you remember what you did, or how you did it?” she continued, displaying a sense of delight and maliciousness. Casually, Karman turned her head toward the patient and gave her a smirk.

“Well, let’s just say my nails did most of the work,” Karman replied, expressing slight humor.

“But yeah, when I attacked them, I went after every inch of their bodies with my nails. I mean, I clawed their backs, arms, legs, and chests, like pieces of meat,” she described, expressing a sense of fulfilment.

“And then, when they weren’t able run anymore, I remember hovering over them, watching them all cry and scream. That’s when I pulled my right arm back and then swung it forward, slashing my nails through their chests,” she added, having a mischievous grin on her face.

Without notice, Karman’s name was called aloud from across the room.

“Karman! I need to see you for our session!” called Dr. Patel, standing at the entrance with Karman’s file opened in her hands.

A few seconds had passed before Karman slowly stood to her feet and walked to her right, around her friend who she was recently conversating with. As she approached the entrance, she suddenly heard her friend’s voice from across the room.

“I’ll see you later, ok?! I wanna hear more about that experience!” she exclaimed, while turned to the right of her chair and watching Karman walk toward the entrance.

Just then, Karman turned to her right to look back at her friend then lifted her right index finger up to her mouth to signify keeping quiet. Right after, she turned back around and proceeded toward Dr. Patel. As soon as she reached the threshold, Dr. Patel closed Karman's file and greeted her, while also glancing over at her friend.

"Good afternoon Karman. I thought we'd use this time for our session. There's some things we need to discuss," greeted Dr. Patel.

"Oh! And I see that you and your friend are getting along pretty well," she presumed, taking a quick glance at the friend while placing her right hand on Karman's lower back to guide her into the hall.

When they reached the office door, an orderly at the counter stood up and asked Dr. Patel if she needed the restraints put on Karman.

"Dr. Patel, would you like for me to put restraints on her? I see you're about to take her into your office now," he asked, expressing minor concern for Dr. Patel's safety.

"No, no. I think we'll be fine. She's never been a problem," replied Dr. Patel, looking to her right at the orderly with a slight smile on her face. She then opened her door with her left hand and then directed Karman inside. She followed right behind her then closed the door.

"Please, have a seat," told Dr. Patel, pointing her right index finger toward the patient's chair.

Karman's file was in her right hand as she pointed. Gradually, Karman walked over to the chair, sat down, but then instantly stared out the window to her left. Shortly

after, Dr. Patel sat down at her desk and opened Karman's file to begin their session.

"Alright. So Karman, how've you been feeling today?" she asked, while searching for the last few pages in Karman's file.

She wanted to continue where she left off from their last session.

"Or, perhaps tell me how you've been since our last session?" she continued.

However, there was no response from Karman. She just stared outside at the partially cloudy, sky blue atmosphere. Just then, Dr. Patel became assertive in her tone, as if she was growing irascible with her.

"Karman! Hey! Listen, I really need your attention right now. There's a few things I need to discuss with you," she advised, pausing briefly from reading her latest notes to observe Karman's behavior.

Unfortunately, silence overcame the room as she stared at her, awaiting some type of verbal reaction. Then suddenly, to her surprise, Karman looked away from the window but only to lower her head down to stare at her hands in her lap. After about a minute, she then turned her head to the right, toward Dr. Patel, to indicate that she was now ready to talk.

"Alright! Are you ready now?" asked Dr. Patel.

"Yeah," mumbled Karman, in a soft tone.

Dr. Patel resumed with reading the file, searching for her most recent notes documented. As soon as she found them, she picked up the folder with both hands and leaned back in her chair.

“Alright. Here we go. Now, I wanna continue where we left off. And from the looks of our last session, we were discussing your recent disengagement which you were displaying, compared to the progress you had earlier this year. If you recall, we used to have excellent dialogues about your past infuriation and how you’ve slowly developed a sense of forgiveness for those who’ve caused you discontent. Moreover, you’ve also shown a desire for restoration within yourself for a greater future. But during our last session, when you mentioned finding a means for revenge, it only proved that you’ve now done a complete one-eighty from where you were nearly three months ago. So today, I would really like for us to discuss what’s changed?” she reexamined, expressing concern for Karman’s current mental health state.

At that moment, Karman looked back down at her hands again, but this time appeared shameful.

“Karman, what’s wrong? What’s this look all about?” she inquired, now curious of Karman’s facial expression.

“Nothing. Nothing’s wrong,” replied Karman, in a soft voice while looking down in her lap.

“Karman, I want you to know that I’ve been studying behaviors for a very long time now, which means I’m very attentive of the characters displayed of someone being dishonest. In addition, this experience also incorporates the characteristics of deception and guilt; which are the two additional features I find you’re also displaying. So please, tell me what happen,” Dr. Patel insisted.

Karman did not respond. She just remained silent while staring down at her hands in her lap. Tactfully, Dr. Patel decided to mention the patient friend who she saw her speaking with earlier in the community room.

“So, could this new-found temperament of yours have anything to do with your new friend I saw you talking to a while ago?” she probed, expressing curiosity as she leaned forward, laying the file down on her desk then propping her elbows on top.

Next, she gently folded her hands together and looked directly at Karman. But Karman did not respond.

“You know, we never really finished our discussion about her. So, we should do that now,” she proposed, going back to Karman’s file to take notes.

She picked up her black, bald-point pen with her right hand and then flipped toward the end of the file.

Karman just sat in silence.

“Now, you mentioned you were having thoughts of revenge. By any chance were these thoughts profoundly induced by her?” enquired Dr. Patel.

“And if so, what did she say or do to encourage this mentality?” she continued, ready to document Karman’s response.

But Karman remained nonresponsive and offered no type of interaction.

“Huh. So, let me guess, she’s played no factor in your current vengeful acuties, right?” she asked, in a sarcastic tone.

“Well Karman, I liked like to believe this, but after seeing how eager she was to reengage in conversation with you

later, brings about some suspicion. I mean, why does she want to speak with you so desperately?" she probed.

"Can you tell me what you two are planning to talk about later?" she continued, expressing major curiosity.

Karman, however, just stared at her hands in her lap while displaying no interest in responding.

"Ok. I can see you're not willing to talk to me about her, so let's move on," she implied.

"Now, in case you weren't aware, for some peculiar reason, there was a detective here the other evening asking to speak with you," she disclosed.

"Of course, I chose not to allow this because of patient confidentiality; however, after observing this recent change in your behavior; and, after seeing how this friend of yours is so eager to talk with you about something, it now concerns me that your current mental health condition may be the reason the detective wants to speak with you, in my professional opinion. So, to be honest, at this point, I'm actually interested in hearing the questions he wants to ask you," she added, hoping to gain a reaction from Karman.

At that very moment, to her surprise, Karman looked over at her swiftly with a nervous expression on her face.

"What? What's wrong? Is it about that detective?" she asked, while observing Karman's facial expression.

But Karman did not respond.

"Karman, you really need to talk to me, ok? Of course, if you choose not to talk; remember, whatever you're not disclosing, may likely be revealed later. Perhaps, if it's revealed now, my professional credentials may benefit in

resolving this problem. But, if it comes out later, then your chances of my professional support playing an influential role may become less advantageous,” she advised.

However, Karman still remained silent and just stared at her with this nervous expression on her face.

“Karman, either you tell me, or I’ll get this information from someone else,” she threatened.

Just then, Karman looked down at her lap again, but only for a brief second before looking back at her. Leaning back in her chair, Dr. Patel could see that Karman wanted to say something; yet, she also read the expressions of doubt and concern on her face. And so, at that point, she decided to not to say another word and just wait until Karman was ready to speak. Surprisingly, after a few minutes had passed, Karman finally replied.

“What did this detective tell you?” inquired Karman.

“Well nothin really. Why? Do you believe it was because of something you did?” probed Dr. Patel, curious to learn how Karman was capable of doing anything outside of the facility.

Karman did not answer.

“Well, before we get into the detective’s visit, let’s talk more about your friend. I mean, I’m actually interested to hear why she’s so eager to speak with you later,” she redirected, changing the topic.

Karman looked away from her as if to try to buy herself a few minutes before replying.

As soon as she was ready to speak, she took a deep breath, and then answered.

“She’s not my friend,” she proclaimed, while looking out the window.

“Wait! What did you say?!” asked Dr. Patel, unclear of Karman’s response.

“I said she’s not my friend,” repeated Karman, looking back at Dr. Patel.

“She’s just someone I met a few weeks ago, that’s it,” she added.

“Is that right? Well, it seems you two are pretty close now,” told Dr. Patel.

“Come to think of it, I believe your behavior began to change around the time you and her started bonding,” she declared.

“So, what happened? What did y’all talk about that could’ve brought on such changes?” she probed, leaning forward at her desk and giving Karman her undivided attention.

“But most importantly, what discussions did you have that could’ve somehow resulted in actions now eliciting a detective to seek you for interrogation?” she continued.

Karman just stared at her, silently. Seeing that Karman was still unwilling to reply, Dr. Patel returned to reviewing her file. She now began to review the notes from various orderlies over the past year regarding Karman’s behavior.

“Of course, after reviewing your file going back a year, there hasn’t been one incident report about you trying to escape, or that you were unaccounted for, for hours. And even if you had attempted to leave, this facility has very tight security; so, I can’t imagine how you’d leave and come back without being detected,” explored Dr. Patel.

“In my opinion, I don’t believe you would’ve returned had you found a way out, anyway. I know I wouldn’t have,” she assumed, with slight humor.

“Now, although this suspicion may seem rather vague, a detective did request to speak with you. And so, I have to suppose for the time that there is a valid reason for his reconnoitering interest,” she contemplated.

Karman looked away from Dr. Patel and stared out the window. Astonishingly, after a minute or two, she decided to reveal how she began her relationship with the other patient.

“A few weeks ago, a patient came up to me talking about her past and how things got so bad for her that she acted out of rage. She told me some of those really bad things she did, and how no one knew she did them. Now, I didn’t believe her at first, but after I asked her just how was it she did all those things and never got caught, that’s when she told me how she found a way to separate her spirit from your body,” she disclosed, while staring out the window.

Silence suddenly overcame the office. Now leaning back in her chair, Dr. Patel took a few minutes to reflect on Karman’s statement. Shortly after, she began to ask her more questions about this patient.

“So, she told you she did some bad things, but was never caught doing them, huh? Well that’s interesting! I mean, how is it she’s been admitted here?” she inquired, expressing doubt about this story.

“She told me her mother walked in on her in the middle of doing this sorcery stuff; and so, because they didn’t understand what was happening to her, out of fear, they decided to have her Baker Acted,” Karman enlightened.

“Alright. So back to you. How did her story impact you? Did you happen to try this special power of hers for yourself?” probed Dr. Patel, curious to hear the answer.

Karman did not respond. But what she did do, however, was nod her head up and down to signify a yes response.

“Hold on, so you’re telling me you actually tried using this black magic or sorcery?” she asked again, but now perturbed about Karman’s confession.

Karman just sat quietly.

“Karman look at me! Did you use this special power or not? And if so, I need to know exactly who you used it on?” she continued, growing frustrated due to Karman’s persistent silence.

But still, there was no response from her. At that moment, Dr. Patel looked at the time on her computer screen and decided that she would end their session. She felt that if she were to continue pushing for answers from her, that eventually she would lose her professional demeanor. With her left hand, she picked up her radio from off her desk and requested an orderly to come to the office to escort Karman back to the community room.

“Attention staff, this is Dr. Patel. Could I have an orderly come to my office to escort patient Karman back to the community room?” she requested.

“Copy that!” replied an orderly.

She then placed her radio back on her desk, picked up her pen, and began to jot down notes from this session. Minutes later, an orderly knocked on the office door.

“Come in!” directed Dr. Patel.

Just then, the door opened and an orderly entered the office.

“Karman, we’re gonna finish our conversation later. We really need to go over this some more,” told Dr. Patel, looking directly at her with a grave expression on her face.

The orderly came around to the left side of Karman’s chair, assisted her to her feet, and then escorted her out of the office.

Meanwhile at the precinct, Arquette and Ryan were still in the lab reviewing all the evidence from the scenes. Drawing near their hypotheses, they soon agreed that each scene was more than likely the effects from the same suspect. In addition, they also agreed that it was still difficult to deduce who the suspect could be. Arquette mentioned the two friends who were still alive, and how one of them was the boyfriend of one of the victims.

“Of course, after reviewing all these photos of the bodies and prints, it’s safe to say that each scene was likely the result of the same suspect. I mean, it’s clearly obvious the many similarities from each scene; there’s hardly any distinctions between them,” highlighted Arquette, sitting to the left of Ryan at the tech’s desk.

“This seem to be true, but who could we link to these cases?” asked Ryan.

“Right now, I only have one person, Karman Anderson. Yet, with her being locked away, there’s a challenge with considering her our prime suspect,” admitted Arquette.

“Yeah, I’d have to agree with you on that,” said Ryan.

“Well, considering any other possibilities, we have Chris and Abigail who are still alive, and were friends of the two deceased. Chris was actually the boyfriend of the late victim, Stacey,” assessed Arquette.

“Huh! Well you know we could start looking into whether this was done by one of them, right?” pondered Ryan, suggesting them for alternate suspects.

“Maybe. I mean if this Karman woman doesn’t work out, we’ll likely have no other choice but to consider them alternatives,” avowed Arquette.

“And believe it or not, even the Chief hinted about looking in another direction based on all the possible difficulties one would have to go through just to leave that psych ward. I mean honestly, why the hell would a person leave that facility, come all this way to kill someone, and then return there, anyway? To me, that wouldn’t make any damn sense, especially the part of going back. I mean, why not just stay out?” he enquired, feeling a bit doubtful about pursuing Karman.

“Those are some really great points. And, per each case, this person would’ve left that facility and later returned, each time. And judging from that distance, that would be one hell of a commute in such a short period of time, unless they had someone drive them or something,” said Ryan, adding to Arquette’s statement.

“Exactly!” agreed Arquette.

“Alright. So, what’cha wanna do now?” Ryan asked, still exhibiting team support for his investigation.

“Well, although I’ve been back and forth with the next move thing, I still think I’m gonna pursue Karman as our primary suspect. I mean, I’ve been given this lead, so I intend to follow it through. Now, if this lead doesn’t work out, then I’ll move forward with pursuing these friends. But what I don’t wanna do is skip over her and she’s actually our suspect. That’ll make me look incompetent because I should’ve continued following protocol,” replied Arquette.

“Now that’s true,” Ryan agreed.

“Alright, so what’s the next move then?” he wondered, taking a short break from reviewing the evidence.

“Right now, the next move is the warrant to interrogate Karman...which should be ready soon, hopefully. That’s if Chief really presses this issue, of course,” replied Arquette, having a slight smirk on his face.

All of a sudden, to Arquette’s surprise, his cellphone started to ring. Instantly, he pulled it out of his right pants pocket and read the caller ID. It read, “Chief.” He immediately pressed the send button and then placed it up to his right ear to answer.

“Hey Chief! Man, I was just talking about you, sir. Well, it was actually about the warrant,” answered Arquette, expressing slight humor.

“Really?!! Well Jackson, your timing couldn’t be better. Listen, when you get a chance, I’mma need you to swing by my office to pick up your warrant. Sorry it took slightly

longer than expected, but some steps just couldn't be avoided," informed the Chief.

"Sir, I understand, believe me. But to be honest, I'm just grateful and appreciative for all your support on this; especially now that I have my warrant," told Arquette, expressing gratitude for the Chief's support.

"I'll be up there shortly, sir!" he concluded.

They then disconnected. Now full of anticipation from the Chief's call, Arquette lowered his cellphone slowly in disbelief, then instantly updated Ryan on the news.

"That was Chief," he revealed.

"Humm. Let me guess, your warrant's ready?" presumed Ryan, sarcastically, with a smirk on his face.

"Yeah, it's ready. But you were sitting right there when I was talking to him, so I know you heard. He wants me to come by his office and pick it up," confirmed Arquette.

"Alright! This is great news!" Ryan exclaimed.

"And so, I take after you go get it, you'll be heading back out to the asylum again soon, huh?" he inquired, resuming to assess the evidence.

"Yeah, I'll need to head out there before it gets too late. Oh! And sense I'm now able to question her, I think I'll take some of these photos with me out there to show her; you know, see if I get some kind of obvious response," replied Arquette, now selecting various photos to take.

"Right. And if Karman is in fact the person we're looking for?" asked Ryan, while sorting out the rest of the photos from the scenes.

“Then I would arrest her and bring her back here, I guess. I don’t know. I mean this is my first case involving a witch at an institution,” chuckled Arquette, as he stood to his feet.

He then slid his cellphone back into his right pants pocket while holding the photos in his left hand.

“I see. Well while you’re there, I’ll be here still reviewing evidence. And if I happen to find anything to help link her to these cases, I’ll definitely contact you, asap. You know, since you’ll already be out there, it’ll just help move the arrest along,” Ryan proposed.

They both agreed, said their goodbyes, and then Arquette left the lab for the Chief’s office.

Now upstairs, Arquette stopped by his office first to collect his computer case and other supplies. That way, as soon as he got the warrant, he could then leave for the psychiatric center. After everything was packed up, he placed his case strap over his left shoulder and then headed for the Chief’s office. When he reached the door, he saw that it was partially open. He knocked twice, called for the Chief, then stuck his head between the crack of the door. Inside, he saw the Chief at his desk on his office phone. His left elbow was propped on the desk with his left hand holding the receiver up to his left ear. While conversating, the Chief happened to look toward the door and acknowledged Arquette. At that moment, he picked up an orange official envelop from off his desk with his right hand and aimed it at Arquette, signaling for him to take it. Arquette opened the door slightly to enter then extended his right arm out and

grabbed it. After receiving it, the Chief held up his right index finger at him, gesturing for him to wait. Arquette nodded his head in agreement, took a seat in the guest chair on the right, then sat his computer case on the floor to the right of his chair. As he waited patiently, he decided to open the envelop and read the warrant. Once the Chief had finished his phone call, he hung up the phone then gave Arquette his undivided attention.

“Hey Chief, again, I wanna thank you for moving incredibly quick on this. Really, I owe you immensely because of your expedience, you have no idea,” told Arquette, expressing tremendous appreciation while skimming over the warrant.

“No problem, Jackson,” the Chief replied.

Right then, he placed both of his hands on top of his desk and then interlocked them together.

“Ah, listen, before you head out, I wanted to tell you that the governor’s office contacted me earlier about this investigation,” he added, informing Arquette of this new circumstance.

“Really?! Ok. So, what was that about?” enquired Arquette, now looking up at the Chief.

“Well, I’ve been informed that the governor’s apparently developed a strong interest in catching this killer now, which means that this investigation has been bumped up to priority one. So, when you go out to speak with this woman at that psych ward, I’m gonna ask that you provide her the necessary questions that would either, lead to an arrest, or sway you to pursue another suspect,” advised the Chief.

“And I’m only asking of this because now that the governor’s seeking closure, we may not have much time if

another victim's killed. I mean, at this point, I now feel if we don't close this case soon, the governor may get the Feds involved," he continued, expressing concern about the governor's involvement in their investigation.

"Yes sir. I understand where this is going. Once the governor's involved, things start to become political, which means I need to close this case now. I agree. But just to let you know, my alternative game plan is to pursue the two friends if this patient doesn't check out. Now, during this interrogation, I plan to show her some photos from each of the crime scenes, in hopes she'll express herself in a way that indicates that she was involved," told Arquette, providing details of his strategy.

"But again, if she screens out, then I'll move on with investigating the friends. I mean, with all of them having such a close history, someone of close acquaintance oughta have a connection to their friends' deaths," he presumed.

"I just find it really hard to believe that some random person would attack three people whom all share such a close history. Hell, or even if there were three different killers, I'd still find it strange that each would pick a victim whom shares a history with the other victims," he continued, growing eager to conduct his interrogation.

"Well Jackson, I know you'll figure this thing out. You've been an outstanding detective for many years, so I won't doubt your talents now. I just need you to know that there's likely a possible time frame now, now that the governor's involved," the Chief restated.

"Yes sir. I understand," replied Arquette.

He then stood to his feet.

“Is there anything else you’d like to discuss before I go, sir?” he asked.

“No Jackson, that’s all I had. Although, once you’re finished, I would like to know how this interrogation went,” the Chief requested.

“Will do, sir. No problem. As a matter of fact, you’ll be the first to hear the outcome,” proclaimed Arquette, reaching for his computer case.

He picked it up and sat it in the chair. After he opened the case, he slid the envelop inside with his right hand then closed it back. Now ready to leave, he placed the case strap over his left shoulder and then turned for the door.

“Alright sir, I’m gonna head out there now. I’ll give you a call as soon as I’m done,” he concluded, looking back over his left shoulder.

“Sounds good Jackson. Thanks,” the Chief agreed.

Arquette left out the office and then exited the precinct. When he reached his car, he put his computer case in the backseat, then got into the driver’s seat and drove out the parking lot for the psychiatric center.

The time was a little past 3pm. The bright rays from the sun had now created a vibrant, tranquil, yet scalding atmosphere. The partial clouds, fortunately, provided frequent moments of breeze which kept the environment from sweltering. Abigail had just arrived at the call center to start her workday. After she found a parking space, she parked and then exited her car holding her black purse in her right hand. Her attire consisted of a white blouse, dark pink business

pants, and a pair of black shoes. As she walked toward the building, she put the strap of her purse over her left shoulder then began to shuffle through the purse for her office badge. Now at the entrance, she opened the left glass door outward to enter the building then proceeded through the lobby to reach the elevators. This building had four elevators which were positioned side by side to the right of the lobby. When she approached them, she saw other employees from various corporations also waiting to go up. She moved close to the elevator on the far right and waited. Just then, the sound of an elevator rung twice then the door of the second elevator from the right, opened. A few employees, along with Abigail, entered this elevator then pressed the buttons for their desired floors. Abigail chose the 18th floor. After a few minutes, the elevator had now reached the 18th floor. The door opened and Abigail stepped out then turned immediately to her left and walked through the lobby. Not far ahead was a set of tan, wooden double doors. This was the entrance to the suite for TeleCast Communications. On the wall, just left of these doors, was a scanner. With her badge in her right hand, Abigail approached the scanner and held her badge against it. A single beep resounded from within the scanner which indicated that the doors were temporarily open. She put her badge back inside her purse then pulled the right door outward to enter the suite. Now passed the threshold, she noticed the call center was in full operation. The main area had over 40 gray, medium height cubicles organized across the room, each with a customer service representative responding to calls. After briefly scanning the area, she then turned to her left and

began to walk toward the side offices for the one which belonged to her. As she walked around the cubicles on her right, she heard various operators answering their telephones with the introductory greeting, “Thank you for calling TeleCast. How can I help you?”

When she reached the corner of the room, she turned right and continued down toward her office. As she walked along the left side of the room, she passed two offices on her left before finally reaching her door. On her door was a brass coated name plate that read Abigail Ramsey. Inside her office, was a tan work desk and black office chair to the right. On top of the desk was a computer monitor, a keyboard, and a mouse at the center. To the right of the computer was a black office phone, and the left was a gray-plated paper bracket for holding reports pending review. Moreover, underneath the keyboard was a calendar with various notes and reminders written on it. Behind the desk was a black, medium size bookshelf against the wall. Each shelf contained various items ranging from books, photos, awards, an office lamp, and a small plant. Directly in front of the desk sat a gray plastic chair for guests or employees. And finally, there was that large office window straight ahead from the office door, overlooking the city of Annapolis.

After entering her office, she walked over to the bookshelf, sat her purse down by the plant, then took a seat at her computer and typed in her password to unlock the screen. Once the screen

was open, she could now clock-in. She clocked in then immediately opened her emails to read the new messages. With her right hand on the mouse, she began to scroll down through the inbox, reading each subject head. Suddenly, she came to a halt after seeing an email with her supervisor's name in bold black letters. She double clicked on this message with haste and began to read it. This message informed her that she was to see her supervisor the moment she had reached work. After reading this directive, Abigail rose to her feet promptly then left her office. As soon as she exited her office, she turned left and then walked past two more offices before reaching her supervisor's door. The supervisor's office was the last one in the corner. It was next to the massive window of the suite which extended into the supervisor's office, giving her a panoramic view of the scenery. Abigail approached the office and saw the door open; however, she politely remained at the threshold out of professional courtesy. Patiently, she waited while watching her supervisor type at her desk to the right of the office. A few seconds went by before she decided to just knock on the door to get her supervisor's attention. After her supervisor heard the knock, she glanced over at the door and saw Abigail standing there, then waved her left hand to signal her to enter. Abigail entered the office then sat down in the guess chair in front of the desk.

“Give me one minute,” requested the supervisor, trying to finish an email she needed to forward to upper management.

Abigail did not say a word. She just waited patiently while perusing over the many plaques and other accommodations around the office with an internal sense of veneration.

“And send!” said the supervisor, indicating that she had just finished her email and was now forwarding it to upper management.

Soon after, she then began her conversation with Abigail.

“Ok. So, the reason I requested you this morning is because after I reviewed the overall call percentages this morning, I noticed our sells stats were pretty low. Now, I’m not sure if that’s because we’re just not getting the calls, or if there’s data missing from the stats report. But today I need for all the managers to ensure their data sheets are updated and placed in my box by COB. This way I’ll be able to eliminate the unlikely factors and focus on the problem at hand,” she directed, looking at her computer screen to her right as she reviewed her consolidated data sheet.

“Ma’am, I wanna say that some of this could be my fault. I’ve gotten a little behind on my data. So I do agree and will now ensure I get all my reports caught up as soon as possible. Even if I have to stay later, I’ll do that just to be sure I get all my data in today. Oh! But just to let you know, my team’s been up on their sells. So I think once my reports are added to your stats sheet, this oughta bump our overall sells up,” Abigail admitted.

“Now that’s what I’m talking about! I can’t wait to see those results! Thanks!” exclaimed the supervisor, with excitement.

“Well listen, I really do appreciate your willingness to stay later. That shows you have great initiative,” she continued, expressing approbation.

Abigail gave her a polite smile.

“Now, you said you were behind on your data. Is there anything going on here, or perhaps in your personal life, that’s affecting your work performance?” she asked, now exhibiting concern for Abigail’s wellbeing.

“No. Everything’s fine,” Abigail replied, modestly.

But then silence suddenly overcame the office as she looked out the window to her left. Seconds later, she then decided to disclose her horrendous anguish.

“Well...not really. I just found out a few of my friends from high school were killed this past weekend,” she told, expressing sorrow as she lowered her head toward her lap.

“Oh no! I’m so sorry to hear that!” replied the supervisor, expressing empathy.

“Oh man, I mean, having one friend pass is dreadful, but having more than one pass; and so close together, that could really be emotionally overwhelming to deal with,” she continued.

“Do you think you need some time off? I could make the necessary adjustments until you get back,” she offered, being supportive of Abigail’s grief.

“No, no. I’ll be fine. I’m just gonna continue taking things slow, you know; one day at a time,” replied Abigail, giving her supervisor another polite smile.

“Nah, right now, I just wanna make sure I have everything ready and in your box by this evening,” she continued, as she stood to her feet, now ready to leave.

“Oh ok. Well I wanna thank you so much, Abigail, for your initiative. And again, I’m really sorry to hear about your friends,” sympathized the supervisor.

“Please know that I definitely appreciate your hard work. But also know that I’m here if you need anything,” she counseled.

Abigail nodded her head in agreement then exited the office.

Across town, Arquette was still traveling to the psychiatric center. The traffic on the city streets began to congest as many people began to leave work. Frequently, Arquette would have to stop at a traffic light before he reached the expressway that advanced out to the center. After looking at his watch, he predicted that it would take him roughly over an hour before he reached that location. Suddenly, his cellphone began to ring. He pulled his cellphone out of his right pants pocket to read the caller ID. It read “wife.” He pressed the send button to answer and then held his cellphone to his right ear.

“Hello,” he answered, while trying to stay focused on the road.

“Hey baby, I just wanted to check up on you, see how your day’s been. So, how’s it going?” Linda asked, expressing her care and affection for Arquette.

“Hey honey, my day’s been pretty good so far. I’m now heading out to this psych ward to do an interrogation. Yeah, the warrant I needed I got today, thank God, so now I get to speak with our prime suspect without any red tape,” replied Arquette, mildly excited.

“Now that’s good news, hon! I’m glad to hear things are working out for you,” told Linda, with gladness.

“Well listen, I also called because I’m at the store and wanted to know what you’d like for dinner,” she continued, trying to get an idea for a dinner dish.

“Humm...well let me think. You know, I believe I have a taste for some baked chicken and macaroni and cheese. I’ll let you decide the vegetable. I just don’t want you in the kitchen cooking too long, though,” replied Arquette.

“Awwe! Well thanks so much my amazing husband!” Linda replied, expressing fondness and gratitude.

“Ok then. I’ll be sure to grab the things you have a taste for, and probably add some broccoli or mixed vegetables to go with it,” she proposed.

“Now that sounds like a perfect combination, love,” agreed Arquette.

As they continued their conversation, Arquette’s cellphone began to beep unexpectedly, indicating that someone was calling in on the other line.

“Linda, baby, hold on! Someone’s calling in,” he requested.

He then moved his cellphone around to the front of his face to read the caller ID. It read, “Chris.” He quickly put his cellphone back to his ear to inform Linda about the incoming call.

“Hey Linda. Honey, I have someone calling in and I really need to take this. But please know that as soon as I’m finished at the institution, I’m coming straight home after. Yeah, this evening I wanna enjoy that delicious dinner right next to you, love,” informed Arquette, feeling romantic.

“Ok baby. Just please be careful while you’re out there, and I’ll see you when you get home. I love you,” concluded Linda, expressing caution.

“I know, baby. I love you, too!” replied Arquette.

Right after, he pulled the cellphone away from his ear again to locate the send button. After he pressed it, he immediately answered.

“Hello. This is Detective Arquette speaking. How can I help you?!” he answered.

“Hey Detective, this is Chris,” greeted Chris.

“Hey Chris, what’s up? How can I help you?” inquired Arquette, feeling pleased to hear from him.

“Well sir, I just called to tell you everything’s still going really good, actually. I mean, even up till now, there’s been no signs of anything suspicious or life threatening,” told Chris, expressing a sense of hope.

“Alright! Now that’s news I like to hear, Chris! And what about your friend, Abigail. Have you heard from her lately?” asked Arquette, expressing minor concern for her.

“Yeah, I spoke to her this morning. Though when I first called her, she didn’t pick up right away. That’s when I immediately assumed the worst. However, as I continued to call, she finally picked up, and that’s when I found out she was just sleep. Though, from the sound of her tone, I believe I pissed her off. But then after I explained to her why I was calling so much, she eventually claimed down,” replied Chris.

“Good job!” commended Arquette.

“Well, the most important thing is you heard from her,” he continued.

“So, I’ll assume for the time being that everything’s going good for both of y’all, and that there’s no reason for me to be perturbed about either of your safety,” he presumed, expressing minor relief for their wellbeing.

“Ok. Well even though y’all are safe, I’m still gonna work on my leads. As a matter of fact, I’m actually in route right now to go question that Karman individual. My hope is that this interrogation will somehow reveal what’s needed in order to make an arrest. For instance, depending on her responses to my questions, whether physical or verbal, they could likely insinuate her involvement in any of these cases,” he explained.

“Then once I’m done, I’ll contact you to provide an update on how things went, especially if we arrest her,” he told.

“Oh man, this sounds really good!” exclaimed Chris, sounding excited.

“Man, I just want you to know I really appreciate all you’re doing to keep me safe,” he continued, expressing appreciation.

“And, if I know Abigail, I’m sure she’d also be expressing this same gratitude if you spoke to her,” he added, assuming Abigail’s appreciation for Arquette’s efforts to keep them both safe.

“Well Chris, it’s my job, and I plan to continue to work hard until this thing’s resolved,” Arquette concluded.

Soon after, they wished one another a good evening and then disconnected. Finally, Arquette’s unmarked sedan had reached the main highway. After making a right at the fourth traffic light, it proceeded up the on-ramp then headed east for the facility.

The Interrogation

Meanwhile at the psychiatric center, recreation time was now coming to an end. Three orderly workers began to collect the games and then escort the patients back to their rooms. This allowed the dining staff to prepare the community room for dinner. Dr. Patel was in her office reviewing the notes from various patients on her computer. When she saw the notes for Karman, she gave them extra attention based from their last conversation which involved spiritual estrangement rituals. While reading each note, she soon felt it was time to reengage with her to hear more about her paranormal experience. With her left hand, she picked up her radio from off her desk then held the intercom button and spoke.

“Hey, this is Dr. Patel. Could someone please give me Karman’s location?” she requested.

“Yes ma’am! She’s just been escorted back to her room,” confirmed an orderly.

She sat her radio back down and then scattered the vanilla folders out on her desk to her left to find Karman’s file. As soon as she saw it, she placed it on top of the other files in preparation for their session. Next, she grabbed her radio and stood to her feet to leave the office. After exiting, she headed down the hall for Karman’s room. The orderly who escorted Karman to her room had just opened her door and was now guiding her inside with his right arm against her lower back.

As soon as he felt she was settled, he then ensured her that he would return to escort her to dinner.

“Alright Ms. Karman, you know the drill. As soon as we get the community room prepped for dinner, I’ll be back for you,” he said.

Karman nodded her head up and down, indicating that she understood. After seeing her response, he exited the room and then locked the door behind him.

Karman stood there facing the door for a few more minutes before evidently turning around and walking over to her bed. Now next to the bed, she dropped to her knees and placed her left hand in-between the bed mattress and frame. Startlingly, someone knocked at her door. Karman turned slightly to her right with haste to see who it was. It was Dr. Patel looking through the small glass window of the door with a smile on her face. After seeing that Karman had acknowledged her, she then proceeded to unlock the door and enter while putting her keys inside her right pants pocket. At that moment, Karman slid her hand out from between her mattress and then rose slowly to her feet and faced her.

“Good evening, Karman! I thought I’d come by to check on you. How are you?” greeted Dr. Patel, hoping for a friendly dialogue.

Karman just stood there silently; though, she did manage to give Dr. Patel a partial smile.

“I see they’re getting ready for dinner, so I’ll just make some time for us to talk after. We really need to finish our

last discussion,” recommended Dr. Patel, while observing the room.

Karman did not reply; she just stood there quietly and stared at her. Right then, an orderly began his announcement over the radio. His instructions were for the staff on how to prepare the clients for dinner. After hearing this message, Dr. Patel decided that she would head back to her office.

“Alright. Well I guess I’ll see you in a few then,” she said.

She then walked over to the door and exited the room. Karman sat on her bed in silence, watching as Dr. Patel closed and locked the door.

Finally arriving at the facility, Arquette drove up to the parking lot where he was last instructed. After parking, he grabbed his computer case and exited his car for the entrance. He placed the case strap over his left shoulder and then headed for the building. This time as he approached the entrance, he noticed that the center was open for visitors. Arquette entered the facility and right away detected the guests sitting in the waiting area to his right. They were awaiting official response for someone to escort them to the floor of whom they came to visit. Arquette approached the front desk where a security officer and an orderly sat and requested to see Dr. Patel.

“Good evening, I’m Detective Arquette. I’m here to speak with Dr. Patel regarding a patient,” he greeted, using both hands to present his badge for identification.

“Give me a minute sir, I’ll see if she’s available now,” replied the officer.

He reached for the phone with his left hand and held it to his left ear while using his right index finger to dial her extension number. Arquette closed his badge and then waited patiently. The phone rang four times before her voicemail responded. The officer pulled the phone away from his left ear and invited Arquette to have a seat in the waiting area while he tried again.

“Detective, if you wouldn’t mind having a seat over there. I’m not getting an answer right now, which could mean she’s with a patient. But I’ll try back again in a few minutes. As soon as she does answer, I’ll call you back up,” advised the officer, hanging up the phone and pointing to the waiting area as he stood to his feet.

“Sounds good, officer. Thanks!” agreed Arquette.

He turned around toward the waiting area and then chose to sit in a seat near the front. After walking over and taking a seat, he sat his computer case on his lap and then opened it, removing the warrant to read the details. Nearly fifteen minutes passed before he heard his name called.

“Detective Arquette!” called the officer.

He put the warrant back inside the case then closed it. Promptly after, he stood to his feet, placed the case strap over his left shoulder, then proceeded up to the desk. Now at the desk, the officer informed him that Dr. Patel had been notified of his visit and would be down to meet with him shortly.

“Detective, Dr. Patel has been notified of your arrival and will be down shortly,” told the officer.

“I appreciate it. Thanks!” replied Arquette.

He then went back over to his seat in the waiting area.

Another ten minutes passed before Dr. Patel suddenly appeared from beyond the secured access door and walked over to speak with the officer at the front desk. Arquette noticed her but decided to wait for her to call him over. In the meantime, he just sat and watched as she conversated with the officer. Then finally, after a few minutes, he saw the officer stand up and wave him over to the desk. Arquette stood to his feet and then walked over to meet Dr. Patel. As soon as he approached her, he instantly shook her right hand and thanked her for meeting with him.

“Good evening, Dr. Patel! I really appreciate you using this time to meet with me,” he greeted.

“Good evening to you, too, Detective! It’s no problem,” replied Dr. Patel.

“So, how could I be of assistance to the police department this evening?” she inquired.

Though, just before Arquette would respond, he paused briefly after realizing how close the officer and orderly were to overhear their conversation. He then leaned toward Dr. Patel and asked her if she had another place where they could speak in private.

“Uh...yeah, this is actually a confidential matter, to be honest. Is there another place for us to speak in private?” he enquired.

“Actually, yeah. Follow me, please,” replied Dr. Patel.

She led him over to the secured access door while removing her badge from her top right lab coat pocket with her right hand. After scanning it against the card reader and the door beeped, she then dropped her badge back inside her

coat pocket while opening the door with her left hand to enter; Arquette followed directly behind her. After he entered, he went over and stood next to the elevators. Dr. Patel then pulled the door closed with her right hand and ensured it was secure.

Right after, she joined Arquette near the elevators, and they began to converse.

“Alright Detective, what’s this all about?” questioned Dr. Patel, exhibiting minor concern.

“Well Doctor, I have a warrant here which grants me permission to speak with your patient, Karman Anderson,” disclosed Arquette, unzipping his computer case with his left hand while it was still hanging off his left shoulder.

With his right hand, he withdrew the folder containing the warrant then presented it to her. She took the folder, opened it, and skimmed over the details briefly with her right index finger. After gaining basic understanding of the warrant, she then handed the folder back to him.

“I don’t understand. Is this about your case? I thought we resolved this dispute,” declared Dr. Patel, expressing slight frustration as she crossed her arms.

“Remember? I already told to you Karman’s not the one you’re looking for,” she continued, feeling very confident in her statement.

“Yes Doctor, I remember our discussion previously regarding her; yet, because I’ve been in this line of work for nearly two decades now, I also remember the importance of questioning all potential suspects. And so, how this works is, I would ask questions necessary to the

case, observe their reactions, listen to their alibies, then I'd make a determination of whether they were involved or not," Arquette enlightened.

"Right Detective. And I'm sure your protocol is very advantageous; however, Karman's been here night after night, with no reports of her being miscounted for these last few days. Which means, there's no way on earth she could've attacked anyone, especially in the last week. So, with that being said, Detective, I strongly believe you're wasting your time questioning her. But, if you're gonna be persistent..." responded Dr. Patel, having disputable concerns about Arquette's warrant.

She turned toward the elevators, grabbed her badge with her right hand, and then scanned it at the first elevator panel. Arquette stood patiently to her right. The elevator rung twice, then the first elevator door opened. After they both entered, Dr. Patel pressed the button for the fourth floor and then elevator door closed.

The elevator began to coast in an upward direction. Each floor number lit up distinctively to indicate where the elevator was located, temporarily. As they waited for the elevator to reach the fourth floor, Dr. Patel informed Arquette that he could use her office for his interrogation.

"At this time, Detective, we're in the middle of serving dinner. And as soon as that's finished, we'll be starting visitation," informed Dr. Patel.

"Now, since Karman doesn't have family visits, I actually planned another session with her right after dinner. But I

guess I could postpone it for later now that you're here," she continued, sharing trivial details of Karman's history.

"Of course, between dinner and visiting hours, the community room will be occupied for quite a while. So, I'll just have you use my office for your session," she offered, looking up at the floor indicator.

Just then, the number four lit up and the elevator rung twice to indicate that it had reached the floor requested. Next, the elevator came to a complete stop and then the doors opened.

They exited the elevator then turned to their right for the orderly counter. Dr. Patel used her badge to get them through the next access door. After passing that door, they stopped at the counter for Arquette to sign-in his car keys. Arquette moved around and stood to the left side of Dr. Patel. She then introduced him to the orderly working the counter.

"This is Detective Arquette and he's here to speak with one of our patients," she disclosed.

The orderly stood to his feet, shook Arquette's right hand, then placed the clipboard with the sign-in sheet on the counter in front of him.

"Nice to meet you sir. If you could, please sign-in your car keys and I'll place them in our security lockbox back here," insisted the orderly, while handing him a pen.

Arquette shifted his computer case back to reach into his left pants pocket for his car keys. After taking them out, he placed them on the counter then grabbed the pen with his right hand. The orderly took his car keys then walked over to the lockbox to drop them inside.

Now signed-in, Arquette followed Dr. Patel across the hall to her office door. She took her keys out of her right pants pocket, unlocked her door, and then they both entered her office. Shortly after, she began to explain how she would prefer to have her office arranged during his interrogation.

“Ok. What I’d like to do is move my chair around to the front of my desk, as well as the patient’s chair. This way it would feel more like a face to face dialogue instead of a mandated, clinical session,” suggested Dr. Patel, while walking behind her desk for her chair.

Arquette waited near the door, watching her make the adjustments that she proposed. She rolled her chair around from the left side of her desk and then positioned it in the center of the office. Next, she walked over to get the patient’s chair. At that moment, Arquette decided to remove his computer case from his left shoulder and sat it on top of her desk. He then opened it and began to extract his note tablet, tape recorder, and other items to prepare for his interrogation.

As soon as she positioned the patient’s chair near hers, Dr. Patel took a few minutes to scan her office, trying to determine if there were any unsafe objects requiring removal before the interrogation begun. Now feeling self-assured that her office was safe, she then asked Arquette if he was in need anything.

“Do you have everything you need? Is there anything I can get you?” she asked.

“Ah, no. I believe I have everything I need here. Thanks!” confirmed Arquette.

“Alright. Well just know that during your meeting, I’mma have my door cracked open slightly. Plus, I’ll be right outside just in case you need me,” informed Dr. Patel, being supportive and precautionous.

“Thanks! I really appreciate everything you’re doing for me.” responded Arquette, showing gratitude for her support.

“You’re welcome. Now, let me go check on Karman, see if she’s done eating. Again, she normally doesn’t have visits, so I can just bring her in as soon as she’s done,” reminded Dr. Patel, walking toward her door.

Arquette did not respond. He just resumed with prepping for his interrogation. Dr. Patel left the office and headed toward the community room.

Now unpacked, Arquette noticed that he still had some time to himself. At that moment, he decided to give Linda a call to let her know how his evening was going. He pulled his cellphone out of his right pants pocket, scrolled through the recent calls list, then pressed the call button once her name was highlighted. Next, he held his cellphone to his left ear and waited for her to answer. As the phone rang, Arquette took a seat in Dr. Patel’s chair. The phone rang three times before Linda answered it.

“Hello!” she answered.

“Hey baby, how are you?” asked Arquette.

“I’m doing good, love. How’s everything going at work?” replied Linda.

“So far, things been moving pretty smooth. As a matter of fact, I’m in the doctor’s office right now about to interrogate

one of their patients. It shouldn't take long, but then again, it's too early to tell. The doctor just left to get her and bring her back to the office," Arquette divulged.

"I see. Well please take all the time you need, hun. I know how important this is for you. Anyway, I'm home getting dinner ready. If you're not home in the next hour, I'll leave your plate in the microwave," told Linda, expressing support for Arquette's hard work.

"Thanks Linda. You know I love you, right?!" asked Arquette, feeling grateful for Linda's support.

"Yeah I know. And I love you even more, Jackson!" Linda responded, expressing strong affection.

They then said their goodbyes and disconnected.

After Arquette pressed the end button on his cellphone, he heard Dr. Patel's voice out in the hall. Her conversation was now distinct as if she was close to the office. She was apparently informing a patient about a visitor awaiting him or her in the office. As each second passed, her voice gradually became louder as if she was about to enter her door.

All of a sudden, Dr. Patel appeared at the threshold with a female patient at her right side. After escorting the patient inside the office, Dr. Patel then introduced her to Arquette.

"Alright Karman, this is Detective Arquette with the Annapolis Police Department. He's here to ask you a few questions," she informed Karman, while walking her to the patient chair.

Karman had her hands bound with brown restraints for security purposes. Arquette immediately stood to his feet,

turned slightly to his left, then extended out his right hand to greet her as she passed. Karman, however, paused in her steps and just stared at Arquette's hand. After about a minute, she began to walk toward the chair again and disregarded his hand. Dr. Patel smiled slightly at Arquette as she led Karman to the chair. Now in front of the chair, she turned Karman around and then slowly eased her downward in the chair by her right arm.

"Alright. Now Karman look at me. I want you to know you don't have to answer any questions you don't feel like answering," affirmed Dr. Patel, bending slightly forward close to Karman.

But Karman was not paying her any attention. Instead, her attention was solely fixated on Arquette.

"Oh! And also know that I'll be just outside my door if need me," she assured, hoping that this would make Karman feel worriess of any undesired exigencies.

Dr. Patel then turned slightly to her right and looked directly at Arquette. Arquette, in turn, just gave her a polite smile.

"If that's everything Detective, I'll leave you two alone so you can get started," Dr. Patel concluded.

"Thank you, Doctor," replied Arquette, displaying appreciation for her efforts.

She then walked toward the door, closed it behind her slowly, but eventually stopped to ensure there was a small gap between the door and the threshold.

Instantly, silence engulfed the room. Arquette did not speak. He just sat in silence while observing Karman's

behavior. She, in turn, also did not talk or look directly at him. No, it seemed as if her focus was on his shoes. After nearly five minutes of uncommunicativeness, he soon believed that her withdrawn behavior would more than likely persist. At that moment, he lifted his left forearm up to read the time on his watch, then decided to begin the interrogation to avoid extending further time delay. But just before asking his first question, he wanted to ensure that Karman was fully aware that their session being recorded.

“Karman, before we begin, I wanna ensure you understand that our session is being recorded, ok?” he disclosed.

Karman did not reply, nor did she reject the idea of a recorded session. So of course, with no rejections or concerns from her, Arquette processed forward with his interrogation. First, he reached to his right to press the record button on the tape recorder that was on the desk. Next, he grabbed his pen from off the desk and got ready to jot down her responses on the notepad in his left hand.

“Alright. Let’s get started. Good evening Karman, my name is Detective Arquette. How’s your day been?” he greeted, starting with pleasant inquiries for hopes to encourage early responses from her.

Yet, Karman remained silent while staring down into Arquette’s lap.

“Please know I don’t plan to hold you long. I just have a few questions to ask you regarding a case I’m working on. And with your help, I believe I can solve it,” he continued, enacting as if he was trying to establish an entrusting relation with her.

Karman, however, did not display any interest in his conversation.

After failing to attain a response, he decided to move forward and ask the questions that targeted her youth, preferably aiming for her school years.

“So, I’ve read over your file and saw that you grew up here. Wanna tell me a little bit about your childhood, or perhaps your time in school? I’m interested in hearing about that,” he offered, in an attempt to ease right into his interrogation questions.

Although Karman did not verbally respond to either of the questions, she did respond physically as her eyes shifted briefly from Arquette’s lower body to looking at his face. This came as a shock to him, which then prompted him to inquire more about her experiences from school.

“Well, I see I’ve gotten your attention now. What was it? Was it about school in general, or your time at Richmond High? Can we talk about that for a minute?” he probed, convinced that this stimulated response was from the school question.

But Karman remained silent while her eyes adjusted downward at Arquette’s lap again.

Now feeling that her interest had been lost, Arquette decided to go for his computer case. He sat his pen and notepad down on the desk, opened his case, and then withdrew a vanilla folder. Inside this folder were the photos of the victims. Some of them were portraits, and the others were shots taken by forensics from the crime scenes. Arquette decided to begin with a portrait of Mr. Osborne from a yearbook from Richmond

High. He was dressed in a light blue, short sleeve polo shirt with a dark blue tie. The scheme of the background included a bluish-white pattern which complemented the driver's image. Lastly, the photo showed him posing in-between the American flag and the school flag. Arquette held this photo up in his right hand then turned it around for Karman to view.

"Alright Karman, the first photo I have here is that of Mr. Myron Osborne, a bus driver for Richmond High. Now, according to your high school file, you rode his bus at one point, is that correct?" he enquired.

But Karman did not respond, nor did she look at the photo. After noting her nonresponsive manner, Arquette just continued on with his questioning process.

"Of course, after reviewing all your records, it's evident you haven't attended this school in a really long time, so you probably may not even recognize this person anymore," he stated, personating a false sense of doubt.

He then put Mr. Osborne's photo face down on the left side of the folder then picked up another one on the right side. This one was the second victim, Stacy Kirsten, and it, too, was a portrait from a yearbook as she posed in-between the American flag and the school flag. In this photo, she was dressed in a pink, round neck blouse. Her brown colored hair was tied in a ponytail. Though, a small portion of it in the front was curled into a bang. Moreover, the white diamond earrings she was wearing dangled just passed her earlobes.

"Alright, this next photo here shows a woman in her early to mid-twenties. Her name was Stacey Kirsten and she was a former student from Richmond High. Now since you were

also a student there, is it possible you recognize her?" he asked, as he turned the photo around for Karman to see.

Surprisingly, this photo caused a noticeable reaction from Karman as she locked eyes with the image. And it seemed like the longer she stared at it, an odious expression slowly grew on her face, as if she was becoming affronted. But then shortly after, as her stare persisted, her expression suddenly altered into something even more sinister. Karman's expression of discontent had now converted into a malicious grin. As soon as Arquette noticed this, he decided to address it immediately.

"Oh, I see you have some feelings attached to this photo," he said.

"Even though you haven't said much, your expressions are blatantly obvious," he continued.

"So tell me, were you and Stacey friends, or perhaps was there some type of troubled history between you two?" he probed, using rhetorical questions in hopes that Karman would respond.

But Karman just sat there completely quiet. Though she did, however, respond physically by shifting her eyes away from the photo to looking at him. This silence overtook the room for a few minutes. Arquette saw this as a good time to pause to notate the response he just observed. He placed the photo back inside the folder and closed it, then sat the folder down on the desk and then grabbed his notepad and pen and started to write about her facial reactions; incorporating his theoretical views of why she reacted this way.

After updating his notes, he put the notepad and pen back on the desk then picked up the folder again. He opened it and then flipped to where he left off for the next photo. It was another portrait from a yearbook, but this time it was that of Michael Smith. He was wearing a letterman's jacket from Richmond High and posing in-between the American flag and the school flag. The jacket's color schemes were dark blue, black, and white. His hairstyle featured a low-cut fade with natural waves. Moreover, there was a small gold-plated earring in his left ear.

"Ok. Next, we have Michael Smith who was also from Richmond High. Any chance you might remember him?" he asked.

Karman still did not respond. Yet, her eyes happened to lock on to this photo as it did the previous one. Subsequently, she made the same disgruntled impression she did with the photo of Stacey.

"Well I take it from the expression you're giving, you're not pleased to see this photo, either. Is this because of the person here?" he inquired, rhetorically, while pointing his left index finger at the portrait.

He, again, pushed this question to entice some type of response. Surprisingly, her dissatisfied façade suddenly grew into anger after being asked that question.

"Oh. It seems this question made you upset again. You want to talk about it; maybe tell me what you're feeling when you see this person?" he offered, in hopes Karman would finally disclose her repressed emotions.

But silence only permeated the office. And within the next minute, her eyes gradually lowered toward his thighs once again. Now, even though the lack of communication from Karman had become dreadfully frustrating, Arquette was acceptably content after observing her physical responses which perceived the expressions of obvious anger and resentment.

Because he now felt that her responses were an indication of dislike for the victims, Arquette decided to now present the crime scene photos. He avoided the ones for Mr. Osborne because she showed no reaction toward his yearbook photo. Instead, he went straight for the ones of Stacey and Michael.

“Alright. Now, before I show these photos, I must warn you they’re very graphic,” he advised, placing the open folder down on his lap.

Next, he stacked the photos together but then paused briefly while holding them toward his stomach.

“Please know I normally don’t this, but again, because I believe you can help me solve this case, I feel showing you these photos would be a great help,” he avowed, in a slightly enthusiastic tone.

In the back of his mind, he was eager to see her reaction to the images. At that moment, he held the group of photos in his left hand then drew the first one with his right thumb and index finger. After turning it around toward her, he began to discuss the details.

“This photo here shows the lower portion of the victim, Stacey. She was found dead in her bedroom,” he disclosed.

“If you look closer, you’ll see she’s been cut repeatedly on both arms by what we think was a five-bladed object. However, after doing some research, there apparently aren’t any knives matching this description,” he added.

Karman glanced at the photo but then quickly turned her head to the right to avoid seeing the image.

After he noticed how she was looking away from the photo, Arquette decided to draw the next image.

“Ok. In this one, you can see more cut marks all along both legs. Again, these marks seemed to have been from a knife of some sort, or so we believe,” he resumed.

Though Karman’s head was fixated to her right, she still managed to look at the image to her left. When Arquette saw her eyes peaking to her left, he leaned slightly forward to get the photo closer to her face. It was then that her reaction to the photo emerged as she forcefully closed her eyes, again, trying to avoid the image. After detecting this response, he became more convinced that she was responsible for Stacey’s death. Although, the obstacle that remained was proving that she had left the facility during any of these murders. Now feeling more confident of Karman’s involvement in Stacey’s murder, he decided it was time to escalate the session. He placed that photo back in the folder then flipped through the remaining ones in his left hand for a particularly graphic one.

“I see you didn’t like that photo either. Well this next photo is also extremely graphic,” he said, rotating it in his right hand for Karman to see.

“As you can see here, the victim’s stomach was practically curved out by, again, what we believe may have been by a knife. And judging by the depth and length of this wound, we’ve concluded that the strike which caused this likely transpired from directly over top of the her,” he described.

Karman opened her eyes then looked briefly to her left to see the image. Though, as soon as she saw it, she hurried to close them again. Then suddenly, her body began to fluster and shake, chillingly, as if she was disturbed and petrified of this image. The juddering of her thighs apparently caused her hands to shake unbearably as they rested on top. And, with her hands already quivering, this caused the hand restraints to vibrate intensely. This moment of the interrogation was incredibly essential for Arquette as he believed this to be the ominous response of someone guilty of this crime. But in the back of his mind, concern for his own safety arose. For he was unsure of Karman’s capabilities in her current, frantic state.

“Hey Karman, are you alright? Do you need me to get someone for you?” he asked, in hopes of a response.

But Karman did not respond. She just kept her head turned to the right with her eyes shut. And although her lips were trembling, there was no noise coming from her mouth. It appeared as if she was mumbling softly to herself. Arquette placed the stack of photos inside the folder then sat the folder on the desk, still open. Next, he grabbed his notepad and pen and began to update his notes. After adding these additional notes, he decided to take a break to allow Karman’s troubled demeanor to subside.

Five minutes had passed before Karman's manic behavior began to dwindle slightly. But there were still a few signs of uneasiness displayed. However, with no interest in prolonging his interrogation, Arquette decided to resume with showing more photos. At that moment, he sat his notepad and pen down on the desk then grabbed the folder and sat it on his lap. Next, he picked up the photos and prepared to present them. The ones he chose this time were from the grocery store scene. He shifted through these photos to find the most graphic ones to exhibit.

"Karman, are you feeling better now? Listen, there's a few more photos I'd like you to see before I wrap things up," he insisted.

Just then, Karman's mumbling came to a halt. Her head, though, was still turned to the right with her eyes closed. Arquette began to flip through the photos, trying to find the ones of Michael's disfigured corpse.

"Karman! Hey, Karman! I need you to look at these, ok?! These are from another crime scene," he revealed, turning one of the photos around for her to see.

"You see here, this is a photo of Michael, and it appears he was also killed by some sort of five-bladed object, based on the incisions along his legs and torso," he described.

After realizing that Karman was blatantly ignoring the photos, he leaned forward and tapped her on her right thigh with his right index finger to get her attention. Right then, her body jolted nervously as if this startled her. Moreover, her head then snapped forward with her eyes staring directly at him, alarmingly.

“I apologize for touching you. I wasn’t trying to alarm you, by no means. I just really need for you to look at these photos,” he said, expressing regret while striving to keep her calm.

He leaned back in the chair, put that photo down in the folder, then selected another one of Michael and then turned it toward her.

“Please, if you could look at this photo. Again, it seemed as if someone curved his stomach out as well,” he stated, in an overtly graphic manner.

“I mean, do you at least have an idea of whom would wanna kill your former classmates this way, out of enragement and aggression, might I add?” he inquired, intensifying his questions, slightly.

After looking at this photo, Karman instantly came to a pause as if she were in a deep state of meditation. Her behavior displayed a sense of nostalgia as she appeared to be re-envisioning this awful image. This lasted for nearly five minutes. Shockingly, before Arquette knew it, she suddenly started to grumble about the nights she had pursued each victim as more disturbing images began to recur in her mind, ultimately causing her to overreact while staring at this photo. Moreover, her body began to jerk and twitch in her chair, assertively. Soon after, she eventually covered her eyes as though she could not tolerate the image from that photo any longer.

What occurred next was even more bizarre. Her head began to sway from left to right, rapidly, like she was vigorously trying to avoid the photo. Concurrently, the word, no, was also

being shouted constantly in objection to viewing more of the photos. Though Arquette could not quite understand what Karman had grumbled, he felt that now was the perfect time to harass her with more questions. At that moment, he searched through the photos for the one that exposed Michael's deformed torso. With this photo in his right hand, he then leaned forward and held it directly in front of her face.

"Karman, I need you to look at this photo! Look! Who do you know is capable of doing something like this?! I really need to find them, now!" he stated, exhibiting mild irritation.

But she did not respond. Instead, her tone only got louder and body language became increasingly violent. Unimaginably, the wooden chair she was sitting in began to crackle as if it were about to collapse due to her riotous motion. Without warning, Dr. Patel's office door stretched open; it was Dr. Patel entering her office to check on Karman. After noticing the discomforting expression on Karman's face, the awkward movement in her chair, and hearing her crying out, Dr. Patel immediately discontinued the interrogation as she found it being extremely intense for her patient.

"Detective, what's going on in here?! What is this?!" she shouted, in a furious tone.

Right then, Arquette calmly retracted his forceful approach, placed the photos back into the folder, then closed it. Next, he put the folder on the desk and then grabbed his notepad and pen to update his notes. Dr. Patel swiftly moved to attend to Karman's care. She stood behind her chair, leaned over slightly, then braced her arms around Karman's arms to

console her. However, Karman's belligerent behavior just persisted. As soon as she felt her effort to reduce Karman's traumatic episode wasn't instantly effective, Dr. Patel yelled for the orderly.

"Orderly! I need you in here, now!" she yelled, while embracing Karman.

Within seconds, an orderly rushed into the office in response to her request. After realizing the alarming situation, he moved quickly to assist with Karman. He approached her chair from behind then placed his arms just underneath Dr. Patel's arms and then began to speak soft, tranquil words to Karman in an effort to get her to acknowledge him. This was a technique that he was trained to do in order to psychologically redirect patients whom were displaying any types of mental health instabilities.

"Karman, it's me. I need you to relax, ok? Everything's gonna be fine. I'm here to take you back to your room now. Please come with me, ok?" he counseled, repeating this phrase multiple times.

Successively, his words eventually brought her to a serene, unruffled state of mind.

"Dr. Patel, I'm gonna take her back to her room now," he affirmed, preparing to shift himself around to the front of Karman's chair.

"Yes, please do. I think she's had enough for one night," empathized Dr. Patel, looking down at her.

As he repositioned himself to the front of her chair, Dr. Patel released Karman's arms. The orderly placed his right

foot between Karman's legs and then wrapped his arms tight around her upper body area to lift her up. As soon as he felt secure to lift her, he pulled her forward with support from his right leg, then stabilized the lift with his left leg back. After they stood up, the orderly then shifted himself to Karman's right side then placed his left arm underneath her right arm. Then without delay, he began to escort her out of the office. Dr. Patel followed close behind to ensure he would be ok escorting her. Out in the hall, the orderly told Dr. Patel that everything would be ok, and that he could handle getting Karman back to her room.

"Ma'am, I got it from here. I can get her back to her room. It's no problem," he assured.

He then slowly guided Karman down the hall.

"Are you sure you're ok? I could call for another orderly," asked Dr. Patel, leaning to the left of her doorway.

"No ma'am, that won't be necessary. I'll be fine. Thanks!" the orderly claimed, looking back over Karman's right shoulder at Dr. Patel.

After accepting that he had Karman managed, Dr. Patel returned to her office and closed the door partway. Arquette was sitting in the chair still writing his notes.

"What the hell was that all about, Detective?" she asked, expressing frustration while walking over toward him.

"Doctor, I know what you're probably thinking, but I promise you I had everything under control," declared Arquette, looking down at his notepad.

"Oh really, because what I saw wasn't under control. No, it actually seemed more like you were forcing her to look at

your photos, under pressure I might add,” stated Dr. Patel, returning the patient’s chair to the right of her desk.

“Well Dr. Patel, believe it or not, her reaction wasn’t actually because of how I presented the photos, but from what she saw on them,” explained Arquette, with certainty.

“Oh really? And what do these photos pertain to?” inquired Dr. Patel, now standing behind her desk with both hands placed on top, leaning forward toward Arquette.

“Doctor, these are photos of the victims whom I believe were the result of a serial killer, and they’ve all taken place over the past a few days. So please understand that this meeting with her was to help me decide whether I should remove her or keep her on my list of suspects. Although now, of course after having this interrogation, I have a strong notion she’s actually the person I’m looking for,” disclosed Arquette, pausing briefly from writing his notes to look at Dr. Patel.

“Ok. So if I’m understanding you correctly, you believe a patient of mine, who’s been here for nearly ten years might I add, is a serial killer? And, that she’s killed people within the past few days no less?” queried Dr. Patel, walking around to the left side of her desk.

She then stopped and sat on the corner of her desk next to him.

“Well Doctor, from the tone of your voice, I’m beginning to sense that you’re doubting my theory of her involvement. But it’s ok, because this interrogation helped alleviate my doubts about her,” assured Arquette, feeling convinced of Karman’s involvement.

“Oh really? And what makes you certain it was her?” asked Dr. Patel, expressing curiosity.

“I mean, yeah, so she reacted bleakly toward those disturbing photos, so what? In case you haven’t notice, Detective, she is a psych patient,” she speculated, intrigued to hear his response.

“Yes, Dr. Patel, I’m fully aware of who she is and where she’s at. But, with all respect, I’m a detective who’s worked many homicide cases for nearly 20 years, which means I have knowledge and perception on the various behaviors of someone innocent or guilty. And with that being said, let’s discuss the behaviors of an innocent person. An innocent person wouldn’t feel troubled or nervous when reviewing evidence or being questioned. However, when a person is guilty, their mentality would likely display this, whether through eye contact, facial features, or avoidance of evidence in an attempt to escape the results of their horrific actions. Of course, when I showed these photos to Karman, there were all sorts of red flags going off. For instance, her facial feature distinctively expressed some type of infuriation and disgust for both, the female and the male victim. Now mind you, if she was innocent, then none of these photos would’ve provoked such an aggressive, personal reaction,” Arquette expounded, while closing his notepad.

He then stood to his feet.

“Well, regardless what your theory is, Detective, I just don’t see Karman being the person you’re searching for. She’s never caused any trouble and has always seemed to stay to herself since she’s been here,” assured Dr. Patel.

“But most importantly, and you should maybe take this into great consideration, there’s never been any reports, none, of her trying to flee or escape,” she added.

“Dr. Patel, listen, I hear what you’re saying and respect your view on this matter, I really do, and so I will consider your input,” told Arquette, while lifting up his left forearm to check his watch.

“Alright. It’s getting pretty late. Besides, I think I’m done here, so I’mma go ahead and take off,” he mentioned.

“Again, I respect your opinion on this matter, but just as a caution, I’m gonna ask that you please take my card anyway,” he suggested, while pulling a business card out of his left pants pocket.

“Now, I’m not sure when you’re planning to leave this evening, but while you’re here, I just ask that if you happen to hear or see anything suspicious regarding Karman, to please give me a call asap,” he advised.

“And oh! If you could, please feel free to provide your staff with my number as well, in case they notice something after you leave,” he concluded.

Dr. Patel took his card and began to read the information on it. At that moment, Arquette moved around her left side and put his notepad and folder into his computer case, zipped it closed, and then put the strap around his left shoulder. Seeing that he was now ready to leave, Dr. Patel stood up from her desk then escorted him out the office. Now out in the hall, she then accompanied him over to the orderly counter to retrieve his keys. Arquette grabbed the pen and began to sign himself out while the orderly stood to his feet and walked over to the safe

to retrieve his car keys. Within a few seconds, the orderly approached the counter, handed Arquette his keys, then stood there patiently awaiting to provide additional assistance.

Out of courtesy, Dr. Patel then wished Arquette off. “Alright Detective, I’m glad you were able to conduct your investigation. Sorry your meeting with Karman wasn’t more successful though,” stated Dr. Patel, feeling apologetic for the results of Arquette’s interrogation.

“Oh, it’s quite alright, Doctor. I’m just hoping I don’t have to come back out here again, that’s all,” replied Arquette, with a partial smile on his face.

He then put his keys in his left pants pocket.

“Honestly Detective, I doubt you will. I mean, unless it has anything do with magic...,” mentioned Dr. Patel, before coming to a quick pause mid-sentence.

Arquette stared at her with a vague expression on his face while trying to decipher whether she was being sarcastic or not. The orderly, however, thought about her partial comment of Karman and magic, but remained silent.

“What? What was it you were about to imply?” Arquette asked, expressing curiosity.

“No...nothing. Please, have a good evening, Detective. And please have a safe travel back into town,” Dr. Patel concluded, having a meticulous expression on her face.

“Ok. Well I thank you Doctor for your time and wish you a good evening also. Goodnight,” replied Arquette, feeling skeptical about her previous partial statement.

“Goodnight,” wished Dr. Patel.

She then walked away from the orderly counter and headed down toward the community room.

Now having all his effects, Arquette was ready to leave the center.

“Alright. I think I’m set now. I want you to have a good evening, sir. And definitely be careful around these patients,” wished Arquette, displaying thoughtful affection toward the orderly.

“Oh I will sir. I appreciate your concern.” the orderly replied.

Arquette then waved goodbye and then started walking toward the access door. To his surprise though, something unexpected happen. He heard the orderly yell for him to come back.

“Ah, Detective, could you come back here a second?!” shouted the orderly.

Without hesitation, Arquette turned around and went back to the orderly counter.

“Yes sir! Did you have something else for me?!” he asked, as he approached the counter with hopes that the orderly had more information to offer him.

“Yes Detective,” replied the orderly.

“Well, I’m honestly not sure how this information can help you because I’m not exactly sure why you had a visit with Karman tonight, and by no means am I asking. I just want you to know that after hearing Dr. Patel mention magic regarding her, it had me think of a situation the other night involving her. Now, I would like to go into this in more detail, but I don’t need Dr. Patel assuming I’m offering you

confidential information,” he explained, while leaning forward over the counter toward Arquette.

“And I can completely understand that,” Arquette agreed.

“Just so you know, I also wouldn’t want you to get into any kind of trouble, either. And so, with that being said, if there’s any additional information you can provide me, I give you my word it’ll be held strictly confidential,” he vowed.

“Trust me, at this point, any additional information I can get would be greatly appreciated,” he stated, expressing gratitude and confidence.

The orderly paused briefly, then looked to his right to see if Dr. Patel was coming up the hall. With her nowhere in sight, he then went over to a filing cabinet near the lockbox, opened the second drawer, and began to search through the folders. Arquette waited patiently for him to return to the counter. After closing the drawer, the orderly approached the counter holding a vanilla folder in his right hand.

“Ok. So on that evening I was talking about, there was one other person in the room with me and Karman,” told the orderly.

Right then, he opened the folder on the counter, grabbed a pen and yellow notepad, then wrote down a number. After jotting it down, he then explained to Arquette his reason for providing it.

“Here. This is the number to our priest. His name is Father Francis and he comes here on Sundays and Wednesdays to perform mass. He could definitely give you the full story of what happened that evening, and that’s mainly because he

was in the room long before I got there,” he continued, while separating the piece of paper from the notepad and handing it to Arquette.

“Sir, you’re the man! I really do appreciate this,” thanked Arquette, showing gratitude.

“Yeah, I’ll definitely to give him a call as soon as I can,” he continued, taking the note and placing it in his left pants pocket.

Soon after, he shook the orderly’s right hand and then left for the access door. The orderly waited until Arquette was in the camera at the door before pressing the button to allow him through to reach the elevators. Now outside the front of the facility, Arquette decided to contact his wife to inform her that he was leaving the center and heading home. He took his cellphone out of his right pants pocket, speed dialed her number, then held his cellphone to his ear while proceeding to his car. Linda answered and then they began to speak briefly about his current status. When he reached his car, he sat his computer case on the backseat, then got into the driver’s seat. As soon as he and Linda disconnected, he started the car and then drove off the site.

PART IV

Chapter 22

Trouble at TeleCast Communications

The evening finally settled as the sun fell far beyond the horizon. The afterglow from its rays eventually diminished, emitting a dark blue sky. Like clockwork, the glow from the moon shined bright in the middle of the sky, casting an elegant beam across the night atmosphere. This beam astonishingly unveiled a pathway leading out into the obscurity beyond the outskirts of the city. Subsequently, the downtown area of Annapolis began to irradiate following the various office lights switching on systematically, as well as the streetlights which resembled an orange-yellow luminosity overcoming the dark streets. With the rays from the sun no longer present, a cool, refreshing breeze drifted across the terrain. Arquette had finally reached the city limits. As soon as he stopped at a red light, he picked up his cellphone from off the passenger seat, then reached into his left pants pocket for the note with the Priest's number on it. Next, he held the note up at the top of the steering wheel then, with his right thumb, entered the number into his cellphone and then pressed the send button. With the cellphone held to his right ear, he heard the phone ring four times before the voicemail answered.

At first, he hesitated about leaving a message, but quickly decided that leaving one could provide the Priest with a name to the missed call. In addition, he may become conceivably eager to return the call after listening to his voicemail. The only concern, though, was the uncertainty of just how long it would be before he receives this message. Arquette then began recording his message.

“Hello. Good evening Father. This is Detective Arquette calling. Sir, I had recently visited Miracle Care Recovery about a patient there. And before I left, an orderly provided me your number, suggesting I give you a call so you could describe to me a situation that took place the other night involving this patient. After hearing his brief version of the story, I decided to call you to hear whatever detailed information you could provide, in hopes this would further assist in my investigation. If possible, could you please contact me at your earliest convenience. I’m heading home now, but I’ll still be up for a while. So please feel free to call this evening,” he explained.

After finishing his message, he disconnected and then sat his cellphone down on the passenger seat again.

Thirty minutes later, Arquette pulled into his driveway. After turning off the ignition, he exited the car, grabbed his computer case, and then went into the house. The lamp on the living room table was still on.

“Linda, I’m home now, love!” shouted Arquette, as he walked over to the fireplace to put his keys, cellphone, and badge down on top of it.

While unpacking, he suddenly heard footsteps coming from upstairs. It was Linda walking toward the staircase. After coming down the stairs, she then walked over to him.

“Hey honey!” greeted Arquette, while extending his arms out toward her. He held her forearms lovingly then leaned forward to give her a kiss. In turn, Linda kissed him.

“Hey baby, how was your day?” she asked, while helping Arquette with his computer case.

“Oh man, I think I got a break in this case...finally!!” declared Arquette, feeling a sense of relief. He then took off his suit coat and laid it across the top of the loveseat.

“Really?! Now that is great news!” replied Linda.

“It was that interrogation! Man, I tell you, if you would’ve seen how distraught this woman reacted when she saw my photos of the victims, you would’ve thought the same thing,” protested Arquette, as he unbuttoned his shirt.

Well I’m sure, judging from your reaction right now,” Linda giggled.

“Did you take your medication today? I wanna make sure you’re taking care of yourself with the same energy and effort you’re giving your case” she asked, expressing concern for Arquette’s mental health.

“Yes, yes ma’am I did! I took them around lunch today. And just to let you know, I haven’t really had any issues these pasts few weeks since taking them. But let me guess, I still need to keep taking them, right?” replied Arquette, with slight humor.

“Yes, my amazing husband. I mean that’s great news about your work, but as you can see, I’m more concerned

with your mental health,” Linda said, expressing sincerity and compassion.

“Anyway! That’s enough talk for tonight. Right now, it’s time for you to eat and then get in bed. You need to get some sleep,” she continued, while helping him take off his shirt.

“Yeah love, you’re right. Is the food in the microwave?” asked Arquette, removing his gun belt and handing it to her.

“Yeah. Just warm it up for about 50 seconds. Here, I’ll take your things upstairs,” replied Linda, adding the belt to the coat and shirt that were already folded across her left forearm.

She then gave him another kiss and then went back upstairs. Arquette went into the kitchen wearing his pants, a white t-shirt, and his shoes. He swept his left hand along the right side of the kitchen entrance to flip the light switch on. When he approached the microwave, he opened it to see if the food was inside. After confirming that it was in there, he shut the door and then pressed 50 seconds on the timer. While his food was warming up, he went for a glass from the cabinet then went over to the refrigerator for some juice. Just then, the microwave beeped five times, signaling that it had terminated. Arquette sat his glass of fruit punch down on the table then went over to the microwave and carefully removed his plate. After closing the microwave door, he went over to the silverware drawer to grab a fork and then took a seat at the table.

While eating, Arquette began to reflect on his interrogation and the reasons why he still deemed Karman his prime suspect. As his thoughts on how she reacted improbably toward each image replayed over and over in his head, he also

began to think about the challenge he would have in proving that she did commit these murders. And this challenge would be based on him still not having any evidence to confirm that she had physically left the facility on each of those nights. All of a sudden, as he ate in silence, Arquette heard his cellphone ringing in the living room. However, he chose to ignore it. He just continued eating with the assumption that it was the precinct calling. Although by the fourth ring, it eventually struck him that this might be Father Francis returning his call. Right then, he abruptly jumped to his feet then dashed into the living room. He ran in between the loveseat and the table to get to the fireplace. Now in front of the fireplace, he immediately grabbed his cellphone with his right hand and pressed the send button to answer, then desperately held the cellphone to his right ear and spoke.

“Hello, hello...Detective Arquette speaking!” he greeted, sounding winded.

“Yes, good evening. This is Father Francis. I believe you left me a message asking me to give you a call,” greeted the Priest.

“Yes, that’s correct, sir. I called you just after visiting a patient at Miracle Care Recovery,” confirmed Arquette.

“Well Detective, I’m not a doctor. Nor do I have access to any records at that facility. I just perform the mass services Sundays and Wednesdays,” the Priest explained.

“I understand, Father. But I’m not necessarily contacting you about patients’ records. I’m actually calling to discuss an incident the orderly said involved yourself and a specific patient I spoke with this evening,” revealed Arquette.

“Is that so? And who is this patient you’re referring to, may I ask?” the Priest inquired.

“Sure. The patient’s name is Karman Anderson,” Arquette replied.

“Does that name sound familiar to you?” he asked.

“Karman Anderson. Karman Anderson. No, can’t say I know that name, Detective, and that’s mainly because I see so many patients during each mass service, it’s really hard to place a name without a face,” the Priest answered.

“I understand. You only see the patients when you’re performing mass. So of course, trying to recall any patient’s name without seeing them could be very difficult,” empathized Arquette.

“On the other hand, however, the orderly who gave me your number, told me he helped you with an incident involving Karman Anderson the other night,” he continued.

“Humm...wait. Now that you mention it, there was an incident the other night. Well, to be exact, it was just past midnight yesterday morning,” the Priest recollected.

“Yeah, it happened right after midnight mass. The orderly and I were in Karman’s room trying to calm her down. I mean I don’t know what it was, but it seemed like she was in some type of trance. Her eyes...they were shaking and rolling behind her head, you know? Oh! And she was also mumbling something to herself, too, almost like she was performing some kind of séance,” he continued, recalling his traumatic episode with Karman.

“And that, Father, was what I was waiting to hear,” stated Arquette.

“What? What were you were wanting to hear? I’m confused. And also, why exactly are you, a detective, pursuing this patient, may I ask?” the Priest asked, expressing curiosity for Arquette’s interest in Karman.

“Well Father, I’m currently in the middle of a homicide investigation. Three people were murdered in the past few days. And what I’ve learned about each of these victims was that they all shared a history with this patient, Karman. Now just this evening, I had the chance to interrogate her, but her doctor interrupted the session just before I could ask all my questions,” disclosed Arquette, before the Priest interrupted him.

“So, let me venture a guess here. You have some belief that Karman may’ve had something to do with this, right?” the Priest asked.

“So far Father, all the evidence has pointed to her. But most importantly, had you seen her reaction to the crime scene photos I showed her, you likely would’ve drawn the same suspicions, too,” assured Arquette, feeling confident in his theory.

“Ok. So if you feel this confident, then why haven’t you made an arrest yet?” the Priest wondered.

“Well Father, here’s the thing, although there’s plenty of evidence leading to her, my ultimate challenge now is explaining how she’s been able to come and go from the facility, undetected I might add, in order to commit these crimes,” replied Arquette.

“And that, you see, is where you come in. See Father, after my interrogation was over, Dr. Patel walked me to the

orderly desk to get my keys. It was then that she agreed it would be extremely difficult for anyone to come and go undetected, unless magic was involved,” he continued.

“Surprisingly though, after mentioning magic in regard to Karman, she immediately paused mid-sentence and just walked away. That’s when the orderly provided me your number, after overhearing her mention magic involving Karman. He said you would have something to share which encompassed her and magic. It seems he was right. So, judging from that eccentric episode you just described, I think I’ll consider this to be additional intel for my investigation,” he divulged.

“Uh, Detective, do you feel it’s appropriate to mention magic in your report? I mean, wouldn’t your superiors find this a bit outlandish or impractical? I’m only asking because it could be extremely difficult to prove this, unless maybe you were there to witness it,” the Priest inquired.

“I mean, how often does a person get arrested for using magic?” he continued, doubting whether Arquette should mention magic in his report.

“Father, I agree with everything you’re saying; but again, all our evidence points to her. Now keep in mind, our forensics confirmed that each victim’s death occurred around midnight, maybe a few hours after; basically, about the same time you claimed your incident with Karman transpired. I mean who’s knows, maybe she’s using some sort of witchcraft to go after her victims during that time frame. Just a thought,” ventured Arquette.

The Priest did not respond.

“Father, my last question is, what did you do to stabilize her that evening? You know, did you use some type of psychological method?” he enquired, wondering what method the Priest used for remediation.

“Actually Detective, I just remember quoting some scriptures from the bible while also having my hand on her head. Surprisingly, that eventually calmed her down. Of course, it took quite a while though,” the Priest replied, slightly clueless of Arquette’s reason for asking that question.

“Oh! Ok!” exclaimed Arquette, seemingly shocked to hear this.

“Well to be honest, Father, it sounds to me like you performed an exorcism. And if that was the case, then I’d like to assume that because of that performance, that was likely the reason another murder didn’t occur overnight,” he speculated, now linking all this intel together to develop a broader premise.

“Yeah, I guess that’s accurate,” the Priest agreed.

“Alright Detective, I really hope I was of some assistance this evening. I’m gonna get off this phone now, get some rest,” he continued, in a tired tone.

“Father, you were an incredible help, sir,” Arquette replied.

“Oh wait! Before you go, is it ok for me to keep your number on standby? You know, in case I may need you again,” he asked, believing that he would likely need the Priest’s assistance in the near future.

“Sure Detective, that’s no problem. Feel free to call me anytime, well except of course Sundays, because I’m normally busy majority of that day,” offered the Priest.

“Sounds good, Father! Thanks!” said Arquette.

They then wished one another a goodnight and then disconnected.

Arquette returned to the kitchen to finish his dinner. After he finished eating, he placed his dish and cup in the sink, turned off all the lights, and then went upstairs to his room. He placed his cellphone on the nightstand then took off the rest of his clothes. But just before he got into bed, he went to use the bathroom. As soon as he done, he exited the bathroom then climbed into bed. However, he did not go directly to sleep. After speaking with the Priest, he figured he should first contact Dr. Patel to see if she could have someone monitor Karman periodically throughout the night. This way, if they were to see her performing any type of suspicious acts, they could intervene right away. This additional measure, he felt, would maybe prevent another murder. At that moment, he turned himself onto his right side with his right elbow propped on the mattress, grabbed his cellphone with his left hand, then started searching for the number to the psych ward. After highlighting it, he pressed the send button then held the cellphone to his left ear. With patience, he listened as the automated operator guided him to Dr. Patel’s extension number. As soon as he heard it, he lowered his cellphone, entered it, then held the cellphone back up to his ear. Her office line rang. After four rings, her voicemail answered. Because he was tired, he decided to just leave her a message. In it, he basically asked if she could assign

someone to monitor Karman throughout the night. As soon as he concluded his message, he disconnected, then laid down next to Linda and went to sleep.

The time was now 10pm. At the psychiatric center, family visitation and game night had both concluded for the evening, and the last few patients were finally escorted back to their rooms. Dr. Patel was in her office; She had just finished her last patient session for the night. While at her desk, she decided to use this spare time to update notes. While typing her notes, she happened to glance over to her left at her office phone and saw the caller ID displaying fifteen missed calls. Though knowing the time, she figured it was too late to contact anyone, and so she disregarded them. As soon as she completed her last note, she stood up and collected some of the files from her desk, then returned them to the filing cabinet. After filing them, she returned to her desk for the last two files. When she picked them up, she saw an incident report just underneath them which she apparently missed when she first arrived at work. She placed the two files under her left arm, then picked up the report with her right hand. As she read it, the report stated that Father Francis had performed a religious sacrament on Karman. It, however, did not include all the details of Karman's mental health state at that time because the orderly could only write what he could recall from the incident.

Dr. Patel paused briefly, trying to imagine how this incident unfolded.

“Alright. So what could’ve happened that would’ve led him to wanna perform such a sacrament?” she wondered.

“I only asked him to pray over her, that’s it. This here seemed like an exorcism. I mean, as long as she’s been here, there’s been no reports of her exhibiting any type of anomalous behaviors, especially actions needing extreme religious formalities like this here,” she said to herself, recalling Karman’s history at the center.

“Alright. Well considering this report, I oughta check on her, see how she’s doing before I go. And then tomorrow I can contact the Priest and find out more about this here,” she added.

While still reflecting on the report, she suddenly remembered the session when Karman mentioned how she was contemplating revenge through spiritual meditation which she acquired from a friend. Right then, she walked over to the filing cabinet and sat the incident report on top. Next, she put the files that were underneath her left arm into the cabinet, then pulled Karman’s file. With it in her left hand, she used her right hand to peruse through it, looking for the notes from their recent sessions. After finding them, she began to review them to refamiliarize herself about Karman’s mental health complex at that time. While reading, an incredible disturbance abruptly arose from within her as she soon alleged that this erratic means of retaliation might have been the cause for this extensive spiritual retort. After she finished reading the notes, she closed the file and put it underneath her left arm, then closed the cabinet draw. Then,

she grabbed the incident report from off the cabinet and then left her office. Just outside her door, she informed the orderly at the counter of her intention.

“Listen, I plan to be in Karman’s room for a little bit to check on her. Keep your radio close in case I might need you,” she stated, while closing her office door behind her.

“Yes ma’am,” the orderly agreed, sitting at his desk.

In her room, Karman had been pacing back and forth with her black and white notebook open in her hands, seeming passionately neurotic about the material she was reading. Unexpectedly, she heard a knock at her door. With her back turned, she looked over her right shoulder and saw Dr. Patel peeking through the window of her door. Right then, she abruptly shut her notebook, dropped to the floor, then slid the notebook in-between the mattress and the bed frame. Disturbed by this, Dr. Patel quickly unlocked the door and entered.

“Good evening, Karman. Is everything alright? What happened?” asked Dr. Patel, curious to why Karman had dropped to her knees.

Karman slowly rose up from off the floor and then sat on her bed, but she did not respond.

“You know, we weren’t able to have our session because that detective needed to speak with you. Can you tell me what that visit was about?” she inquired, hoping for a response.

Karman, however, just remained silent while staring ahead at the wall in front of her.

“Now, I’ve been told there’s reason to believe you may have been involved in some malicious acts, and that apparently these acts costed some people their lives. But because I don’t rely on rumors, I thought I’d come get your take of these accusations,” she divulged, being tactful with her conversation.

Karman swallowed out of guilt, suddenly, but still did not respond.

“Now to me, I’m finding these allegations ludicrous because I just can’t see how you’ve been able to come and go from the center without being detected,” she mentioned, feeling skeptical.

“Although, after reading my notes from our last session, you did mention this unique ability to separate the spirit from the body. And so, I’m starting to believe that there could possibly be some truth here,” she continued, placing the incident report on top of the file to read, then sitting down on the bed to the left of Karman.

“Oh! And by the way. When I was clearing off my desk just now, I saw this report. You wanna tell me what happened that night?” she probed, using her left hand to position the report directly in front of Karman’s face.

After noticing Karman’s obvious avoidance of the report, Dr. Patel decided to read it aloud. As she read, Karman slowly shifted her eyes to the left to look at it.

“If you look here, the report states that both, the orderly and Priest, had to restrain you while performing a religious ritual to get you to calm down,” she read.

“Now, I do recall asking the Priest to pray for you, but this seems more intensive than just a simple prayer,” she continued, looking at her right at Karman for a response.

Karman just looked back at the wall and remained silent.

“Karman, please know if I can’t get a response from you, I may be forced to put you in isolation,” she warned, hoping that this threat would inspire Karman to communicate.

Shockingly, her warning did work as Karman finally replied.

“For what? I haven’t done anything,” she said, in a frustrated tone.

“No Karman, you probably didn’t; but, if you don’t talk to me, I may have no choice. And considering how things are going for that detective, you could remain there until his case closes, perhaps,” declared Dr. Patel, in an authoritative nature.

With Karman aware of what happens in isolation; and, knowing the challenge she would face attempting to conduct her supernatural power, she decided to talk about the night of the incident.

“So anyway. That evening, the Priest came to my room while I was trying to use that power. I guess he thought I was possessed or something, I have no idea. But I didn’t kill no one. I only tried it out; that was it,” she professed, hoping her reply would suffice and that Dr. Patel would reconsider placing her in isolation.

“Huh. Well, I guess you’re right about that. So basically, you’re telling me you were trying to use that spiritual power your friend’s been teaching you, but never reached its

full potency,” Dr. Patel, summarizing Karman’s statement for clarity.

“Though now, I have to ask, is that because you’re still new to this experience, or was it because you were interrupted by the Priest that night?” she probed.

Karman just stared at her with a slight smirk on her face, but did not respond.

“So, no response, huh?” she asked.

Because it was late, Dr. Patel decided to move on to her next point...the murder investigation.

“Now, in regards to this investigation, the detective views you as a suspect. It’s hard to understand why, but that’s because I haven’t seen the information he has. I just know he’s seriously interested in you,” she stated.

“Anyway. As interesting as this is, I think it’s time we look over the notes from our last session,” she insisted, opening Karman’s file, then placing the report inside.

She then turned to the recent notes and began to read them aloud.

“So here you said your friend told you some of the terrible things she did but was never caught. Which I assume, had you done the things the detective thinks you did, he would have a challenge proving this as well, and that’s likely because this out of body experience would allow you to come and go without being seen by anyone, obviously,” she speculated, conveying that she is fairly convinced of Karman’s involvement in this investigation.

Right then, Karman turned her head to the right, away from Dr. Patel.

“But anyway, fortunately for you, I’m not linked to this investigation. So, if you say you weren’t involved, I won’t doubt you. Though I will caution you that if I happen to find out you did do anything this tragic, I will report you to authority, immediately, as it would then be my legal responsibility to report any suicidal or homicidal actions,” she warned, with a stern expression on her face while staring at Karman.

Right then, Karman rapidly snapped her head to the left and stared directly at Dr. Patel with mixed expressions on her face of both, anger and distrust. Now content with her conversation, Dr. Patel closed Karman’s file, then got up and walked over to the door. Before exiting the room, she turned slightly to her left and looked back at Karman.

“I want you to have a good night, Karman. And please reflect on what we just discussed. Remember, you’re here for help, not to hurt. If you move in the opposite direction that progress was made over the past few years, then ultimately that progress will be lost,” she concluded, expressing great concern for Karman’s current mental health state.

Karman continued to stare at her in silence. Now out in the hall, Dr. Patel gave Karman one final glance while having a polite smile on her face, then closed and locked the door.

Meanwhile, over in the downtown, Abigail was still at work. The last staff worker came to her office to inform her that she was leaving for the night.

“Ms. Abigail, I’m on my way out now. I should be the last one...well, besides you,” she said, being mildly humorous.

“Thank you. Yeah, chances are I’ll probably be here a little while longer. I’m behind and tryna get caught up by tomorrow. Well, to be honest, I was actually instructed to be caught up by tomorrow. You know how that goes,” replied Abigail, while typing a report.

“Then yeah, I can definitely see why you’re here so late,” replied the co-worker.

“But so far, how do you like the new position?” she inquired, while shuffling her left hand around inside her brown purse hanging off her left shoulder, in search of her car keys.

“It’s fine. I find the pay much better for an assistant manager. But the workload is a bit overwhelming. I mean these reports, alone, have me wanting to walk out. But then again, had I stayed on top of things, I wouldn’t have been so far behind. You learn and you grow, I guess,” replied Abigail, now looking to her left, toward threshold of her office.

“Yeah, I guess that’s true. Alright, well I want you to have a good night. Hopefully you’ll be heading home soon,” said the co-worker.

“Yeah, hopefully. Thanks!” replied Abigail.

The staff worker then walked away from the threshold to leave for the night. Abigail resumed with typing her report.

Another hour had passed. The clock on the office wall now read a quarter to 1am. Abigail had just completed her last report and proceeded to shut down her computer for the

night. Next, she organized the files that were on her desk, grabbed her purse, and then turned off her lamp. Now at her door, she put her purse strap around her left shoulder then reached behind the door and locked it with her right hand. After pulling the door closed, she checked the knob and confirmed that it was locked. She was now ready to leave. She began to walk toward the entrance, passing the other offices on her right. While passing the last set of cubicles on her left, one of the phones from a cubicle began to ring. She paused briefly and started scanning the room to locate the phone that was ringing.

“Humm. Now I don’t know who’s calling this time of night, but we’re close. You’ll have to call back during normal hours. Sorry!” said Abigail.

She then continued on toward the main entrance. The phone eventually stopped ringing. Abigail reached the main doors, opened the one on the right outward, then exited. As she crossed the threshold, however, another phone began to ring. She paused again and turned slightly to her left to listen, trying to determine where the ringing was located. As she focused in on the sound, she eventually realized what part of the room it was coming from. Yet, because it was so late, she still chose to exit then closed the door behind her. Shockingly though, this phone kept ringing. Now standing with her back against the doors, she contemplated about whether to go back inside to answer it.

“Yeah, I know I shouldn’t, but whoever’s calling this much, this late, must have an emergency, right?” she pondered, followed by a sigh.

She then pulled the left door outward then reentered the main room. Next, she began to walk up the center aisle, passing cubicles on both, her left and right, in search for this phone.

“Alright. So who the hell is calling this late?” she asked, exhibiting frustration.

The cubicle with the ringing phone was down on her left, not too far from the entrance. It continued to ring, endlessly. As soon as Abigail reached the cubicle, she immediately picked up the receiver and held it to her right ear, and then answered.

“Hello! TeleCast! This is Abigail. How can I help you?” she answered, remaining calm and professional.

However, there was no answer. Only silence lingered on the other end for approximately one minute. Abigail waited patiently to see if anyone would eventually answer. As she listened carefully, she soon heard some whispering of words which, within seconds, progressively grew louder. As soon as Abigail heard this, she tried to decipher these words in an effort to make sense of them.

“Hello! Is anyone there?!” she asked suddenly, hoping for a response.

But no one replied. The whispering, however, just grew louder and louder, eventually adding Abigail’s name.

“Hello! Is someone playing a game with me?! Who is this?! It’s not funny!” she shouted, now expressing frustration.

The whispering continued. Abigail, now extremely frantic of this situation, hung up the phone abruptly. She then paused momentarily to determine if what she just witnessed was real, or if someone she knew was playing a prank on her.

“Well anyway, whoever it was, it couldn’t have been job related,” she said to herself, while exiting the cubicle.

She then headed back up the aisle for the entrance.

As she neared the entrance, something freakishly disturbing began to happen. Various phones suddenly began to ring coincidentally, one after another.

“Oh hell no! This sh..t ain’t happening!” she exclaimed.

Without hesitation, she rushed out the main doors, slammed them shut, and then dashed over to the elevators. After pressing the down button, she anxiously waited for an elevator to open. The floor indicator above the elevators began to move, highlighting which floor the proceeding elevator was on as it moved upward toward the 18th floor.

“They must be crazy if they think I’ll answer all those damn phones,” she said to herself, with slight humor, trying to reduce the amount of anxiety she was feeling.

Without warning, a noise resembling an electrical blockage resounded within the elevator shaft and all the elevators stopped operating, instantly. Seconds later, the lights in the lobby soon began to flash on and off rapidly, before shutting off permanently. That then activated the emergency lights.

“What now?” she wondered, while pressing the button on the elevator panel, repeatedly.

She waited a few seconds to see if an elevator would respond. Yet, the floor indicator remained dark and inactive as there was still no sign of elevator activity.

The only emergency stairs she could think of at that very moment were the ones located back inside the work room. Abigail knew the only way out of the building now was to go back through the main room to reach the stairwell. Fortunately, the emergency system unlocked the main doors, giving her immediate access without having to use her badge. After approaching the double doors, she pulled the right one open. Though, before entering, she heard one of the elevator doors open. This gave her a sense of relief. She then closed the door and then quickly moved back over to the elevators. It was the left elevator that was open, but when she approached it, she became perplexed as there was no elevator inside. It was just a dark shaft. Uncertain of why the door opened, Abigail leaned slightly forward to observe the shaft, trying to see if there were any possible signs of activity. As she stared downward, she eventually noticed a small, red illumination. With each second passing, she realized that this red glow was ascending toward her. But what made this moment even more frightening was how it appeared to be expanding as it continued to climb.

With alacrity, Abigail moved away from the shaft and ran for the double doors. After entering through the right door, she immediately tried to pull it shut; but surprisingly, a powerful gust of wind resembling an invisible, obscure blockage, lingered between the doorway, making it quite difficult for her to close it. She then applied her body weight, leaning back with both hands on the handle in an effort to counter the force and close the door. After finally getting it shut, she turned the manual lock immediately then hurried to

the right side of the room to locate the emergency stairwell. The gust of wind that was at the entrance suddenly grew manic and started pressing aggressively against the wooden doors, causing them to crackle as if they were about to be blown off their hinges. Hearing this noise, Abigail moved faster to reach the emergency door. Now at the door, she pressed the lever with both hands, pushed the door outward from the right, then started down the stairs. After going down the first flight, she decided to peek over the rail to see ahead of her on her way down. At first, she only saw the emergency lights faintly illuminating the stairwell. But, after a few seconds, she suddenly noticed that the same red glow from the elevator shaft was now ascending up the stairwell.

“What the hell is that?” she asked herself, overwhelmed with paranoia.

Afraid to continue down, she quickly turned around and ran back up the stairs for the emergency door.

When she reached the door, she pressed down on the handle with her left hand, pulled the door open inward from the left, then entered the main room. Now inside, she pulled the door shut behind her and then stood there silently. Befuddled and uncertain of what to do next, she decided that contacting the police would be the next best option. Her cellphone was in her purse, though, and the darkness made it extremely difficult for her to search for it. This meant that she would have to locate the nearest cubicle and use the office line. Cautiously, she walked about the room with her right arm extended outward, trying to feel for a cubicle. As

soon as she found one, she first sat her purse down on the desk, then picked up the receiver and held it to her right ear, then dialed 911. As she listened for the phone to ring on the other end, within seconds, she soon realized that there was no dial tone. With her left hand, she pressed the reset tab on the base of the phone then released it. But again, there was still no dial tone. She hung up the phone then rushed to the next cubicle on the right to try that line. The result, unfortunately, was the same; the line was inoperable. The wind had grown extremely intense and was now pressing against both, the entrance and emergency door, sounding desperate to enter. Stunned to hear this, Abigail hung up the phone then started slowly walked back out the cubicle, eventually backing up until her back was against the large glass window of the room. She stood there frantically while trying to decide her next move. Threateningly, the sound of crackling from both doors resounded loudly as the wind strived violently to force its way past them.

Then catastrophically, it finally blew both doors off the hinges with devastating force. The way these doors hit the floor on impact, startled Abigail, causing her to jump. As this furious wind entered the room, cubicles began to rattle fiercely. Moreover, various documents started flying wildly across the room, creating an obstacle for clear visibility. Chillingly, the red illumination finally entered through the main doors and began to expand slowly, as if it were searching for something, or someone. See this, Abigail decided to stoop low then move along the window, passing

some cubicles on her left. Her goal now was to reach her office for safe refuge. Now at her door, she removed her keys from her right pants pocket, felt for the office key, then unlocked the door. After she opened it, she slowly eased herself inside to avoid detection. Once she was inside, she then closed the door softly, locked it, then scurried over and hid underneath her desk. Alarmingly, this red illumination suddenly approached her office. The space at the base of the door began to shine a bright red color. As this light became more vivid, the wind also grew stronger, causing the door to tremble aggressively. This occurred for nearly five minutes before something odd began to happen. This disturbance suddenly began to weaken as if it were leaving the building. The wind dwindled coincidingly with the red glow which had slowly faded away. Abigail listened carefully, assessing the change in the environment. Although believing that the chaos had miraculously disappeared, she chose to remain hidden underneath her desk. After almost five minutes of complete silence, she suddenly felt certain that the threat was now gone. She crawled out from underneath her desk then stood to her feet, but continued to listen for any ominous sounds outside her office. But because the door was so thick, it was really difficult to hear anything atypical beyond it. This made her feel insecure. At that moment, she decided to approach the door and press her left ear against it to listen.

Just outside her office window, a strong gust of wind began to develop, causing the glass to vibrate moderately. Of course, with Abigail focused on listening for any

abnormalities outside her door, she was totally oblivious to the situation occurring outside her window. Meanwhile, that red glow began to grow brighter outside the window from afar. As it neared the window, it slowly casted a shine into the office. Its reflection climbed into the window then eased calmly across the floor toward Abigail. Eventually it reached the door, casting a large, radiant shine throughout the entire office. Startlingly, Abigail soon recognized this shine and started backing away from the door slowly. At first, she looked down at the base of the door, thinking it was entering through there; though, as she continued to observe, she soon noticed that her shadow was now reflecting on the door. And that, to her, meant that this light was looming from behind her and not from outside the door. The window, now vibrating with thrilling intensity, had prompted Abigail to turn around to see exactly what was transpiring behind her. After turning around, she instantly saw an oversized pair of red, illuminated eyes outside her window, staring directly at her. Right then, her body became motionless as she gazed into these eyes and became mesmerized.

“What...what the hell do you want from me?!” she shouted, while stuck in a trance-like state of being.

Hauntingly, an eerie voice arose from within this supernatural force and responded, “to diiiiiieeee!” in a hollow, sinister voice.

Then, without warning, the glass shattered, sending debris flying abrasively through the air. This explosive sound made Abigail drop to the floor out of shock and paranoia. Peculiarly, however, this debris did not impale her

immediately. It just hovered in midair, seemingly controlled by this paranormal image before her. Ominously, this image suddenly started to amend the shredded glass, fusing them into small, piercing daggers, then immediately projected them across the office at Abigail as she laid on the floor. One piece of debris struck her in her left thigh. It apparently struck the main artery as blood gushed out like a broken water pipe. She quickly placed her left hand around the glass and then pressed it firmly against her thigh in an attempt to prevent the blood from spewing out rapidly.

She turned onto her right side then used her right forearm to drag herself along the floor away from this image. Her aim was to move around the right side of her desk and hide underneath it again. Unexpectedly, another piece of debris struck her in her left arm. The excruciating pain which resulted from this impact made her scream in agony. At that moment, she paused briefly, sat up, and placed her right hand over the wound on her left arm. Instantaneously, another piece of debris followed, piercing her right hand. Believing that her situation would only worsen just sitting there, Abigail decided to overlook the pain and proceed around her desk. Pieces of debris continued to fly across the office, making deep knocking sounds on impact as they struck various parts of the desk and walls. Abigail finally made it around to the back side of her desk and was now shielded from this debris. Strangely though, the noise from the debris soon came to a halt, unexpectedly. But Abigail did not come out from underneath her desk. She just stayed still and

listened discreetly to hear whether the debris actually did stop. After a few minutes of complete silence, she began to feel a sense of triumph, though that red glow was still evident, growing brighter as it drifted over the top of the desk. Its shine had now tinted the bookshelf red as it slowly eased downward. Abigail, watching the shadow of her desk on the floor move inward toward her, huddled herself up tightly as possible and remained silent. Hauntingly, this glow began to peek from over the top of the desk and soon reflect off of Abigail's face. As she gazed into this glow, she eventually fell into another trance. Soon after, the red eyes from this paranormal being, emerged.

“What are you? Why are you even here?!” shouted Abigail, full of trepidation.

“It's time for you to scream!” replied the eerie image, in a haunting tone.

Then, within seconds, it menacingly projected five knife-like nails then thrust them forward at her, hostilely, causing everything to go dark, instantaneously.

Chapter 23

Investigating Abigail's Death

Ring, ring!! The phone rang and startled Arquette and Linda out of their sleep. Lethargically, Linda rolled over to her right then reached her left arm across Arquette's chest to grab his cellphone from off the nightstand. After picking it up, she then placed her head on his chest and held the cellphone to her left ear and answered.

"Hello!" she answered, still half asleep.

"Good morning Mrs. Arquette, this is Chief Miller. I apologize for calling so early, but I really need to speak to your husband. It's urgent," greeted the Chief.

"It's ok. Hold on please," Linda moaned.

She moved back to her side of the bed, placed the cellphone on Arquette's chest, then used her left hand to shake his left arm.

"Honey, honey, it's the Chief," she informed him.

Arquette turned his head to the left toward her with this disturbed look on his face.

"What time is it?" he asked, expressing minor frustration.

"It's almost 6:30 honey," she replied, lifting herself slightly to look over at the clock on the nightstand.

Arquette then grabbed his cellphone with his left hand and held it to his left ear.

“Hello. Hey Chief, good morning,” he greeted, in an exhausted tone, yet trying not to sound disgruntled from this early morning interruption.

“Hey Jackson. Again, I apologize for calling you this early, but I was awoken by a call about an emergency that occurred at a company called TeleCast. I was told that this building was apparently vandalized, leaving one person dead,” the Chief revealed.

“Right sir. But shouldn’t this fall under investigation of theft, possibly breaking and entering, along with homicide?” asked Arquette, perplexed to why the Chief would call him instead of a detective who is assigned to theft cases.

“Yeah Jackson, I thought about that for a minute, but after being explained the full details of the scene, this one unfortunately matches the ones of your previous cases. Of course, that’s mainly because of how they described the condition of which this victim was found,” the Chief justified.

“I’ve been reading your reports, Jackson, so I may be 100% accurate that this was done by the same killer,” he continued, trying to build Arquette’s interest for this case.

“Alright, alright. I’m getting up now, sir. Let me get some clothes on, eat, then I’ll be heading out that way. Well actually, I’ll grab something to eat while I’m out. This way I could just head straight there as soon as I get dressed,” told Arquette.

“Has Ryan been notified yet?” he asked.

“Notified?! Hell Jackson, he called and told me he just got to the scene,” replied the Chief, sounding impressed.

“Oh, that’s right! When you get there, you’ll have to go to the 18th floor. That’s where the incident took place,” he added.

“Aahh. Ok sir, I’ll be on my way soon,” confirmed Arquette, in the middle of a yawn.

“Thanks Jackson! I’ll see you later!” the Chief concluded.

“Yes sir,” replied Arquette.

Arquette pressed the end button to disconnect then put his cellphone back on the nightstand. Right after, he continued to lie in bed for a few more minutes, trying to get a little more sleep. Linda stayed next to him with her back against his.

“Honey, you got to get up, love,” said Linda, nudging her right elbow against Arquette’s back.

“Huh. Yeah, I know. Thanks baby,” replied Arquette, beginning to move sluggishly.

Eventually he sat up in the bed, turned himself to the right, then placed his feet on the floor. After taking a long stretch, he stood up then went into the bathroom to freshen up.

After finishing in the bathroom, he walked out and turned right to get to the closet. He slid the right mirror door open to the left with his left hand then started browsing through his wardrobe. After choosing what he wanted to wear, he pulled out a burgundy dress shirt and black slacks. Now dressed, he went over to the dresser near the window for a tie and shoes then sat at the foot of the bed. After putting on his tie and shoes, he picked up his gun belt hanging on the bed post to his right. Next, he stood up and put the belt around his waist then walked over to the right side of the bed and gave Linda a kiss.

“Baby, I’m leaving now. It might be a long day, but if you need me, just call,” he proposed.

“Humm...well just make sure you eat something, and take your medication,” requested Linda, while in a full stretch.

“I will, love. I’ll talk to you later. Love you!” agreed Arquette, now walking toward the bedroom door to exit.

“I love you too, baby. Have a good day and please be careful out there,” Linda replied.

“I’ll try. Thanks!” said Arquette, while picking up his cellphone from off the nightstand.

He then left out the bedroom and went downstairs. Now in the living room, he swiftly moved to collect his computer case, keys, and badge. After he had everything he needed, he then left the house for the crime scene.

It was Tuesday morning. The sky appeared light blue as the sun had yet to reach the horizon. The full moon was still visible, casting a white, vibrant glow about the sky. In addition, the morning air was gusting across the city like a calm, gentle breeze. As Arquette neared the downtown area, he eventually ran into work traffic. When he finally reached the main street for the TeleCast building, he found the traffic at a complete standstill. At that moment, he decided to turn his sirens on to advance through it. The vehicles ahead began to maneuver slightly to the side to allow his cruiser to pass. Now he was able to move through the busy street quickly and precede to the crime scene. Fifteen minutes later, he reached the parking lot of TeleCast. As he cruised up toward the building, he noticed a news reporter broadcasting live in the middle of the parking lot.

Reporter Erica: “Good morning everyone! This is Erica and I’m reporting to you live here at TeleCast Communications where a murder has occurred on the 18th floor. It’s believed that this happened late last night or early this morning, according to authorities. Currently, investigators are on the scene conducting their assessment to find out what actually took place here. As of now, they believe this was a robbery that later led to vandalism and murder. However, at this time it’s too early to conclude what really transpired. As this investigation continues, we’ll be sure to update you on the new details. Back to you, Diane!” Erica reported.

Arquette drove around the news crew and reached the building. After parking, he turned off his engine then exited his car. Next, he opened the back door then and grabbed his computer case and put the strap over his left shoulder. Now ready, he shut the door then proceeded toward the front of the building to entered. He walked through main doors, passing a few officers whom were assisting as additional security in the lobby. He approached the elevators then pressed the up button on the right panel. The light from the floor indicator above began to highlight each floor one of the elevators passed as it descended to the first floor. Finally, the elevator on the right rang and then the door opened. Arquette entered and pressed the button for the 18th floor. The elevator then closed and began to ascend. As soon as it reached the 18th floor, it rang twice and stopped, then the door opened. Arquette stepped out and turned left for the entrance to TeleCast. Near the main

double doors were two forensics officers analyzing the area around the entrance in all white lab suits.

“Good morning everyone!” greeted Arquette.

“There he is! Good morning, Detective!” replied one of the officers.

“Hey. So how’s it going? Find anything for me yet?” inquired Arquette, stooping over slightly to analyze the debris around the threshold.

“Well sir, so far we’ve concluded that this door, along with the emergency door inside, were both busted opened. And as thick as these doors are, there had to’ve been something awfully powerful to come through to tear them down. I mean I just can’t see nothing less than that doing something like this,” discussed the officer, while pointing at the threshold with his right index finger.

“Is that right?” replied Arquette staring at the door fragments on the floor.

“Humm. Alright! Well I’ll leave you two to this then. Let me get inside and see the body,” he continued, coming to a stand and analyzing the door frame.

“Sounds good sir. And we’ll let you know if we find anything requiring your attention,” told the officer.

“I appreciate that. Thanks!” replied Arquette.

He then walked past the threshold and entered the main room. Now inside, he immediately stepped to his left and paused briefly near the threshold. As he stood in place, he began to observe the room, trying to create his own hypothesis on what transpired. He scanned the room slowly from left to right and saw the massive destruction left behind from an

unknown factor. The first thing that struck him was the way majority all of the beige cubicles were unhinged. Some were lying on the floor, while others that were still intact, were leaning slightly over. In addition, while observing the floor, he saw an abundance of documents, countless computer monitors, and other various office supplies scattered about the room.

“Humm...Now, if I had to guess, I’d say this had to’ve been done by some type of natural disaster or something. I mean, I just can’t see why anyone would do all this, even if it were a robbery,” he speculated.

After he conceived a mental note of the area, Arquette continued to walk to the left of the room for Abigail’s office.

“Now, let’s take a look at the victim,” he said, speaking to himself.

When he approached the threshold of the office, the first thing he noticed was a dual head spotlight to the left of the entrance which stood half his size. It was facing upward toward the ceiling to provide sufficient lighting for the whole room. He then looked to the right and saw Ryan standing to the right of a forensics officer behind the desk, observing the victim underneath it. They both were bent slightly forward; the officer was taking multiple shots with his camera, while Ryan was notating the details in his notepad. Straight ahead, Arquette saw two more forensics officers near the window analyzing the broken glass on the floor. He decided to enter the office. When he stepped inside, he walked to his right to join Ryan behind the desk.

As he slowly approached the desk on his left, he noticed the many scratch marks that were etched into the front of it.

On the wall to his right, he noticed more engraved marks.

“Hey Arquette!” greeted Ryan.

“Good morning fellas!” replied Arquette.

“Huh. I see we got some marks here,” he continued.

“Oh yeah, I had forensics run analysis on all the markings already. Apparently, that was caused by pieces of glass which were also found impelled in this desk,” explained Ryan, looking up at Arquette still examining the wall.

“Is that right? Glass, huh?” replied Arquette, in a peculiar tone.

After his analysis of the wall, he decided to move over to the desk. He walked around to the front of the it, first, then squatted down and began to analyze the angle of the markings to determine what could have happened. As soon as he made a careful assessment, he stood up then walked to his left around the desk to view the body.

“Alright fellas, let me get over here for a minute. Thanks,” he requested, as he removed his computer case from his left shoulder and sat it on the bookshelf to his left.

Next, he tapped the forensic officer on his right shoulder as a sign of request for him to move aside.

“She’s all yours, Detective,” acknowledged the officer, lowering his camera and stepping to his left.

Arquette then moved up and then kneeled down close to the corpse and began his assessment.

“Let’s see, what do we have here?” he asked himself, in a low tone.

“It appears to be a female victim, possibly between the ages of 24 to 26. We believe her name was Abigail Ramsey, the name that’s on the door,” identified Ryan, aiming the light from his miniature black flashlight at the corpse with his right hand.

This florescent shine allowed Arquette to observe the specifics of Abigail’s injuries.

“As you can see there, her lower chest and stomach wounds match those of our previous victims,” he identified.

“Then there’s the lacerations, like the others, which appeared to’ve been caused by the same type of five-bladed object we’re also assuming from the other cases,” he continued.

Next, he aimed his flashlight toward the lower part of the body.

“Here, we have the left leg that’s been partially amputated with multiple marks like the desk and walls; most likely it’s from the broken glass,” he continued.

Shining his flashlight back on the upper body again, he then pointed out the injury to one of the arms.

“And then we have her left arm that’s also been partially severed, as you can see there. And the same marks on her legs, also appear on both arms,” he added.

“Oh yeah! And let me not forget! If you look here, her right hand has a single laceration which indicates that something sharp pierced straight through it. Again, it’s likely from the glass because there’s some broken off inside the wound,” he presumed.

“In my opinion, all these deep abrasions were caused by the same thing which penetrated the desk and walls. Though after the autopsy, we’ll know for sure because traces of glass would not only be found in her hand, but in arms and legs,” he concluded.

“Yeah, you’re probably right,” agreed Arquette.

“Now, speaking of findings, have we found any prints yet?” he asked.

“So far, no. We haven’t found one print, surprisingly. We’re only finding evidence similar to the last few crime scenes like the shattered glass, debris, and lacerated and/or severed body parts,” Ryan replied.

“I’m sure as of now, these cases have to be a major concern for city officials because we still have no leads or can determine who or what’s been doing this. I mean, how the hell could someone just come in here, cause all this destruction and death, and not leave one print?” he continued, expressing a sense of hopelessness.

“Yeah, I feel you, Ryan, and you’re absolutely right. It’s been challenging and quite frustrating, but I still believe we’ll eventually find this person or thing. I have faith. For the bible says, “what happens in the dark, always come to light.” I just pray this light shines bright, and soon,” replied Arquette, with optimism while expressing slight humor.

Arquette stood to his feet then pulled his radio off his belt on his left side, held it close to his mouth, then requested for the coroner to come remove the body. Right after, he placed his radio back on his waist then and walked over to the

window to see if the other officers had found anything. Ryan followed directly behind him.

“Hey fellas, have y’all found anything yet?” asked Arquette, standing behind them while they were analyzing the window frame and the shattered glass on the floor.

“Hey Detective! Well so far sir, we’ve only been able to conclude that something powerful like a hurricane had to’ve come through this window, based from how the glass is shattered, and the fact that we’re on the 18th floor,” reported one of the officers, bending slightly forward and pointing at the glass on the floor.

“I mean I honestly don’t believe that someone caused this much damage, even if they were to’ve used a computer or a brick,” he added.

“Yeah, at this point, I would say that the damage here is definitely greater than minor vandalism,” he continued, while pointing at various parts of the window frame.

“I mean, just looking at all of this makes the idea of vandalism, especially from the outside, very questionable,” he concluded.

“Now that I would definitely agree with you on. I mean, just looking at the cubicles, I could tell there was something unhuman that likely swept through, unhinging majority all those cubicles, while also tossing computer monitors around the room. I mean I just don’t see one individual, or even a group of people, causing this much damage,” ventured Arquette.

“Of course, again, there’s the speculation of vandalism; however, how did he, or they, smash this window inward?”

More importantly, the body seemed to've been violently attacked by at least one person, versus a group of people. So why would a group vandalize the place, while only one person attacks the victim?" he continued.

"Sir, that's an intriguing analysis," complimented the officer.

As the officer continued to discuss his findings, Arquette felt a bit of nostalgia and started thinking back to when his was at the previous scene. Then all of sudden, he interrupted the officer.

"Wait! Has anyone used a blacklight in this room?" he asked.

"Not yet detective, but we can do that now if you want," told the officer.

"Yeah, let's do that because based from the last three scenes, we actually found what happened to be prints in awkward places, but they were only visible under a blacklight. Maybe we'll get lucky again," explained Arquette.

The forensics officer picked up his radio near his supply bag and called for a blacklight. Arquette moved up toward the window then had the other officer move aside so he could begin observing the damage of the window frame. He started at the top left and slowly eased his way down toward the bottom of the frame, then went over to the right.

A few minutes had passed before a forensics officer suddenly tapped him on his left shoulder and handed him a blacklight.

"Here you go, sir," said the officer.

“Oh. Thanks!” replied Arquette, turning slightly to his left to receive the blacklight.

He took the blacklight and placed it in his right hand then clicked the switch on and turned back toward the window.

“Hey Ryan, could you turn that spotlight off? I don’t wanna miss anything,” he requested, now ready to sweep the blacklight across the lower part of the window frame.

Ryan walked over to the threshold of the office then cut off the spotlight. With it off, the darkness had now enhanced the ability for the purplish-blue florescent light to detect anything critical. Arquette finally cleared every inch of the window frame with the blacklight, yet he did not manage to detect anything of importance. At that moment, he paused briefly and began to contemplate about where he should scan the blacklight next. While pondering, he suddenly recalled the scene of the bus driver where he discovered prints along the upper part of one of the buildings. Without hesitation, he asked Ryan to assist him.

“Hey Ryan, I’mma need your help on this,” he requested, while moving up against the window frame.

“What’s up?!” Ryan asked, now walking toward the window.

“Did you find something?” he continued, expressing great interest to hear why Arquette needed his help.

The two forensics officers stood back from the window and just watched Arquette in action.

“No, I didn’t find anything, not yet at least. But, I wanna check along the building outside the window, you know, see

if there's any prints like the ones we found at the bus diver's scene," explained Arquette, while strategizing about how he would get out the window.

He then leaned slightly forward over the window frame and began to estimate actually how far he would want to extend himself out the window with the blacklight.

"Alright Ryan, I'mma need you to hold my lower legs. What I plan to do is tip myself out the window and see just how far out as I can go," he requested.

"You know I got you, but please be careful," agreed Ryan, while expressing caution.

One of the forensics officers walked up and laid a piece of white fabric across the windowsill to prevent Arquette from getting cut by the broken glass.

"Oh! Now that was a good idea! I definitely don't need to get cut up. Thanks!" said Arquette, showing gratitude.

He then moved up to the right side of the window to begin. Ryan got close to him then stooped low to wrap his arms around Arquette's lower legs. Now feeling secure, Arquette tilted his upper body over the window ledge with the blacklight in his left hand. Next, he extended his arm out and began to wave the blacklight against the right side of the wall, slowly, eased it downward toward the ledge. His right hand was pressed against the wall on the inside for support. As time progressed, though, the sun had now crested the horizon, reflecting its bright, orange shine at the top of the building. Arquette happen to glance up and noticed that the shadow of the building was casually getting lower. This

became an instant concern for him as he began to predict that his time for discovering anything with the blacklight was soon going to end. Right then, he decided to quicken his efforts by moving along the lower position of the wall with more haste, to reach the left side of the window. After nearly ten minutes of searching, he failed to uncover anything significant. Now at the left side of the window, the portion of the wall near that part of the frame wasn't wide enough for him to press his left hand against it to have support. And so, he decided to try and grip the frame with his left hand, instead. Now somewhat stable, He hung himself out the window again then extended his right hand out with the blacklight and began to sweep the wall. Ryan continued to secure his lower legs. As he swept the blacklight against the wall to his left, Arquette suddenly detected something which looked like purple residue of some sort.

“Hey guys, I think I found something!!” he shouted, trying to adjust himself further out the window.

Ryan felt Arquette's legs becoming heavy as he lifted himself up slightly off the floor to extend further out the window.

“That's great Arquette! But just to let you know, I'm gonna lose your feet if you keep moving,” he warned, wary of his efforts of keeping Arquette from falling.

Just then, Ryan turned his head quickly to the right and yelled for one of the officers to come help him.

“Hey, I need one of you to come help me with his legs,” he requested.

One of the officers dropped his tools then rushed over to assist him.

“Alright Arquette, you can do what you need to. We got a better grip on you now,” informed Ryan.

Arquette moved a little further out the window and ran the blacklight over the area again. This time he happened to pick up a pair of footprints leading away from the window, moving upward in a diagonal pattern.

“Alright! Now that I found this, how the hell am I gonna photograph it,” Arquette said to himself, aloud.

He then informed Ryan of his findings.

“Hey Ryan, you’ll never believe this, but I found some footprints out here. And from the looks of it, they’re likely from the same perp responsible for the other murders,” he revealed.

“Of course, the only question I have now is how the hell are we going to record this?” he continued.

At that moment, Arquette turned off the blacklight and then requested to be pulled back into the window.

“Hey, can you guys pull me in?” he asked.

Once he was back inside, he took a few minutes to contemplate on how he could best record those prints.

“Alright. Well clearly a ladder outside this window definitely won’t work, and using both hands to carbon tape the prints also seems impossible since I’d have to use one of my hands to hold myself out the window. So what else is there?” he asked himself, aloud.

Right away, Ryan suggested taping a cellphone to the blacklight and using the video to record the prints.

“Yeah, and with the way you just had to use one hand to hold yourself out the window, it would be difficult for you to use a camera or cellphone to snap a shot. Although, another idea would be to tape your cellphone to the blacklight, press the record button, then scan the print. And we’ll hold your legs again like we did,” he proposed.

Arquette thought briefly about Ryan’s proposal, then smiled and moved closed to him.

“You know what Ryan, you’re a genius!!” he exclaimed, giving him a friendly peck on his right cheek.

“Here sir, I can help you with that. And if you have your cellphone, I’ll need that also,” said the assisting officer, reaching for the blacklight.

Arquette passed him the blacklight, first, then took his cellphone out of his right pants pocket and handed that to him. The forensics team then assisted Ryan in creating what he proposed by using a few strips of evidence tape to affix Arquette’s cellphone to one end of the blacklight. Now ready for use, the officer handed the blacklight back to Arquette. He then prepared himself by holding the blacklight in his right hand, vertically, with the cellphone up. Next, he pressed the video button on the camera of his cellphone with his left hand and started recording.

“Alright. Let’s try this again,” said Arquette to himself, in a low tone.

He then turned around and leaned himself back out the window. Ryan and the officer moved up close to him, stooped down, and supported both of his legs. Now secure, Arquette repositioned himself in the same spot so he could

relocate the prints. He began to sweep the wall again slowly, trying to detect them. As soon as he discovered them, he took his time recording each one to ensure the lab could analyze them both without facing any type of discrepancies. As soon as he felt confident of this recording, he asked to be pulled back into the window.

Now inside, he detached the blacklight from his cellphone then passed it back to the officer. With his cellphone in his left hand, he pressed the replay button on the camera to review the clip. Ryan approached him on his left side to also take a look.

“So what do you think? Is it the same guy?” Ryan asked.

“Well just from looking at this, I’d say there’s no doubt about it. I mean, considering the location, the size of the prints, and the consistent pattern, I actually feel really confident that this is our guy,” replied Arquette, expressing certainty.

“And with that being said, I feel it’s time we press the lab to get us the results of other prints found,” he added.

“Alright team, I believe we’re done here. Let’s go ahead and start clearing up the area now. And if anyone finds any additional evidence, I ask that you please bring it by my office,” he instructed, lowering his cellphone to his left side and scanning the office one last time.

Soon after, he and Ryan then left out the office to head downstairs. The moment they exited the building, Ryan suggested informing Abigail’s family about their lost.

“Hey listen, I think I’ll pay the victim’s family a visit, you know, let them know about their lost. And while I’m there, I’ll be sure to refer them to a grievance counselor,

just in case they might need one,” offered Ryan, standing to the left of Arquette.

“I like that idea. Yeah, you go ahead and handle that,” agreed Arquette.

“As for me, I’mma contact Chief, first, then I’mma head to the lab and see if I can put some pressure on the techs for a match today. If anything comes up, I’ll contact you asap,” he continued.

“Sounds good! I’ll see you later!” said Ryan.

They then separated and walked toward their cars.

As he walked to his sedan, Arquette pulled his cellphone out of his right pants pocket, dialed the Chief’s number, then held his cellphone to his right ear. The phone rang twice before the Chief answered.

“Hey Jackson, what’s up?” he greeted.

“What’s the latest from this recent killing?” he inquired.

“Well sir, it appears you called it right again,” professed Arquette, expressing slight humor.

“Really? Just how close was I?” the Chief probed.

“Well sir, the victim’s been spliced open, there’s some severed body parts, and then there’s the window in the office that’s been blown inward, likely from a strong gust of wind or something, we believe. Either that or someone had a 100ft ladder and a slug-hammer and smashed the window in,” Arquette disclosed.

“In addition, we found both, the entrance and the emergency door torn down, along with multiple cubicles shuffled across the room. Again, all this seemed like someone just came through and smashed everything in sight,” he added.

“But to be honest sir, after observing this scene, I have to say there’s no doubt in my mind that this was done by the same suspect,” he professed.

“Alright. But now speaking of suspects, have you gotten close to finding one yet?” the Chief asked.

“I mean it’s been a few days now, and all the scenes seem to be resembling one another, but yet I still don’t recall you pen pointing on a suspect,” he continued.

“I mean, I know you found prints, but I don’t believe you gotten the results yet, is that correct?” he questioned.

“Yes sir, that is correct,” answered Arquette.

“Oh! And speaking of prints, we actually found some just outside the window,” he revealed.

“Now, because we still don’t have a match from the previous ones, I would like to ask you now for your help in getting the lab to expedite them, maybe have them ready in a few hours, possibly. I only ask because I have a really strong feeling about that woman at the psych ward, but I need solid proof before I can continue to pursue her. Now, if those prints happen to come back belonging to her, then an arrest can and will be made today,” he explained.

“Now this sounds really good, Jackson!” the Chief exclaimed, sounding intrigued.

“Alright. Well let me contact them now and see what I can do to press this matter, because we really need to get this this case closed asap!” he continued.

“You’re absolutely right, Chief. I agree, completely,” said Arquette.

They then concluded their conversation and then disconnected.

On the other side of town, Chris was at a breakfast café having a sausage, egg, and cheese croissant with a blended mocha Frappuccino. While eating, he decided to get his laptop out to do some web browsing. He turned to his left to open the laptop bag, pulled the laptop out, then sat it to the left of his plate and turned it on. As soon as he was connected to the wi-fi, he started surfing the internet. Not realizing it, he unintentionally connected to a news site that was providing the latest stories and events. He soon became interested in the various headlines and started skimming through the links as he ate. Startlingly, he happened to come across a story about a woman who was murdered last night in Annapolis. Right then, he stopped eating and dropped his fork into his plate.

“Oh God, please don’t tell me...,” he said to himself, quietly.

He then took his right index finger and guided the cursor over the link to double-click it open to read the details. Though, just before clicking it open, he paused for a few seconds and contemplated on whether he should read the story or not.

“Haaa...I know I shouldn’t read this because if it is what I think it is, it’ll only make me even more paranoid,” he thought.

“Although at this point, it probably would be smarter to know what actually happened. I mean, this could’ve just been some random murder for all I know,” he continued.

He then double-clicked the link and opened the article. Instantly, the bold face letters of the title summarized that there was a murder at the TeleCast building last night. Just seeing the company's name, right away Chris presumed that Abigail was the victim; hence, he began to read the article. Going from paragraph to paragraph, Chris grew more knowledgeable about the case, but soon realized that this report was not providing the name of the victim. At that moment, he stopped reading and just leaned back in his chair to think about how he could get this information.

"So, a woman was killed at TeleCast, yet this article fails to mention that person's name. I should contact the news station, they oughta have it, right?" he pondered.

As he continued to reflect on this homicide, he tried thinking of other ways to get this information. Before long, Arquette's name suddenly came to mind.

"Wait a minute! Detective Arquette! Yeah, he was probably called there this morning. And if he was, maybe he could tell me if that was Abigail. I hope it wasn't, but..." he said to himself, as he reached for his cellphone to the right of his plate.

He picked it and began to scroll through the recent calls list to find Arquette's number. As soon as he highlighted it, he pressed the send button then held the cellphone to his right ear. The phone rang three times before Arquette answered.

"Good morning, Detective Arquette speaking. How can I help you?" greeted Arquette.

“Hey Detective, this is Chris. Sir, I was sitting here eating breakfast and browsing the net and came across a news article about someone killed at TeleCast. And now it concerns me because I only know one person that works there and fear something might’ve happened to her,” told Chris.

“Now, as I read through this article, I saw a lot of details about this killing, but I didn’t see the name of the person who died. So that’s the reason I’m calling you, to see if you know who it was,” he explained.

“Could you tell me, or at least let me know if it was my friend or not? Her name is Abigail Ramsey,” he divulged, still skimming through the article.

Silence interrupted their conversation for a minute or two before Arquette replied.

“Oh man. I really hate being the one to have to give you this news Chris, but Ms. Abigail Ramsey, your friend, was found deceased early this morning in her office,” Arquette revealed.

“Again, I definitely wanna offer my condolences for your loss and apologize for having to tell you this,” he continued, expressing deep empathy.

Chris did not respond. Instead, there was another moment of silence. Trying to avoid further awkward silence, Arquette began to talk about the scene.

“As of now, we can only speculate possible vandalism, which may have likely led to her murder. Although, because there was so much damage, we’re still having trouble determining how many people were actually involved. But

the good news is we did find prints and hope to have a match later today,” he described.

Chris sat his left elbow on the table and then placed his left hand against his forehead and remained silent.

“Chris! Are you still there?!” he asked, trying to confirm if Chris was still on the line.

Then suddenly, out of nowhere, Arquette heard Chris starting to weep, quietly.

“Chris, I want you to know I’m working very hard to find this killer,” he avowed, hoping to build a sense of comfort and trust within Chris.

Chris coughed twice then took a deep breath. After clearing his throat, he lowered his left hand, then began to converse with Arquette again.

“Sir, do you think this was by the same person?” he inquired, now developing a concern for his own life.

“I’mma be honest, Chris, after seeing the many consistencies from this scene compared to the others, I’m now 80% positive that this was done by the same killer,” replied Arquette.

“Oh God!” Chris exclaimed, placing his left hand back on his forehead.

“Chris, Chris, I really need you to remain claim, ok?!” Arquette advised.

“How’s that Detective? All my friends are dead, and now that just leaves me. And what’s worse, you all still aren’t close to finding out who this person, or thing, is. But you’re telling me to stay claim. Does that make any sense

to you?!” Chris vented, expressing mixed emotions of both, frustration and panic.

Arquette paused and decided to give him a minute or two to express his emotions before initiating a response.

“Chris, I apologize. I’m just trying to keep you from total paranoia, that’s all. But I would agree, there is a chance you could be next here. So, what I’ll do as an extra measure of security is have a patrol car watch over your home this evening. And, I’ll have them contact me as soon as they see anything of concern,” suggested Arquette, devising a security plan for Chris.

“Sir, I appreciate your security proposal, but I really can’t see how one patrol car can stop anything clearly unnatural,” said Chris, leaning back in his chair.

“Well Chris, we don’t know if it’s unnatural yet; however, we do know that it happens to make itself known on arrive. So again, if the officer sees anything suspicious or out of the ordinary, I’ll have them notify me immediately,” reassured Arquette.

Silence interrupted their conversation for a few seconds before Chris finally agreed with Arquette’s proposal.

“Well sir, I guess any security is better than having no security at all,” he agreed.

“Your absolutely right, Chris,” replied Arquette.

“Alright, I need to get going now. But please know I’m working overtime to find this killer, while also trying to keep you safe,” he continued.

“Yes sir, I know. And I really appreciate all that you’re doing,” replied Chris.

At that moment, they concluded their conversation then disconnected. Chris just sat at the table and stared at the article on his laptop while shaking his head in disbelief.

Overnight Watch

At the psychiatric center, Dr. Patel had just arrived at work. She walked through the main door of the facility wearing a white lab coat over a dark blue business casual outfit, with the strap of her laptop case over her left shoulder. Before heading to her office on the fourth floor, she decided to stop by the front desk to greet the staff, first. When she approached the desk, she noticed that both, the security officer and orderly, had their chairs turned to the left and looking at the 32' inch flat screen tv mounted on the wall.

“Hey, good afternoon everyone!” she greeted, placing her case on the counter.

They both turned their head to the right to acknowledge her.

“Good afternoon, Dr. Patel! How are you?” asked the officer.

“I’m fine, and you all?” Dr. Patel replied.

“What are you watching? Apparently, it must be really interesting because it has both of you with your chairs turned and glued to the tv,” she continued, being humorous.

“Yeah, we’ve been following this murder story sense this morning. They said someone was killed at the TeleCast building last night or early this morning,” told the officer.

“Is that right? That’s really terrible,” said Dr. Patel, with sympathy while looking over at the tv.

She then lifted her left forearm up to read the time on her watch.

“Alright, well let me get to my office. I have a few sessions soon,” she continued.

“I guess I’ll see you guys later then,” she concluded.

“Yes ma’am! We’ll see you later,” replied the officer, looking back at the tv again.

Dr. Patel grabbed her laptop by the handle with her left hand and then proceeded toward the access door to get to the elevators. After going through the door, she got into the elevator. Now on the fourth floor, she exited the elevator then turned right and headed for the security door. After passing that door, she stopped at the orderly’s desk on her right to greet the orderly. The orderly was sitting in his chair, staring at his computer screen.

“Good afternoon!” greeted Dr. Patel.

“So, how’s everything been so far today?” she asked.

“Good afternoon, Dr. Patel! So far, things have been alright. I mean, earlier we had a few patients who needed our direct attention due to their misconduct, but that’s all been taken care of. So, for now, everything’s been pretty good,” the orderly replied, looking up at her.

As they continued to conversate, a news report providing updated information about the recent murder suddenly appeared on his computer screen. This caused the orderly to glance back at his monitor and read the headline as it moved from right to left, across the bottom of the screen. It read, “This Just In.” He looked back at Dr. Patel then asked her if she had seen the news recently.

“Oh, hey Doc, have you been watching the news today? They’re saying a woman was killed at TeleCast sometime

this morning. And as of now, apparently, the police are saying they still haven't identified or caught the person that did this," he disclosed.

"Yeah, they were telling me about this downstairs when I first came in. But no. Usually when I get up, I spend some time in silence just to prepare my mind for the day. I mean, with this place already being a high stressed environment, I don't need the news to rouse my anxiety before I get here," replied Dr. Patel, slightly humorous.

The orderly just smiled and nodded his head in agreement.

"And on that note, let me get my day started now. I have a few clients to see soon," she concluded.

She then turned around and walked over to her office across from the desk.

"Yes ma'am! I'll see you later!" replied the orderly.

Dr. Patel took her keys out of her right pants pocket and unlocked the office door. After she entered, she closed the door partially then walked over to her desk and sat her laptop down. Next, she went over to the filing cabinet and opened it to pull the files for each session. Once she had them all, she put them underneath her left arm, closed the cabinet, then went back over to her desk. After she sat down, she fanned the files out horizontally across the desk so all the names could be seen. While reviewing these names, the thought of that news report suddenly crossed her mind. Because this latest murder seemed to resemble those previous, still no arrests regarding these murders, and a detective coming to question Karman, she started thinking about their last

session when Karman mentioned that she was acquiring a new ability her friend used to do acts while going undetected. That conversation is very difficult for her to ignore now, especially after hearing how the police have yet to identify or capture this killer. She reclined back slightly in her chair then pondered about whether or not to have an unscheduled session with Karman. Within seconds, she jumped up then quickly moved to the file cabinet again. This time she was going for Karman's file. She opened the cabinet then skimmed through the files with her right index finger. After finding her file, she pulled it out, closed the cabinet, then went back over and sat at her desk. She reclined back in her chair again then opened Karman's file to review their last few sessions.

While reading her notes, the intercom on her office phone suddenly beeped. She paused briefly from reviewing the notes and leaned forward to view the caller ID. It read, "front desk." Right then, she closed Karman's file in her left hand then pressed the intercom button.

"Yes!" she answered, holding the red button down with her right index finger.

"Ma'am, I have a Detective Arquette on the line for you," reported the officer.

Silence instantly overtook their conversation as Dr. Patel hesitated to respond, for she felt that Karman was more than likely the only reason why he would be calling her.

"Doctor, should I transfer him over?" he asked, unsure of Dr. Patel's current status.

At that moment, she snapped out of her state of thought, and replied.

“Oh, sorry. Yes, please transfer him. Thank you!” she replied, sitting Karman’s file down on her desk to take the call.

“Hello, good afternoon Dr. Patel. This is Detective Arquette,” he greeted.

“Good afternoon Detective. How can I help you?” replied Dr. Patel, in an unenthusiastic, unwelcoming tone.

“Well Doctor, I just called to inform you of another murder which occurred overnight, last night,” revealed Arquette.

“Yes Detective, I’ve seen the news recently; however, I’m still not entirely sure of your reason for contacting me about this,” said Dr. Patel.

“Doctor, I understand. But considering the inconsistency of these news reports, I’m not entirely sure how much information they’ve provided. And so, I decided to call you to share some details that I believe may relate to your patient, Karman Anderson, if you have some time of course,” offered Arquette, expressing optimism that Dr. Patel may decide to help him bring Karman in.

“Alright Detective, I’m listening. But please know I have my first patient to see in about ten minutes,” agreed Dr. Patel.

“Yes ma’am. No problem. I understand the importance of your time,” replied Arquette.

“Alright, so what can you tell me?” Dr. Patel asked.

“Well Doctor, after a careful assessment of this crime scene, I came across many similar patterns, especially with the victim, which gives this case a high probability that it was done by the same killer. Again, however, there were no

clear signs of entry or exit from the suspect; nor were there any types of video footage of this killer,” divulged Arquette.

“Now, though the details of this scene are important, the most vital evidence, which is the sole reason for this call, is to inform you that this was another victim whom Karman had a history with, per my source,” he added.

“Is that right? But tell me, just how reliable is this source?” inquired Dr. Patel, feeling skeptical of Arquette’s findings.

“Doctor, this source is completely reliable, and that’s because he, too, is affiliated with the other victims who used to chastise Karman during their high school years. And with that being said, please understand that now that all his friends are dead, he may be the next victim if this killer isn’t caught,” forewarned Arquette, expressing a sense of urgency.

“I see. So basically, your presumption is my patient, who’s history apparently coincides with your source and his friends, while adding in each crime scene you’ve investigated, is this serial killer,” Dr. Patel recapped.

“But what I’m having a challenge with is the fact that there’s still no actual proof it was her. For instance, do you have some pictures or anything to confirm her identity?” she probed, trying to avoid accepting Arquette’s exploration.

“Haa. At this moment, no. The only evidence we do have are prints which we’re currently running through our system to find a match,” replied Arquette.

“Is that right? Well then Detective, I must apologize because there just doesn’t seem to be enough proof to help your allegation regarding my patient. I mean, I can’t just hand a patient over based off of what you have currently. So,

until you can provide some real convincing evidence, there's nothing I can do for you," insisted Dr. Patel.

"So the fact that this latest murder involving another person from Karman's past doesn't elicit just a little proof? I mean, in case you weren't aware, this was the third victim who had a difficult past with her. In all my years of detective work, I can honestly say that I've never seen anything like this before. And no, I just don't see this all being coincidental. There's definitely a connection here," expressed Arquette, sounding frustrated.

"Detective, I'm sorry. There's nothing I can do at this time. Now if your prints happen to come back belonging to Karman, then I would be ecstatic in assisting you. Until that moment, though, I feel there's nothing more for us to discuss," declared Dr. Patel, trying to conclude their conversation.

"Fine. Fine. Well I'm heading back to the precinct now to follow-up with our lab. If those prints come back as hers, you'll definitely be contacted first so you can place her in a secured room until I get there," stated Arquette.

"That's fine Detective. Goodbye!" replied Dr. Patel.

She then pressed the intercom button to disconnect. After taking a deep breath, she picked up Karman's file, opened it to her notes, then leaned back in her chair and began to review them. Even though she refused to believe Karman was this serial killer being investigated, a part of her felt she could no longer ignore the ominous details from Karman's previous statements about seeking revenge while being undetected. She decided to add Karman to her list for a session.

Arquette reached the precinct. After parking, he grabbed his laptop and other supplies, then entered the building. As he walked through the main hall, he looked to his right and saw the Chief's door open. Right then, he decided to stop by his office. Now at the door, he knocked on it three times with his right hand then called for the Chief.

"Chief! Hey, you got a minute?" he asked.

The Chief paused from typing on his computer then looked up at the door and answered.

"Yeah Jackson, what's up?" he replied.

Arquette entered the office, sat down in the visitor's chair on the right, then put his laptop case on the floor next to him.

"Sir, after this recent murder, I now believe my source, Chris, is possibly next, if his story is accurate anyway. And surprisingly, so far, he's been right on the money," told Arquette, expressing great concern for Chris' wellbeing.

"Alright Jackson, so what do you have in mind?" inquired the Chief, as he reclined back in his chair.

"Well sir, I was thinking we should have a patrol unit monitor Chris' home between the hours of 11pm and 6am. And the reason I'm choosing this time frame is because the previous autopsy reports suggest that it was between these times that the other murders took place," proposed Arquette.

"I see. And do you believe that just having one unit there would suffice with protecting your source from a killer with such a destructive history?" asked the Chief, expressing slight skepticism about his proposition.

“Well sir, nothing’s for certain of course; though, I do feel having an officer present may persuaded the killer to postpone their actions out of concern for being caught,” replied Arquette, feeling optimistic about his strategy.

The Chief leaned to the right of his chair with his right forearm rested on the armrest. With his left hand, he began to caress his bearded chin. Silence then overtook the room, briefly, as he reflected on Arquette’s perception for his proposal. Suddenly, he leaned forward, rested both of his forearms on the desk, then interlocked his hands together. After careful deliberation, he thought to include one more suggestion that would make Arquette’s proposal more effective.

“Alright Jackson, I’m gonna say I agree with your idea. But let’s also consider having another unit on standby, you know, patrol the area in case something kicks off. I find it better to have at least one unit ready to respond quickly if backup is needed,” he advised.

“Chief, that’s an excellent idea! I agree, sir,” Arquette concurred, displaying gratitude and excitement.

“Ok. Well I’ll get with the lieutenant and have him set this up,” he said.

“Oh! And I did speak with the lab, so you should have those results very soon, hopefully. They’re doing their best to expedite them,” informed the Chief, resuming back to his typing.

“Thanks so much, Chief! I’ll contact you later with an update,” Arquette concluded.

“Sounds good. I look forward to hearing what you find,” said the Chief.

Arquette jumped to his feet, grabbed his laptop, then left the office for the Dispatch Unit. Once he reached Dispatch, he spoke with the lieutenant about his proposal, requesting to have an overnight surveillance team arranged to monitor Chris' residence. The lieutenant agreed and then they started discussing Arquette's plan of action.

The evening had now commenced as the sun began to project a dim, orange glossy shine across the blue sky. This orange glow beamed like a glare reflecting off of a mirror, overshadowing the natural light blue color of the sky. The wind was blowing a soft, warm current through the city limits. And the traffic began to congest as many were leaving their jobs for the day. Chris had just left from the grocery store. In his left hand were three brown plastic bags filled with groceries; in his right hand was his cellphone he had against his right ear, talking with his mother who was on the other end. As he walked to his car, they continued to conversate about the recent tragedy which involved another one of his friends.

"Mom, mom, I'm gonna be alright! Please calm down!" Chris exclaimed, trying to keep her calm in regards to his safety.

To his surprise, the other line began to beep. With haste, he lowered his cellphone to view the screen. Reading the caller ID, he saw the name "Detective." He then placed the cellphone back to his ear and then informed his mother of this incoming call.

“Ok Mom, I gotta go. That’s the detective calling me now. He probably has some good news,” informed Chris.

“Listen, I don’t want you worrying about me, ok? I’ll be fine,” he reassured, trying to console her.

“Alright, I’ll call you back in a little. Love you,” he concluded, trying to answer the other line quickly.

He then lowered his cellphone immediately, pressed the send button for the other line, then held the cellphone to his ear again and answered.

“Ah, hello. Chris here,” he answered, expressing slight anxiousness.

“Hey Chris, this is Detective Arquette. Do you have a minute?” he greeted.

“Yes sir. Is this about Abigail’s case? Has anyone been arrested yet; perhaps Karman?” Chris asked, with anticipation, while also expressing minor paranoia.

“Well Chris, I have some good news and some bad news. I’ll just start with the bad news first and that is Karman is still at the psych ward. Yeah, unfortunately, we still don’t have enough evidence to link her to any of the murders. Hopefully in the next few hours, though, we’ll find a match from one of the prints we’ve collected. And if even one belongs to her, that would be enough leverage for us to make an arrest,” Arquette explained, updating Chris on the status of his investigation.

“Now, the good news is I’ve put together a team to watch over your residence throughout the night to ensure your safety. This way, if anything happens to present itself as a threat, you’ll have a unit ready to respond. In addition, there’s also gonna be another unit patrolling your area as backup,” he

continued, providing Chris the layout of his security plan for his home.

Silence interrupted the conversation as Chris pondered over what Arquette just told him.

“Hello! Hey Chris, are you still there?” he asked, unsure if Chris was still on the line.

Right then, Chris responded.

“Yes sir. I’m here. I was just thinking about your overnight watch suggestion. I mean, it sounds like a great plan having someone outside my home to oversee things, but do you really think this would matter, I mean considering all that’s happened so far?” he replied, feeling doubtful of Arquette’s surveillance strategy.

“Well actually, Chris, I see this setup being more of a deterrence than a prevention. For instance, if someone tries to approach your home and sees a patrol car out front, this would likely discourage them from attacking out of fear of being detected and catch; hence, you survive another night. Now, this officer has been instructed to report anything suspicious, which then would notify the additional unit that’ll be patrolling the area. Plus, I, too, will be on standby, ready to move in with the precinct behind me,” assured Arquette, trying to promote his security arrangement.

“I hear you sir. And at this point, I honestly don’t think I have any other choices but to go with your plan,” told Chris, feeling ambiguous about other security options he could use.

“I mean, to be truthful, I can’t think of anything else that could actually be better, especially considering how this thing’s been attacking us with extreme persistence,” he continued.

“I agree, Chris, and definitely understand your concern. In the meantime, though, I need you to know that we’re doing everything we can to get Karman over to the precinct. But as I mentioned before, it’s just taking a little more time because we’re still waiting on the prints. Now again, if one even comes back hers, we’ll move immediately to make an arrest. Hell, I’ve even asked my Chief to get involved to expedite things for us. So, hopefully we’ll have the results back very soon,” explained Arquette, expressing optimism, as well as concern.

“Yes sir, I know you’re doing all you can. I’m actually on my way home right now. Do you know about what time that patrol car will be there?” Chris asked.

“Yeah! I was told it would be there around 6pm,” replied Arquette.

“Now, even though it’ll be right outside, you have my number, so I ask that you please contact me if you feel like something’s wrong,” he added, trying to ease Chris’ mind.

“Yes sir. I’ll definitely do that for sure,” Chris replied, with slight humor.

“Oh! And I’ll also be sure to keep an eye out on that patrol car watching the house, too, just as an extra precaution for me, and him,” he continued.

“Yeah, that’s a great idea!” agreed Arquette.

“Alright! Well let me get back to work. But again, call me if you need anything,” he recommended.

“Will do sir. Thanks for checking on me, and for also putting this security team together. This really means a lot to me,” replied Chris, expressing appreciation.

“You’re more than welcome sir. But please, be safe and stay vigilant,” Arquette cautioned.

Chris agreed then they disconnected. He finally reached his car, placed his grocery bags in the back seat, then got into the driver’s seat and drove home.

Back at the precinct, Arquette went by the lab to check on the results from the prints he submitted. After walking in, he saw a tech standing at one of the print machines to the far right of the lab, analyzing data.

“Hey hey!! How are we doing on those prints?” greeted Arquette, walking toward the tech’s desk.

“Oh, hey Detective! I’m pushing the last set of prints through the machine now. Though, unfortunately, we still haven’t been able to find any matches in our database from the previous ones,” the tech reported.

Arquette did not reply. He just stood at the tech’s desk staring at a display of mugshots on her computer screen.

“You know sir, I’ve been at this all day, just about. And I’mma be honest, we may not find a match...well no time soon anyway,” she continued.

“Just who are you looking for anyway?” she asked, looking over her left shoulder, back at Arquette.

Arquette did not respond immediately. He just sat down at her desk, placed his right hand on the computer mouse, then began to scroll down on the mugshots. After about a minute of doing this, he finally answered.

“As of now, the person I believe to be our suspect is currently residing at a psychiatric hospital,” he replied, while reviewing the various names from the mugshots.

The tech just stared at him, clueless.

“So, you’re saying this suspect escaped from the hospital, killed these people, and then went back? Or, did they get sent to the hospital after these killings?” the tech inquired.

“No, apparently this suspect’s been at the hospital for years now, it seems. So honestly, I’m still not quite sure how she’s been leaving and returning; however, that’s not the focus currently. Right now, we’re just trying to get a match to make an arrest. So, if these prints do lead us to her, we can go there and pick her up,” Arquette clarified.

“Oh! I see. But Detective, just a heads up, if she’s been at the psych ward for years, and never been charged with a crime in the past, we may not find her in our system,” advised the tech.

Arquette paused from scrolling through the mugshots, leaned back in his chair, and began to ponder over the tech’s last statement. Then suddenly it struck him.

“Oh sh*t! You know what?! You’re absolutely right!” he exclaimed.

“And here I am focused on finding her in our database this whole time. Man, why didn’t I remember this? I mean had she had a criminal record, we probably would’ve found her by now,” he professed.

“Alright then! Well let’s look at running all our prints through their system now. Chances are they’ll have her

prints on record in case she were to escape,” he suggested, now expressing a sense of enthusiasm.

“That sounds about right sir. But can I ask you something? What makes you believe she’s the one that’s been doing all of this?” asked the tech, gathering all the prints near the machine.

“Well there’s a witness I’ve been working with ever since the second murder. And it turns out he and the other victims were close friends whom all had a troubled history with this alleged suspect, causing her great distress and torment. Yeah, he even told me some of the ways they use to bully her. And I tell you, the things he said they did to her, I honestly started feeling bad for her,” told Arquette.

“So yeah, that’s why I believe she’s going after them; out of vengeance,” he continued.

“Oh wow, Detective! Now that’s an interesting story, sir,” the tech responded, staring back at him again.

“Yeah, I know. But now I feel it’s time this story came to an end,” said Arquette, with a slight smile on his face.

“Especially before anyone else gets killed,” he added.

“And you mentioned the psych ward’s database, hum,” he pondered.

“Alright! Well in order to access their database, I’m gonna need a special authorization request from Chief,” he continued, reaching into his right pants pocket for his cellphone.

Unexpectedly, the door of the lab opened, and Ryan entered.

“Hey Arquette!” he greeted.

“Hey Ryan. Give me one minute, I need to contact Chief,” replied Arquette, holding up his left index finger at him.

He was turned slightly left in his chair, looking back at Ryan while holding his cellphone against his right ear.

“Sure!” replied Ryan, as he walked over to the other desk across from Arquette to have a seat.

The phone rang twice before the Chief answered.

“Hello, Chief Miller here, how can I help you?” he answered.

“Hey sir, it’s Jackson. Sir I’m...,” replied Arquette, before getting abruptly interrupted by the Chief.

“Jackson, where are we on those prints? I just had the Governor’s office breathing down my neck about this case. He wants a status update on a possible suspect, and soon,” he enquired, sounding impulsive and annoyed.

“Well Chief, believe it or not, this is actually the reason why I’m calling you, sir. Yeah, apparently, we’ve been checking in the wrong place this whole time,” replied Arquette.

“What...what do you mean? How is this even possible?” the Chief wondered.

“Well sir, though we’ve spent the past few days in our database, if this suspect’s never been arrested, it’s unlikely we’ll find her in here,” Arquette explained.

“Yeah, that sounds about right. So what’s your next move if a match isn’t found soon?” the Chief asked.

“Well sir, the tech actually proposed running these prints through the psychiatric hospital’s system where I believe our suspect is. And at this point, I’d agree. I mean, they oughta have the prints of each patient on record, you know, in case any of them goes missing. Now if that’s true, then the results should come back quick; thus, if they wind up belonging to

one of their patients, then that would make for an easy arrest,” Arquette explained.

Right then, their conversation was interrupted by a brief moment of silence as the Chief pondered about Arquette’s last statement.

“Humm...well I guess that would make better sense,” the Chief responded, in agreeance.

“Yes sir. But oh! Just a heads up, if we do move in that direction, then that would mean asking you for another favor, and that’s to get authorization from the state,” informed Arquette.

“Alright Jackson. I’d be glad to. I mean, now that they’re pressing me for an arrest, I’m sure they’d be much obliged to grant this authorization so we can get this killer off the street,” told the Chief, sounding slightly humorous.

“Give me some time to make some calls, and I should get back to you shortly,” he continued, expressing support for Arquette’s strategy.

“Sounds good, sir. Thanks!” agreed Arquette.

They then disconnected.

Ryan got up and walked over to Arquette. When he reached the desk, he stood next to him on his left side.

“Hey, what’s going on? Still haven’t found a match yet?” he asked.

“Nah, we’re still searching. Though of course, if our suspect hasn’t ever been arrested before, then there’s a chance we might not find her in our system. On the other hand, our tech just brought up a great idea, suggesting we

run these prints through the psychiatric hospital's database where she's at," Arquette discussed.

"Alright! I like this idea!" said Ryan, expressing minor excitement.

"But wait! Won't that require a warrant or something from someone higher up?" he asked.

"I mean we just can't access their system, undermining the HIPPA laws of confidentiality," he added, picking up a few prints from off the desk in front of Arquette.

"Yes actually, and that's what I was just talking to Chief about. I asked him if he could submit a request through the state for access authorization to their database. And he said he would make some calls. Hopefully he knows someone there who'll get this process moved quickly," replied Arquette, leaning back in his seat.

"Ok. So what do we do in the meantime?" asked Ryan, placing the prints back down on the desk after looking over them.

"I honestly don't know. I guess we'll just have to wait for the warrant. I mean I really don't see us being able to do anything else unless our system finds a match," replied Arquette.

He then sat up, grabbed the computer mouse, and began to scroll through the mugshots again.

"In the meantime, I went ahead and arranged for a patrol car to monitor Chris' house tonight. If my theory's accurate, then that means he could likely be our next victim. I mean, now that all his friends who were connected to the suspect are dead, that only leaves him," he continued.

“Oh man! Yo, that was a really good idea, Arquette, because now we could be notified immediately if anything were to start happening,” complimented Ryan, supporting Arquette’s decision.

“Thanks! But hold on! As an additional measure, I also requested another car to patrol the area for backup. This way there would be at least one unit ready to respond as we’re all making our way out to that location,” Arquette added.

“Alright! Well I definitely can’t wait to get this warrant approved so we can hopefully make an arrest soon,” said Ryan, walking over to the tech who was analyzing the rest of the prints.

“Yeah, me neither,” agreed Arquette, leaning back in the chair again with his hands folded behind his head.

Chapter 25

The Final Session

Meanwhile at Miracle Care, Dr. Patel had just finished her last scheduled session for the evening. After completing her notes, she got up and returned all the files that were on her desk back to the filing cabinet; all except one that belonged to Karman. After the files were returned, she went back to her desk, sat down, and then picked up Karman's file with both hands.

"I believe I put this off for as long as I could today. Haaa. Alright, let's go get her now. Hopefully we'll make some process before this session's over," she said to herself, softly, while flipping through the file.

At that moment, she closed the file, sat it down on her desk, then got up and walked over to her door to exit her office. Now out in the hall, she decided to stop by the orderly's desk first. When the orderly saw her approaching, he slowly rose to his feet to acknowledge her.

"Hey Dr. Patel, how can I help you ma'am?" he asked.

"Good evening. Hey listen, I'm about to have a session with Karman now. I planned to do this earlier, but there were a few sessions that needed extra attention, if you will," Dr. Patel explained, as she approached the countertop then folded her arms and rested them on top of it.

"I understand, ma'am. Is there anything you need for me to do?" asked the orderly.

“Well, nothing as of yet. I just need you to be on alert because during this session, I plan on asking her some questions regarding that visit she had with that detective the other day, and I’m a little concerned that she might get frustrated or aggressive, or maybe both,” replied Dr. Patel.

“I understand ma’am. So, would you prefer having her hands secure during this session?” asked the orderly.

“Humm...nah, just be on standby. I’ll have my door cracked so you can listen in,” replied Dr. Patel.

“Yes ma’am. I’ll definitely be doing that. No problem,” agreed the orderly.

Dr. Patel then looked to her left toward the community room. Even from that distance she was still able to overhear the patients interacting with one another as game night endured. Now feeling prepared for her session, she began to walk down the hall toward the community room. When she approached the entrance, she decided to slowly peek around the right side of the threshold to avoid drawing attention to herself. This way, she could observe Karman’s interaction with the other patients without creating a distraction. As she eased around the threshold, she began to scan the room elegantly, from left to the right. Of course, when she started near the back of the room, she did not have to scan for too long as she immediately noticed Karman and her friend talking amongst themselves at a table near the back window. Karman was sitting directly across from her friend; her back was facing the entrance. Dr. Patel decided to now enter to extract her.

As she casually walked towards them, she immediately noticed how they both were behaving mysteriously, like their conversation was impish. Their body language showed that of a devious nature as they were leaned inward close to one another, nearly face to face. Occasionally, her friend would form this small treacherous smile while turning her head from left to right, as if checking to see if anyone was listening to their conversation. More concerning though, was how Karman's body language would also reflect an ominous vibe as if their discussion had a malice theme triggering elation within her which could easily be viewed as deceitful animation. As Dr. Patel neared their table, Karman's friend noticed her and immediately reached her left hand across the table to tap Karman's right forearm. Karman looked at her eyes and saw them shift slightly off to the left while also having a concerned expression on her face. This prompted her to look back over her right shoulder to see what was happening behind her. When she saw Dr. Patel coming, she then formed this disturbingly sinister smile on her face. All of a sudden, Dr. Patel stopped midway then waved her right hand for Karman to come meet her. Karman noticed this but did not move. Instead, she just sat there and stared at Dr. Patel for at least another minute before saying one last thing to her friend. Soon after, she stood up from her chair and walked toward Dr. Patel. As she walked past Dr. Patel's left shoulder, she looked to her left with a smirk on her face and just stared at her.

“Oh! Did I interrupt something between you two?” asked Dr. Patel, turning to walk alongside Karman's left side.

Karman did not respond. She just looked straight ahead as they both walked toward the entrance of the community room.

After exiting the room, they continued on to her office. Neither chose to converse with the other. Dr. Patel just strolled alongside Karman while looking to the right at her, observing her behavior. Now at the office, Dr. Patel opened her door with her left hand, then directed Karman inside with her right. As Karman entered, Dr. Patel glanced over to her right and gave the orderly the nod to standby. The orderly acknowledged her and nodded in return. She then entered her office, slowly closed the door, but left a small gap between the door and the threshold. This way the orderly could listen in on the session as it progressed. Dr. Patel walked over to her desk and took a seat. After picking up Karman's file, she flipped directly to the back to review her last notes.

"Alright Karman, during this session, I'm gonna ask you some very important questions, and it's imperative you answer them with honesty, ok?" told Dr. Patel.

"Now there's some concerns I have regarding your history, and I have to say, I'm beginning to believe that these concerns may have affected others," she emphasized, referring to the latest murder.

Karman did not respond. She just stared out the window to her left.

At that moment, Dr. Patel paused from reviewing her notes and looked over to her right at Karman.

“Karman, did you hear me? I really need for you to talk to me,” she insisted.

“I want you to tell me why that detective wanted to speak with you the other day. Did something happen that involved you?” she questioned.

But Karman remained quiet. After about three minutes in this state of silence, Dr. Patel decided to go back to reading her notes in an attempt to get her other questions answered.

“Alright. Fine. So going back to my notes, you stated that you’ve been learning this ability to secede from your body to function spiritually. Have you practiced this ritual lately? And if so, how advanced are you with this ability now?” she continued.

“But more importantly, what actions have you taken while exploiting this skill?” she probed, while skimming through her notes.

But there was no response from Karman.

“Basically, what I wanna know is, did you happen to use this extraordinary talent to commit any crimes?” she enquired, tapering the topic of their session toward murder.

Just then, Karman slowly turned her head to the right and stared at her. She still did not say a word, though. Dr. Patel noticed Karman staring at her; so, she decided to stop reviewing her notes once again and just stared back at her in return.

“Listen, I wanna help you, but you need to be open and honest with me. If a detective is questioning you about something, then I have to believe there’s a legitimate reason for it. Come on Karman, help me help you get past this

difficult time in your life. This way we can begin to move forward towards a healthier, efficacious recovery,” she implored, while extending her right hand out to touch Karman’s right forearm.

But Karman still did not respond. She just dropped her head then stared at her hands in her lap.

Dr. Patel rolled her chair over to the right to get closer to Karman then tilted her head slightly to the right and stared directly into her eyes.

“Look, I need you to understand that whatever you did, it’s gonna come out sooner or later. Didn’t you say this friend of yours got caught? Well, if you continue, you’ll eventually get caught, too. And please know I can’t protect you from the law. They will catch up to you and this time I won’t stand in their way,” she counselled, trying to get Karman to disclose any possible offenses she might have been involved in.

Silence interrupted the session again for nearly a minute before suddenly, to her surprise, Karman opened her mouth and began to speak.

“It doesn’t matter now. It’s almost over,” she responded, in a low voice.

Dr. Patel moved closer to her to get a better understanding of her last response.

“Ok, now what? What was that you just said? What’s almost over? Karman, what are you talking about?” she probed, now growing increasingly anxious about Karman’s mental health state.

But Karman still did not reply, just stared down into her lap in silence. Dr. Patel tried to read her facial expression, but her face was completely impassive.

With her inability to interpret Karman's emotional or psychological state at that time, Dr. Patel decided to evaluate her physical state. First, she scanned her gown, briefly. Once she was done, she then moved to assess Karman's physical condition. As she skimmed down from Karman's shoulders to her forearms, she paused abruptly at her hands after noticing how remarkably dirty her fingernails appeared.

"What's this? Have you been outside?" she asked, now moving her chair directly in front of Karman.

She grabbed both of Karman's hands and raised them to eye level for a closer look.

"Humm...it looked like dirt, but after seeing your nails up close, it actually looks more like..." she mentioned, before stopping herself mid-sentence.

Still holding her hands, Dr. Patel decided to observe Karman's gown again, scanning it down toward her feet. Surprisingly, this time she discovered a dark stain bordering around the lower portion of the gown.

"Oh! So what happened to your gown? Again, have you been outside?" she probed.

Karman, though, did not say one word. Dr. Patel lowered Karman's hands then stooped forward to pull up the lower portion of the gown with her right hand. She stopped at Karman's shins and began to assess the stain. Karman appeared inactive, just staring down into her lap.

After carefully examining the stain, Dr. Patel concluded that it was possibly the same substance that was underneath Karman's fingernails. At that moment, she lowered the gown then turned her chair to the desk behind her to grab a white, pre-wet Kleenex. With it in her right hand, she turned back around, reached her left hand out to grab Karman's right hand, then began to wipe it clean. Surprisingly, the minute she realized what Dr. Patel was trying to do, Karman started tugging her hand away from her, bellicosely. As soon as Dr. Patel noticed this vigorous resistance, she stopped wiping her hand and released it. Right after, she placed the Kleenex on her desk then rolled her chair back over to her computer to finish her notes. Once she was done, she rolled her chair back over near Karman to continue her conversation.

"Karman, I'm gonna be straight with you, at this point I find your behavior exceptionally concerning. I mean, just these stains on your hands and gown, alone, are extremely disturbing to me. And I know that didn't happen while you were inside the facility. I mean, you had to've gotten outside," she presumed.

"So, with that being said, I think I'm gonna place you under special watch tonight. And if we don't find out exactly what's going on here, and soon, this watch may last for quite a while," she advised.

"But first, before all this gets started, I'mma have the orderly clean you up and get you into a new gown," she said.

"Then, I'mma send this one to the lab so I can find out exactly what's on it," she concluded.

Now ready to conclude her session, she rolled her chair over to her office phone, picked up the receiver with her right hand and held it to her ear, then dialed the extension for the orderly desk with her left hand.

“Yeah, could you come in here, please?” she requested.

She then hung up the phone and then rolled her chair back over near Karman.

“Please know Karman, by no means are you being punished, ok? I’m just detecting some alarming afflicts regarding your mental health; and frankly, I fear this condition may be a danger to others,” she counselled, leaning forward close to her.

Karman did not respond. She just continued to stare down at her hands in her lap. After nearly a minute or two of complete silence, however, she eventually replied.

“This still won’t change anything,” she told, in a soft, pacifying tone.

“What? What was that you just say?” asked Dr. Patel.

Just then, there was a knock at the door. It was the orderly. Dr. Patel sat back in her chair then turned her head to the left toward her door. After acknowledging the orderly, she raised her left arm and waved him inside. He opened the door and then walked over toward Karman.

“Hey, could you do me a favor and get her cleaned up? I’m not exactly sure what this is, but it looks like dirt under her fingernails. Of course, it’s unclear how she’s managed to contact dirt in this place. For the moment, I’ll just have

to assume she must've gotten outside somehow," told Dr. Patel, looking down at Karman's hands.

"Anyway, that's another story. Right now, I just want her cleaned up. Oh! And before I forgot, I also found dirt at the bottom of her gown. Well again, I think it's dirt. Anyway, after you clean her up and get her into another gown, I'd like this one to be sent to the lab. Yeah, I'm a little curious to know exactly what this is," she instructed.

"And now for my final request, I would like to have an extra orderly posted outside her door tonight," she continued.

"Again, it's unclear how she's managed to contact this dirt. I mean who knows, maybe she did get out. But even if that were the case, how'd she get back inside without being seen?" she speculated.

"Anyway. Whatever happened then, I just want someone to monitor her room after hours to ensure this doesn't happen again," she concluded.

"Yes ma'am! I'll get right on it," replied the orderly.

The orderly then stood behind Karman's chair, placed both of his hands on her arms, then assisted her to her feet.

"Alright Karmen, let's go," he said, while guiding her around the chair.

After clearing the chair, they then began to move slowly toward the door; him walking along her left side. As they eased past the desk, Karman turned her head to the left and peeked over the orderly's right shoulder for one last look at Dr. Patel. Next, out of nowhere, she happened to say something that was completely unexpected.

“Goodbye, Dr. Patel, and thank you,” she said, in a soft, reverent tone.

Although, the manner in which she expressed her goodbye sounded more like she was getting ready to depart from the facility, with no intentions to return. Dr. Patel, however, did not distinguish this incongruity from her tone. She just paused from typing her notes, looked up at Karman, then responded.

“You’re welcome, Karman. Goodnight,” she replied, exhibiting minor interest in speaking with her.

She then resumed back to typing her notes. The orderly and Karman finally exited the office. He then pulled the door closed behind them.

Now out in the hall, the orderly stopped by his desk first to get another gown. He posted Karman in front of the desk then walked around to the left side of the counter to get the tall, gray mental locker near the back wall. After opening it, he pulled out a folded gown and a white washcloth from off a shelf, then closed it. He put both, the washcloth and gown, under his left arm then went back over to the counter to rejoin Karman. With his right hand, he then escorted her by her left arm down the hall. When they reached the community room down on their right, they turned left and continued on for the bathroom which was located at the end of the hall, on the right. After entering the bathroom, the orderly walked Karman straight over to the sinks on their right. He sat the gown on the ledge of the sink then turned the fossette on and ran the washcloth underneath the warm

water. With it mildly saturated, he then held it underneath the soap dispenser with his left hand, while pressing down on the lever with his right hand to add soap. Next, he rubbed the washcloth together with both hands to lather it up, then he began to clean Karman's hands. He started with her left hand first, scrubbing her palm, fingers, and nails. Once that hand appeared clean, he then moved to her right hand. After they were both cleaned, he deposited the washcloth in a laundry bin near the door, then walked back over to grab the clean gown from off the sink, while also taking Karman by her left arm to escort her out the bathroom.

After exiting the bathroom, they turned left and headed for Karman's dorm. They passed three dorms on their right before reaching hers. Just then, he removed his right hand from Karman's left arm so he could extract his keys from his right pants pocket. He then unlocked the door, opened it outward from the right, then escorted her inside.

"Alright! You know what to do. And once you're done, just knock and I'll come in to get to get that one," he directed, removing the folded gown from underneath his arm and placing it on the bed.

Karman just stood there in silence while staring down at the gown on the bed. The orderly left out the room then closed the door behind him. A few minutes went by before he decided to peek into the window to observe Karman's actions. Seeing her just standing there in an idleness state, he knocked on the window three times to get her attention. Right then, she turned her head slightly to the right and

acknowledged him. Now seeing that he had her attention, he pointed his right index finger at the gown on the bed. But she did not react. She just turned her head forward then stared at the gown again. After another minute, though, she soon began to slowly undress herself. Respectfully, the orderly turned away from the window to give her some privacy. Ten minutes had passed before she knocked on her door to signal the him to enter and collect the old gown. He opened the door, acquired the gown, then closed the door and locked it. With the gown bundled in his left hand, it instantly prompted him to recall the request made by Dr. Patel about sending it to the lab for an analysis. And so, after leaving Karman's dorm, he headed straight to the lab on second floor towards the back of the building.

After dropping off the gown, he then used a nearby phone to call for an orderly to report to his desk on the fourth floor. Once that was done, he hung up the phone and then went back up to his floor. Another fifteen minutes had passed before an orderly finally approached his desk.

"Hey man, I was told to report to you. What's going on?" asked the orderly.

"Yeah, I just had Dr. Patel ask me to setup an overnight watch for one of her patients," told desk orderly.

"Oh! Ok! Who's the patient?" the orderly wondered.

"It's Karman. Yeah, Dr. Patel just wants to make sure she isn't gettin' out her room," replied the desk orderly.

“Really?! Is that it?! Oh man, that’s gonna be a breeze!” the orderly exclaimed.

“Hell, I’ll just prop a chair right in front of her door and hangout. This way if she tries to leave her room, she’ll open her door and’ll run right into me,” he told, slightly humorous.

“But wait! I’m confused. I mean how could she be leaving out her room if her door’s always locked?” he asked.

“I don’t think she has an answer to that question. All she’s insisting right now is that there’s an overnight watch setup for Karman tonight. That’s it,” replied the desk orderly.

“Sound good! Alright! Well let me go get a chair and a magazine or something, and then I’ll head down to her room,” said the orderly.

“Is there an extra key I can use, you know, just in case I need to go in?” he asked.

“Here, just take this one,” offered the desk orderly.

He grabbed his keys and removed the master key from off the key chain then handed it to the orderly. The orderly took it then left the desk for the community room. When he entered the room, he first searched for a magazine on one of the tables. After selecting one, he then folded up a chair with his right hand and then carried it out of the room. Karman’s dorm was three doors down on his left. After reaching her door, he sat his chair directly in front of it, but in a position that would have his back facing it. Just before he sat down, however, he decided to first check up on her. As he looked through the window, he saw Karman just sitting on her bed and staring at the wall. Her hands were placed flat on both of her thighs as if she were

meditating. Of course, though, with him not seeing any concerns of this, he then took a seat in his chair and began to read his magazine.

While typing her notes, Dr. Patel happened to glance over to her right and noticed the Kleenex on her desk. Still curious about the stain on it, she picked it up and opened with both hands, then began to observe it closely.

“Humm...let me get someone to take this to the lab, too, and have it analyzed. Something tells me this isn’t just dirt,” she said to herself, softly.

At that moment, she bundled the Kleenex up in her left hand, picked up her phone receiver with her right, then dialed an extension with her left index finger. She then waited patiently for an orderly to answer. As soon as one picked up, she requested to have an orderly come by her office.

“Yes, this is Dr. Patel. Hey, can I have an orderly to come to my office please?” she requested.

She then hung up the phone, put the Kleenex back down on her desk, and then resumed typing her notes. Ten minutes later, an orderly knocked on her door.

“Come in!” she said.

The orderly entered and walked over to her desk.

“Yes ma’am, how can I help you?” he asked.

“Yeah, I have a Kleenex here I want the lab to analyze. There’s something on it I got from a patient. I mean, it looks like dirt, but I wanna get it tested to know exactly what it is,” Dr. Patel instructed.

“Yes ma’am, I’ll take over now” replied the orderly.

“Thank you,” said Dr. Patel, expressing gratitude while handing him the Kleenex.

The orderly extended his right hand out to receive it and then exited of her office for the lab. Dr. Patel resumed with typing her notes once again.

Chapter 26

The Search

The evening sun had finally fell beyond the horizon, allowing for the night ambiance to overwhelm the sky. Not long after, the sparkling of the stars surrounding the white luminous full moon created the perfect portrait of a twilight exhibit. Chris was at home preparing dinner. His meal entailed Italian herb grilled chicken with stirred fried rice and vegetables. Before making his plate, he decided to check the front of his house for any signs of concerns. He entered the living room then approached the window to the left of the front door. With his right hand, he pulled back the burgundy curtain on the right and looked outside. Slowly scanning the front of his house from left to right, he eventually paused after noticing a white sedan parked offset to the right of the house, under a nearby streetlight. At the base of the door was the name Annapolis Police in bold red font. Seeing this patrol car triggered a sense of safety and security within him. He then closed the curtain and walked to his left over to the coffee table near the couch. When he reached the table, he picked up a black tv remote and turned on his black 42' flat screen tv. After selecting a channel, he sat the remote back down on the table then walked over to his left for the kitchen. Now back in the kitchen, he grabbed his plate off the table in the middle of the kitchen then walked over to the stove to fix his dish. First, he placed two pieces of chicken on his

plate with his fork. Then, he took a ladle and added two scoops of rice and vegetables.

His plate was now ready. He sat it on the table then went over to the tan cabinets and opened the one on the right for a plastic blue cup. After closing the cabinet, he then walked over to the refrigerator near the entrance and opened it. Inside was a clear pitcher of iced tea. He pulled it off the top shelf, poured himself a cup, then placed it back inside the refrigerator and then closed it. The cup was nearly full. He walked back over to the table with his cup in his right hand, picked up his plate with his left hand, and then exited out the kitchen for the living room. Now in the living room, he took a seat in the middle of the couch and sat both, his plate and cup, down on the table in front of him. Just then, his cellphone began to ring unexpectedly. He instantly leaned back and pulled it out of his right pants pocket. After reading the caller ID and seeing that it was his mother calling, he immediately answered.

“Hey mom, what’s going on?!” he greeted, sitting forward with his head tilted to the right and right shoulder holding his cellphone against his right ear.

“Hey son, I was just calling to check on you, make sure you were doing ok,” his mother replied, expressing concern for him.

“Oh man, I really appreciate this! Thanks!” told Chris, exhibiting gratitude.

“Well, so far, I’m doing pretty good. Yeah, I just fixed some dinner and now about to watch a movie,” he continued, sounding calm and secure.

“Oh wow! So it sounds to me like you’re doing really good. Well this is comforting to hear!” his mother exclaimed.

“I mean I honestly feel like a huge weight’s been lifted off me. And the reason I’m saying this is because whenever I think about all that’s happened these past few days, like your friends being killed, I start to panic and worry about you. But at this moment, now hearing your voice, and knowing you’re ok, it gives me a sense of relief and peace,” she vented.

“Mom, I totally understand, believe me. I mean, if I knew something like that was gonna happen to you, I’d be worried, too,” said Chris, expressing empathy.

“Yeah, I know you would, son,” his mother concurred.

“Alright! Well, I’m about to get ready for bed now. But before I go, I want us to say a prayer together, if that’s ok,” she offered.

“Mom, I’m ok! Really! Could you please stop worrying?! I don’t need you worrying because that’ll only make me...,” pleaded Chris, before getting interrupted by his mother.

“Honey, I’m just offering a small prayer, that’s it,” his mother insisted.

“It’s what I do when I wanna feel free of any worries or concerns. And tonight, I definitely need to feel this way about you before getting into bed. Remember, the good book says,

“no weapon formed against us will prosper,” she continued, expressing her religious faith.

Silence overcame their conversation for about a minute or two.

Then all of a sudden, Chris responded.

“Fine mom, fine. If it’ll help you relax and get some sleep tonight, I’ll do it,” he concurred, accepting to her proposal.

“Good, son, good! Ok, if you could, bow your head and pray with me,” his mother requested.

Chris, still leaning forward on the coach, held his cellphone in his right hand and then lowered his head.

“Dear Father in heaven, I ask that you please protect my son tonight, and keep any harm from coming his way. Though, if any danger happens to befall him, I ask that You, God in heaven, have this wickedness see the goodness within him and spare him of any pain, suffering, or death. In this we pray in your Son’s holy name, amen!” she prayed.

“Amen!” Chris repeated.

“Listen, mom, I definitely appreciate you calling to check on me. I do believe I’ll be fine, though. So please, get some sleep, ok? And we’ll talk in the morning,” he insisted, in an attempt to reduce her anxiety.

“You’re more than welcome son. And I know you’ll be fine. I just feel a whole lot better now after our prayer. But please, just remember, if you’re having any problems tonight, or the next night, call me,” his mother advised.

“Well, after contacting the police or that detective, of course,” she added, expressing slight humor.

“Yes ma’am, I’ll definitely be sure to do just that, believe me. But again, I’ll be fine,” Chris proclaimed.

“Alright then Chris. I love you and want you to have a great, safe night. And please, call me as soon as you get up in the morning,” his mother requested.

“Yes ma’am, I will. And I love you, too. Have a good night and get some rest,” Chris replied.

They then disconnected. Chris sat his cellphone down on the coffee table to the right of his plate and then started eating his dinner while watching tv.

Back at the precinct, Arquette was still in the lab waiting to hear back about the special warrant the Chief said he would order. While reviewing the various evidences at the tech’s desk, his cellphone began to ring. He pulled it out of his right pants pocket and read the caller ID. It read, “Chief.” He quickly pressed the send button then held his cellphone to his right ear and answered.

“Hey sir, any latest news on that warrant?” he asked.

“Hey Jackson. Apologizes for the long delay. Apparently, this process had to go all the way up to the Governor’s office for final approval; however, you now have authorization,” the Chief explained.

“Are you near a fax machine? I could fax it to you,” he asked.

“Yes sir, there’s one here in the lab,” Arquette replied.

“Oh, ok! I actually know that number. Alright, I’ll be ahead and fax it now,” told the Chief.

“Though, just to caution you, Jackson, if you happen to find what you were looking for, I want you to be careful when making that arrest. I don’t want you or Ryan to get hurt out there,” he continued, expressing a sense of concern for both, Arquette and Ryan’s safety.

“Thanks sir. We’ll definitely be sure to take all the necessary precautions,” assured Arquette.

They then concluded their conversation and disconnected.

Arquette stood to his feet then walked over to the fax machine on the right side of the lab, against the wall, and waited patiently for the warrant to come through. A few minutes passed before suddenly the fax machine began to resound. Soon after, it then began to buzz and vibrate as it converted a plain white piece of paper into a document displaying a title that read, “Annapolis Police Department Search Warrant,” in bold black letters.

Arquette removed the warrant from the fax machine with his right hand then held it with both hands and started reading over the details.

“Alright Ryan, I believe we’re set! I think we have what we need to move forward, and hopefully it’ll lead to an arrest,” he stated, looking over at Ryan to his right.

Ryan was sitting at the other tech’s desk on the left side of the lab.

Arquette then walked over to Ryan and handed him the warrant for him to read over.

“Now all we need to do is contact the ward and show them our warrant, along with our prints,” he added, looking over at the tech to his right.

The tech removed the prints from the analysis machine then walked to her desk to put them with the others. After Ryan reviewed the warrant, he handed it back to Arquette.

“Oh man, this is great work! Man, Chief really knows how to make things happen,” said Ryan, expressing admiration for the Chief.

“Yeah he does,” agreed Arquette.

With the warrant in his left hand, Arquette went over to the tech’s desk on the right and picked up his cellphone to call the psychiatric hospital. He highlighted the number in his recent calls list, pressed the send button, then held his cellphone to his right ear. As he waited for a response, he sat the warrant down on the desk.

The phone rang twice before an automated operating system answered. It appeared to be the voice of a woman providing instruction on how to reach the various departments within the facility. As soon as it offered the extension for the laboratory, Arquette lowered his cellphone and dialed it with his left index finger. The automated system then transferred him over to that extension. The phone beeped four times before someone finally answered.

“Miracle Care Recovery, you reached the lab. How can I help you?” greeted the tech.

“Yes. This is Detective Arquette with the Annapolis P.D. I’m calling this evening because I need your help. Currently, I’m working a murder case and have some prints I need ran

through your system. The reason for this is we believe one of your patients may have been involved in these recent killings. And so, we'd like to run our prints through your system to try and find a match," Arquette explained, while looking down at the prints the tech had fanned out horizontally across her desk.

"Well sir, we would like to assist; however, this is a private facility and our patients are protected under the rights of privacy and confidentiality law," replied the tech.

"Yeah, I understand and am very much aware of your HIPPA law, which is why I have a warrant from our Commissioner granting me access to your records," Arquette disclosed.

All of a sudden, silence interrupted their conversation as the tech paused to reflect on Arquette's last statement. After nearly two minutes had passed, he then responded.

"Ok sir, well if you could, we would need to see that warrant first," he requested.

"Sure thing! Just provide us your fax number and we'll be ecstatic to send it to you, along with our prints," replied Arquette, in a mildly arrogant tone.

"Oh! And please know that it's absolutely crucial we have these results expedited. For we have reason to believe that there's gonna be another victim tonight. So, the sooner we get these results, the faster we'll be able to make an arrest," he continued, ensuring the tech was aware of their urgency.

"I understand Detective. As soon as I verify that warrant, I'll go ahead and start processing those prints, and ensure to expediate the results back to you," stated the tech.

"Are you ready for the number?" he asked.

“Uh, yeah, now I’m ready,” replied Arquette, tilting his head to the right to use his right shoulder to hold his cellphone against his right ear.

Next, he grabbed a yellow notepad and pen, wrote the number down, then disconnected.

With eagerness, he then gathered everything; the note, the warrant, and the prints, and went over to the fax machine. He held everything in his right hand and then dialed the fax number with his left index finger while reading it off the sticky note. After it was entered, he removed the note from the warrant, placed the warrant and the prints into the machine, then pressed the send button. As each document was being scanned, Arquette turned to his right and began to tell Ryan about his plan.

“Hey Ryan. Alright, here’s my game plan. If these prints do come back belonging to Karman, then I’ll head straight out there to pick her up. Though, I might make a quick stop to grab the Priest, first, so he could accompany me. Now, what I’m thinking you could do is maybe wait here just in case I’m still out at the hospital and an incident occurs at Chris’s place. You’d be able to respond immediately, versus me having to race across town to get over that way,” explained Arquette.

“I like this plan,” Ryan agreed.

“But wait, hold on! Now, you said you were gonna pick up the Priest first. Why exactly?” he inquired.

“Well basically it’s because he told me that during a recent incident with Karman, he intervened, using a method of

remediation he said managed to sustain her and kept her from becoming aggressively violent. So, I figured at this point, he may be our ultimate hope of avoiding a violent incident during her arrest, while at the same time also protecting Chris, indirectly,” explained Arquette.

“Oh, ok. I guess that makes sense,” said Ryan, nodding his head in agreement.

They continued to conversate while awaiting the results from the psychiatric hospital.

Meanwhile at Chris’s house. Chris had fell asleep on the couch while watching a movie. The movie credits had ended, displaying the red and white FBI logo on the tv screen. Its glare was so bright, it eventually awoken him. Chris opened his eyes slowly then looked around the room while still in a daze. When he finally came to, he sat up and looked over to his left at the clock on the wall. It read a half past to 10 o’clock. While taking a full yawn and stretch, the squad car outside abruptly crossed his mind. Instantly, he jumped up from off the couch, rushed over to the window to his right, then pulled the right window shade back and looked outside. Looking to the right of the house, he saw the squad car still parked in the same spot, unbothered. Feeling adequately secure again, he closed the window shade, turned the tv off, then went upstairs to his room. After entering his room, he closed his door and then climbed into bed. Shortly after, he remembered that he had left the kitchen light on. Though after ponding about this for nearly a minute, he decided that he would keep it on just in case there was an emergency.

This way, he could easily find his way to the kitchen to exit the house. He then pulled the sheet over himself and closed his eyes. As he laid there quietly, Chris heard what sounded like the wind starting to increase. Within a few minutes, this sound grew more aggressive, as nearby tree branches started scratching portions of his house. He jumped out of bed then darted over to the window on the left side of the room to look outside. Cautiously, he perused the backyard, scanning it from right to left; however, he did not detect anything out of the ordinary. Although, as he continued to observe, he did happen to notice the trees gusting rather forcibly, but this was not a serious concern for him. And so, he stepped away from the window and got back into bed.

At Miracle Care Recovery, Dr. Patel was in her office preparing to leave for the evening. She began to shut down her computer; first, closing all the open windows, then dragging her mouse over to the sleep logo and clicking on it. This caused her computer screen to go instantly dark. Next, she stood up from her chair, gathered all the files together on her desk, then took them over to the filing cabinet. As she placed each one in its proper alphabetical slot, she came across Karman's file. Right away, she began to reflect on their last session, recalling the stains she noticed on her hands and gown. Subsequently, this reminded her of the directive she made to have the gown sent to the lab. She sat Karman's file on top of the cabinet then finished putting the other ones away. After she was done, she grabbed Karman's

file with her left hand, opened her office door with her right, then stood at the threshold.

“Hey, did Karman’s gown ever make it to the lab? Before I leave, I want to know what that stain was that was on it,” asked Dr. Patel, speaking to the orderly at his desk.

Immediately, the orderly rose to his feet and replied.

“Yes ma’am! Right after she changed her gown, I took the old one over to the lab and dropped it off,” he confirmed.

“Thank you,” replied Dr. Patel.

She then went back into her office, closed her door partially, and then sat down at her desk. After sitting Karman’s file down, she picked up her office phone with her right hand and held it to her right ear, then dialed the lab’s extension with her left index finger. Patiently, she waited for someone to answer. “A lovely day”

The phone rang three times before a tech picked up.

“This is the lab. How can I help you?” greeted the tech.

“Yes. Good evening. This is Dr. Patel. I’m calling because I asked an orderly to drop-off one of my patient’s gown for an analysis earlier; I also had a Kleenex submitted as well, and was wondering if the results came back for either of them yet,” she explained, while leaned back in her chair.

“Good evening Dr. Patel. Uh. If you could, give me a few minutes and I’ll check on this for you,” requested the tech.

The phone then went silent. Nearly ten minutes had passed before the tech finally returned to the phone.

“Hello, ma’am!” said the tech.

“Yes, I’m still here,” replied Dr. Patel.

“Ok. I have a printout here with the results from both items. First the gown. The results show a combination of both, dirt minerals and what also appears to be traces of hemoglobin, proteins, and hormones. Or in other words, bloo...,” read the tech, before getting cutoff by Dr. Patel.

“Blood!” stated Dr. Patel.

“Yes ma’am, that’s correct!” replied the tech, in concurrence with Dr. Patel.

“Alright. And with that being said, I can safely assume that this is what was also found on that Kleenex, as well,” Dr. Patel presumed.

“And again Doctor, you’re right!” confirmed the tech, now reviewing the results from the Kleenex.

“But this is odd because I certainly don’t recall hearing or reading about any incident reports involving any of our patients, or orderlies for this matter, that had led to a major injury such as lacerations or deep cuts,” told Dr. Patel.

The tech did not respond.

“Alright then, well let me go get this patient and see if I can get her to tell me just how and when she happened to contract blood,” she continued.

“Thanks so much for getting me these results,” she concluded, hanging up the phone right after.

After taking a deep breath, she stood up from her desk then walked over to her door. Now standing at the threshold of her office, she began to speak with the orderly.

“Hey, are you busy?” she asked.

The orderly stood to his feet then moved closer to the counter and replied.

“No ma’am! What can I do for you?” he asked.

“Well right now, I need you to come with me. There’s a situation,” instructed Dr. Patel.

“Yeah, apparently the results from Karman’s gown, and that Kleenex, both revealed something I now fear she had contracted from outside this facility. But, of course, this is just a notion. Anyway, that’s why I need your help. I feel that in order to get any answers from her regarding how she acquired this element, a physical approach could very well be warranted,” she insisted.

“Now, please know that I’m basing this from off that disturbingly aggressive reaction she displayed during her interview with that detective the other day. Chances are we could experience this same type of behavior almost immediately, the minute I start questioning her,” she concluded.

“Yes ma’am, I understand! I’m ready now,” replied the orderly, walking to his right to get from behind the counter to join her.

They both then proceeded down the hall toward the community room.

“Was an extra orderly posted outside Karman’s room like I requested?” Dr. Patel inquired.

“Yes ma’am! After I explained to him the reason for your request, he came down to the community room and grabbed a chair, then headed over to her dorm,” the orderly confirmed.

Now at the end of the hall, they turned left at the corner and then continued on for Karman’s dorm. Straight ahead was the other orderly sitting in his chair with his back facing

Karman's door. His body was slouched forward with both elbows rested on his knees as he read his magazine. As soon as he heard Dr Patel and the orderly walking toward him, the assisting orderly stopped reading his magazine then looked to his right and watched them as they approached.

"Good evening!" greeted Dr. Patel.

"How's everything been over here? Any issues with Karman's behavior?" she asked.

"No ma'am, not at all. She's been quiet the whole time," replied the assisting orderly, while closing his magazine and standing to his feet.

"Well, I guess I'm not too surprised. I mean it's been nearly ten years and I still can't recall one alarming incident with her...until now," stated Dr. Patel.

"Alright. Well let's go in now and check on her," she continued.

"Could you open her door, please?" she requested, while moving up to the right side of Karman's door.

The assisting orderly moved his chair off to the left of the door, reached inside his right pants pocket for his keys, and then unlocked the door.

"Ah Doc, I think we gotta major problem!" he declared, while looking through the window of the door.

"What?! Did she hurt herself?! What happened?!" Dr. Patel probed, moving closer to the assisting orderly.

"Well, that's just it, ma'am, she's apparently not doing nothing, and that's because she's not in there," replied the orderly.

“What?! What do you mean she’s not in there?! Where the hell else would she be?!” exclaimed Dr. Patel, shoving the orderly to the left, away from the window, so she could take a look inside the room.

She took a few minutes to scan the room to see if she could find her, but Karman was nowhere in sight.

“She was in here, right?! And if so, then how on earth did she happen to get passed you?” she continued, now looking to her left at the assisting orderly.

“Yes ma’am, she was in there. As soon as I got over here, I looked through the window and saw her sitting on the bed. I remember because it looked to me like she was meditating or something,” the assisting orderly replied.

“Anyway, after I saw her just sitting there quietly, I sat my chair down, took a seat, and started reading my magazine,” he continued.

“And no, I didn’t get up from this spot for nothing, either,” he added.

Dr. Patel did not respond. She just looked back into the window and resumed observing the room.

“Meditating huh? Yeah, well something tells me it probably wasn’t the ideal relaxation technique we’re familiar with,” Dr. Patel replied, as she moved back away from the door.

“Open the door!” she directed.

The assisting orderly moved back in front of the door then unlocked it and opened it outward from the right. At that moment, Dr. Patel and the desk orderly both entered the room. As they looked around, they tried to find any breaks or holes in the walls and on the floor that would have allowed

her to escape. But after more than five minutes of searching, there were no signs of breaches anywhere.

“Doctor, I honestly can’t see how she got out. I mean, from the looks of things, there appears to be no signs of damage to the walls or the floor,” told the orderly, while scanning the lower part of the wall near the floor for possible infractions.

“Plus, she was being watched from right outside her door, so I honestly doubt it if she went out that way,” he presumed.

Dr. Patel took a deep breath and then sighed while turning around toward the door. She then paused in place and began to contemplate on how Karman could have escaped. Both orderlies, the one still standing outside the door, and the one inside the room, also paused and just stared at her, awaiting her next instructions.

Moving slowly now, Dr. Patel started heading toward the door. She walked around the desk orderly, passing by his left shoulder as he stood next to the bed. Now frustrated and concerned about Karman’s mysterious move, she decided to make an advisory announcement to all of the staff, in an effort to initiate a facility-wide emergency search. With her right hand, she swept her lab coat back and grabbed her radio from off her hip. After removing it, she then held it close to her mouth and pressed the intercom button.

“Attention all staff! Attention all staff! We have a ‘code-red’! I repeat, we have a ‘code-red’! The patient, Karman Anderson, is now missing from the 4th floor. I’m asking all personal to report to their assigned emergency positions immediately, and begin a facility-wide search,” she dispatched.

As she continued to provide instructions, the desk orderly removed the bed sheets from the bed. With them bundled in his arms, he looked down and saw the corner of a piece of paper sticking out from between the mattress and the plastic base platform. Instantly, he sat the sheets down at the foot of the mattress to his left, then pulled this paper out with his right hand. To his surprise, it was actually a page that was part of a medium size notebook. It was folded outward, displaying written information. He took the notebook and moved over close to Dr. Patel.

“I want every available orderly, nurse, and security personnel to search every aspect of this facility. I mean check each room, restroom, laundry room, and kitchen, as well as the loading dock, thoroughly,” she continued.

“And when you find her, please...,” she said, before getting interrupted by the orderly tapping her on her left shoulder with his right hand.

The notebook was now in his left hand.

“What?!” she exclaimed, expressing mild frustration.

“Uh, excuse me ma’am, I apologize, but you may wanna take a look at this,” advised the orderly.

“Hold on staff!” radioed Dr. Patel.

She then looked to her left and saw the notebook he was holding up. With curiosity, she reached for it with her left hand and started reading the page that was displayed.

“Oh my God!” she exclaimed.

“What? What is it?!” asked the orderly, trying to understand why she was so concerned with the information in the notebook.

Dr. Patel did not respond. She just attached her radio back to her hip then began to flip through the pages. As she skimmed over the notes on each page, she soon discovered that this was information about who Karman was planning to assault, and when. Though, what was even more startling about these notes, was how they provided the actual locations for where these attacks were going to take place, as if Karman was keeping track of each victim over the years.

“Doctor, are you alright? You seem really bothered about this notebook. Do you know what all that is?” the orderly enquired.

But Dr. Patel still did not reply. She just continued reading through the notes. Nearly three minutes went by before, suddenly, she took a deep breath and began to explain everything.

“Alright. But first, please know that what I’m about to tell you is confidential. So don’t leave out of here telling anyone,” she advised.

“Yes ma’am! Not a word. Got it!” replied the desk orderly.

“Ok. So a few sessions ago, Karman she told me she developed this desire to avenge herself against the people she had problems with from her past, high school to be exact. During another session, she then mentioned meeting someone here who taught her how to separate her spirit being from her physical being. A technique she, herself, supposedly using but got caught by her family and was sent here. Now Karman did state she’s been practicing this technique, though she claimed she hasn’t advanced in it. Though, after now reading through these

notes, I can safely presume she's probably been using this technique for quite a while. I mean considering these details of her planned attacks, at this point, it's difficult to believe she's still a novice," Dr. Patel disclosed, still skimming over the notes.

"You know what, Doc, now that we're talking about her, just this past weekend the Priest and I responded to what I now feel was her trying to most likely use this technique. Though I must ask, if she's managed to learn how to separate her spirit from her body, then why isn't her body still here at least?" the orderly wondered.

"Wow! I have to say, that's an intriguing question. Unfortunately, though, I don't believe I have the answer to that one," Dr. Patel replied.

"No. But I am thinking that the person with this answer, is that friend of hers," she presumed, closing the notebook in her left hand and exiting out of the room.

"Come with me guys," she directed both orderlies.

The desk orderly followed Dr. Patel out of the room and then the assisting orderly closed the door and locked it. After that, they all proceeded further down the hall for the friend's room. The desk orderly approached the door and peeked through the window to see what she was doing. As he observed, he noticed that she was just lying down on her bed. He then tapped on the window twice, unlocked it, then opened it outward from the right. At that moment, Dr. Patel walked past him and proceeded inside.

Back at the precinct, Arquette had fell asleep in the lab. Reclined in one of the tech's chair, his feet were propped up and crossed atop of their desk. Both techs had left for the night. All of a sudden, the lab door opened, and Ryan entered holding two white paper cups in his hands. They both were filled with caffeinated coffee. When he closed the door with his right elbow, the noise startled Arquette awake. His eyes opened with anxiousness while turning his head swiftly to the left, toward the door. Within seconds, however, he calmed himself down after seeing that it was Ryan who had just entered and was walking toward him carrying two cups.

"Hey hey! Here you go, Arquette. I thought you could use this," offered Ryan, handing Arquette the cup out his left hand.

Arquette dropped both of his feet to the floor and then extended his left hand out for the cup. After handing him the cup, Ryan then sat on the left end of the desk next to him.

"Thank you!" replied Arquette, before taking a sip.

"So, still no word from that lab, huh?" Ryan asked.

"You know, I could just give them a call, see if that could maybe speed things up," he offered.

"Want me to call them instead?" he continued, showing minor impatience.

"Nah. Giv'em a little more time. They oughta be calling us here soon, hopefully," presumed Arquette.

They then continued to wait while drinking their coffee. Shortly after, the discussion of their families, as well as the

investigation, began to fill the silence. Fifteen minutes later, the phone on the desk to the left of the lab began to ring. This brought Arquette immediately to his feet. After sitting his cup down on the desk, he went over to the other desk and answered the phone. He picked up the receiver with his left hand and held it to his left ear. Ryan, still sitting on the other desk, turned himself slightly to the right to listen in on the conversation.

“Hello, hello! This is Detective Arquette!” he exclaimed, expressing eagerness and passion.

“Yes. Hi Detective. Sir, I apologize for the long wait. There’s been a code-red emergency here, calling for majority all staff to assist with this alert. Though we techs fortunately remain in the lab, which is the reason why your results are finally ready,” the lab tech explained.

“Yes!” Arquette shouted, expressing excitement.

“Oh! And that’s quite alright. I definitely know how those alarms can complicate things. Hell, I’m just grateful to be talking to you now,” he empathized.

“Ok. I’m ready when you are,” he continued.

“Thanks sir. Ok, so the results from the prints came back and they show that they belong to one of our patients here by the name of Karman Anderson,” the tech revealed.

“Yes! And you know, I had a gut feeling about this, but I needed some solid proof, of course, which is what your call has definitely provided me now,” Arquette stated.

“Yes sir! Well, I’m really glad I was able to help,” said the tech.

“Ok. Well I’m leaving the precinct now. If possible, could you please let your security know I’m on my way. I just wanna ensure I have immediate access the minute I arrive so I can get in and out, you know, without any problems,” Arquette requested, expressing a sense of urgency.

“Yes sir! Will do! As soon as I’m off the phone with you, I’ll notify them, immediately,” replied the tech.

“Sounds good. Thanks!” thanked Arquette.

They then concluded their conversation and then disconnected. After Arquette hung up the phone, he turned slightly to his right toward Ryan and started providing him with the latest on the results.

“Alright Ryan, we’re on! It’s been confirmed! The lab said the results from our prints came back and they belong to our girl, Karman, which means my game plan is now in effect,” he confirmed.

“Right. Which means I’m waiting here while you pick up the Priest and head out to the hospital. And if Karman isn’t there, for some mysterious reason, you’ll call me to let me know and I’ll head over to Chris’ house,” said Ryan, reiterating their conversation from earlier.

“Yup, that’s it! But hopefully everything’ll go smooth, this way you could head straight home after I pick her up,” replied Arquette, pulling his cellphone out of his right pants pocket.

With his right thumb, he scrolled through the recent calls list for the Priest’s number. After finding it, he pressed the send button to dial it, then held his cellphone to his right ear. As it rang, Arquette began to head for the door to the

lab to exit. Ryan took a seat at one of the tech's desk and got on the computer.

“Hey father. Good evening. Sir, I apologize for calling you this late, but I may need your assistance this evening. It's about that patient, Karman Anderson,” told Arquette, while exiting out of the lab.

Meanwhile at the hospital, Dr. Patel was still talking with Karman's friend in her room. She was sitting to the left of her on the bed with Karman's file underneath her left arm.

“Look, I know about you and Karman getting close these past few months, and that's ok. But she told me you taught her a technique of some sort that apparently involves the ability to separate her spirit from her body, and I presume you decide to tell her about this after she told you her troubled past, right?” Dr. Patel probed.

“Now that part's definitely not ok, especially considering the situation we're in right now,” she continued.

“And so, at this moment, I need you to provide me all the details about this special practice of yours; for instance, how does it work, how long could it last, and most importantly, if one were to've master it, could he or she be able to disappear, ultimately?” she quired.

But there was no response from Karman's friend. She just stared inanely at the wall in front of her while reclined against the wall behind her. After observing her inertness, Dr. Patel decided to continue with her approach.

“Ok. Well, just in case you haven't heard, Karman is missing, and we have yet to locate her. So tell me, how is it

possible for someone to do this when she's under tight security?" she continued.

Right then, the patient, seemingly under the influence of a powerful sedative, began to speak in a soft, lethargic nature.

"Look, all I taught her was a form of witchcraft through spiritual meditation, that's it. This only gives her the ability to escape this place spiritually," she professed.

"A meditation to escape your body, huh? Well I found this notebook in her room, and in it were days and places she apparently planned to attack her victims. So, if this spiritual meditation were just the case, then perhaps explain to me how she'd be able to physically harm anyone, you know, if she's only a spirit," invited Dr. Patel.

"Harm? No, she couldn't harm no one. I mean, she could maybe scare'em or something...but not harm," the patient avowed.

"Oh, is that right?! Ok. Well during one of our sessions, she told me that you in fact managed to harm a few people while under this out of body experience," disclosed Dr. Patel.

Just then, a disturbing a grim smirk grew on the patient's face.

"Oh yeah, that's right!" said the patient, exhibiting a jovial persona.

"Well then, I guess she is able to hurt people, too, I don't know. What do you want from me?" she continued.

"Well just hearing you say that this act of spiritual meditation could still allow someone to hurt another, was very helpful. Though right now my major concern is how is

it she's able to roam about this facility, physically, if not already escaped?" Dr. Patel probed.

"And I'm assuming this because even her body has yet been found. I mean, one would think that if this was just a spiritual thing, her body would at least be somewhere in the building, if not in her room. So where is she?" she demanded, becoming aggravated with the patient.

Suddenly, the patient's facial expression changed, displaying a hint of annoyance as she, too, had grown frustrated from Dr. Patel's inquisition into Karman. Then unexpectedly, she responded, offering the most crucial piece of advice.

"To be honest Doctor, it would all depend on how good she's gotten with it. I mean, she could be gone. So, if I were you, I'd try to find the person she'd likely be going after next, you know. Chances are you'll probably find her there," she advised.

Right then, silence overtook the room as Dr. Patel pondered on the patient's last statement. Within a minute, she then jumped to her feet, sharply, and turned to her left toward the orderlies still standing at the door.

"Alright listen. The plan, again, is to have all available staff search this building floor to floor. I believe she's still here, so let's keep searching. Now, until someone sane can prove this patient's theory right about Karman disappearing, we're gonna continue protocol," Dr. Patel directed.

"Yes ma'am!" agreed both of the orderlies, simultaneously.

Dr. Patel exited the room, then the assisting orderly closed and locked the door. Right after, they all then headed

back to the orderly's desk. With urgency, Dr. Patel pulled her radio from off her hip again and pressed the intercom button to speak.

“Attention all staff, attention all staff! This is a ‘Code Red’! I repeat, a ‘Code Red’! We still have no sign of the missing patient. So again, I need everyone to stop whatever they’re doing and help search this facility, checking every dorm, bathroom, laundry area, the loading dock, etc. I want this patient found, asap!” she directed.

As soon as they reached the front of her office, she began to give instructions to both of the orderlies, directing one to check all of the stairwells, while the other searches all the patients’ dorms on that floor, as well as the ones on the 5th floor. In addition, she also asked him to make his way downstairs to assist the with searching the main floor and loading dock after he had finished checking these dorms.

“Ok, what I think I’ll have you do is check all the stairwells. Then when you’re finished, I want you to go down to the ground level and assist staff with checking the back area, the loading dock, and the surrounding perimeter,” she instructed, speaking to the assisting orderly.

“And you, I’ll have you check each dorm and the community room on this floor. Then once you’re done, I’d like for you to go up to the 5th floor and check those dorms, etc. And after you’re finished, I want you to report back to me. Yeah, I may just have you come back to your post,” she continued, now speaking to the desk orderly.

Both orderlies agreed to their instructions and then headed down the hall toward the community room. Dr. Patel put Karman's notebook in her file, secured the file in her left hand, then walked over to the elevators to go downstairs. After reaching them, she pressed the down button on the panel then waited for an elevator to arrive.

Moments later, two rings resounded as the elevator on the left reached the 4th floor and then opened. Dr. Patel entered then pressed the button for the third floor, figuring she would stop on each floor going down to check on the searching efforts from the staff. Twenty-five minutes later, she finally reached the ground floor. After the elevator stopped, Dr. Patel suddenly heard her name called over the radio. It was the front desk calling for her attention.

"Dr. Patel, please come in. This is the front desk," radioed the security officer.

With her radio in right hand, she quickly held it to her mouth and responded.

"This is Dr. Patel. What happened? Did we find Karman yet?" she asked.

She then released the intercom button and waited for a response.

"No ma'am, we're still searching. We just wanted to inform you that a detective's on his way here and he's requested to speak with you, urgently, once he arrives," informed the officer.

Dr. Patel paused for a minute before replying back.

"Ok...I wonder what the hell this could be about now," she thought to herself.

She then held her radio back up to her mouth and responded.

“Alright, I’ll be there shortly. I just got to the ground floor,” she replied.

The elevator door opened and Dr. Patel stepped out then walked immediately to her left for the access door. As soon as she walked through the door, she went straight over to the front desk.

“Alright, so when’s he supposed to get here?” asked Dr. Patel, while looking down at her watch on her left wrist.

But there was no response from the officer. At that moment, he was fixated on a monitor to his right belonging to a security camera outside displaying two men who were walking through the parking lot toward the front of the building. Within a minute, though, he soon replied.

“Well ma’am, I believe that’s him there, and it appears he’s brought someone else with him,” he said, while pointing his right index finger at the monitor.

“Humm...maybe it’s his partner,” Dr. Patel presumed.

Moments later, the intercom at the entrance buzzed. Dr. Patel adjusted herself so that she would be facing the main door the minute Arquette entered. The officer rolled his chair up to the counter then pressed the access button with his right index. This created a buzz sound at the door which signaled for Arquette to enter.

“Good evening, Dr. Patel!” greeted Arquette, as he casually entered first with his computer case hanging over his left shoulder.

Walking directly behind him was the Priest dressed in black religious attire and holding a bible in his left hand.

“Good evening Detective. So, what brings you out here again, and at this time of hour?” inquired Dr. Patel.

“Well Doctor, this time I’m here to pick up one of your patients, Karman Anderson,” Arquette disclosed.

“Yeah, I have a warrant here for her arrest,” he continued, while reaching his left hand inside his computer case to extract the warrant.

As he approached her, Dr. Patel slid Karman’s file underneath her left arm, reached for the warrant with her right hand, then started skimming over it. The officer at the desk just stared at her with a stumped expression on his face.

“Uh, ok. Well I seem to be having some trouble understanding all this. Could you at least explain to me what I’m reading here? I mean, what was it that she supposedly did anyway?” asked Dr. Patel, still reading the warrant.

“Well Doctor, to be brief, we found prints from multiple murder scenes that apparently all came back matching your patient’s,” replied Arquette.

“Oh really? And what analytical procedure was used to conclude this?” questioned Dr. Patel, lowering the warrant and looking directly at him.

Skeptical about the results he just mentioned, she almost immediately became disinterested in hearing any more about his case involving Karman.

“Well, that warrant you’re holding there, Doctor, actually granted us access to your lab, and so we had your lab run our

prints through your database. And what do you know, they all came back linked to her,” told Arquette.

Dr. Patel did not respond. She just resumed with skimming over warrant. The officer, overhearing their conversation, decided to ask Dr. Patel if they should tell him about their current incident involving Karman.

“Uh, ma’am, don’t you think we should let him know what’s happened?” he asked, slightly nervous to hear her response.

But Dr. Patel chose to ignore his question while continuing to review the warrant.

“What? What’s happened?” asked Arquette, looking slightly to his left at the officer.

All of the sudden, Dr. Patel folded the warrant closed and sat it down on the counter. She then sighed while staring at the warrant before turning her head to the left toward Arquette to explain their situation.

“Alright Detective, here it is. Currently, we’re experiencing a code-red, and it’s because Karman is missing from her room. Now, it’s unclear how long she’s been missing, however, as soon as I was notified, I ordered an immediate lockdown of the whole facility and asked all available staff to assist in a facility-wide search to find her, which is why it shouldn’t be too long before she’s found,” Dr. Patel revealed, expressing minor optimism.

“Right. But tell me, has this ever happened before, with her I mean?” asked Arquette.

“Humm...not that I’m aware of,” replied Dr. Patel.

“And you know, what’s even more disconcerting about all this is, I actually had an orderly posted right outside her door to keep an extra watch on her for this evening,” she added.

“Oh wow! Then yeah, I would definitely agree, that is bit of mystery,” Arquette concurred.

“But then I have to ask, what was that additional monitoring for? Was she having a behavior crisis or something?” he inquired.

Dr. Patel casually looked to her right at the officer at the desk with the expression of anonymity now displayed on her face. Shortly after, she then slowly backed away from the desk while flexing her right finger in the air to signal for Arquette to follow her. Arquette recognized what she was doing and then began to head in her direction. The Priest, though, remained near the desk and waited patiently.

“Alright Detective, now what I’m about to tell you is strictly confidential, understood?” warned Dr. Patel.

“Yes ma’am, I understand,” Arquette agreed.

“Good. Ok. So, during one of my sessions with Karman, I happened to notice dirt at the bottom of her gown and under her fingernails. When the session ended, I had her gown, and the Kleenex I used to clean her hands, both sent to our lab. I just wanted to know if this was in fact dirt or possibly something else. Later, the lab reported that the dirt analyzed from both materials had traces of DNA. And of course, since I couldn’t find a reasonable explanation on

how she contracted this dirt, or the blood more importantly, I requested to have extra surveillance on her until I found out what happened,” she disclosed.

“I mean, even after looking through her file, I didn’t find one incident report where she and a staff member, or another patient, had to receive some type of medical attention after having a physical altercation,” she continued.

“Humm. Ok. So first there’s the traces of blood found underneath her fingernails, as well as on her gown. Then there’s her file you stated which doesn’t contain any incidents of physical altercations leading to medical attention,” Arquette recapped, thinking aloud.

“That’s correct,” confirmed Dr. Patel.

“Alright. So basically, what I’m hearing is, there’s no reports in her file citing any open bruises leading to blood loss from her and another patient, or one of your staff, is that right? And if so, I’d say yes Doctor, this is disturbing, and critical information for my case,” told Arquette.

“Correct. But hold on. Why is this information critical to you?” Dr. Patel inquired, clueless of why Arquette mentioned this.

“Well you see Doctor, all of our victims happened to’ve sustained deep lacerations from what we believe were caused by a five-bladed knife of some kind, or perhaps maybe even fingernails, now that you brought it up,” Arquette disclosed.

“Oh my God! Really?! Now that I wasn’t aware of,” Dr. Patel replied.

“Yeah. But what continues to be inexplicable is how she’s been able to come and go from this facility per the multiple

incidents. This is the riddle that's been extremely difficult to solve," said Arquette.

Dr. Patel just stared at him with a blank look on her face.

"I understand Detective, but I honestly don't believe she's gone yet. I believe she's still here which means we have to keep searching for her," Dr. Patel insisted.

"Yeah, I guess," replied Arquette.

"Alright Doctor, then I'll let you get back to it. I think the Priest and I will head back now and check on an ex-friend of hers, Chris. And in case you didn't know, those other victims were also ex-friends of hers," he disclosed.

After hearing this detail, a sign of distress instantly appeared on Dr. Patel's face.

"Which is why he believes there's a strong chance she could be coming after him now," he continued.

Just then, he paused and stared at her with concern.

"What?!" he asked, after noticing the expression on her facial.

"Oh! Nothing. This is just disturbing information to hear, that's all," replied Dr. Patel, being guarded and hesitant to reveal the information about Karman's desire for revenge.

"I see. Alright. Well on that note, if you don't find her here, then chances are she may be on her way to him," Arquette supposed.

Shockingly, Dr. Patel's facial expression suddenly changed to exhibit that of both, sympathy and remorse, just before commenting.

“Detective, I really do wanna apologize for not listening to you before,” she said, displaying guilt, as well as disappointment with herself, while removing Karman’s file from underneath her left arm.

“What do you mean, Doctor?” he asked.

To his surprise, she opened the file then removed Karman’s notebook with her left hand.

“Here. You’d probably wanna read this,” she suggested.

“I believe based on the information from this notebook, she could evidently be the suspect you’ve been pursuing,” she professed, while handing him the notebook.

With his right hand, Arquette took it then opened it. As he read through the random pages, he became quickly familiar with the names and the locations of each attack that he, himself, had documented during his investigation.

“My God! I don’t believe this! I mean, she’s got information on everybody, where they live, work, and so on,” Arquette stated, expressing disbelief.

“Hell, at this point, I would agree with you. I mean considering the DNA from the gown and fingernails, and now reading this detailed notebook here, yeah, I’d say she’s definitely at the top of my list as the number one suspect now,” he insisted.

“It would seem so. And you know what? Now that you mentioned this Chris person, you may want to take a look at the last few pages,” Dr. Patel advised.

Right then, Arquette flipped directly to the back of the notebook and found notes about Chris.

“Ah sh...t! Yeah, I think we better be leaving, now!” he exclaimed, now fearing for Chris’ safety.

“Well listen, you’re welcome to take that notebook. I’m sure it’ll assist in your case. But please Detective, be careful. And if you happen to come across Karman, please understand that she could be exceedingly dangerous at this point.” Dr. Patel cautioned.

“Now, you have my number, so please use it if you find her. I’ll have staff forward any emergency calls to my cellphone. And the reason I’m requesting this is because I may be the only one able to help her,” she continued.

Arquette did not respond. He just looked to his left over at the Priest who was still standing by the counter, talking with the officer. Then suddenly, Arquette replied.

“No Doctor, I believe there’s another person who could also help her. No disrespect, but I believe tonight’s remedy may require knowledge greater than science,” he stated, looking back at her with a polite smile on his face.

“Oh, I see! So religion’s gonna be your strategical approach, huh?” Dr. Patel questioned.

“So that explains why Father is with you,” she continued, now looking to her right over at the Priest.

“Ok then. Well on that note, I’ll let you gentlemen be on your way. And if we happen to find Karman here, I’ll be sure to contact you as well,” she said.

“Yes ma’am, that would be really great. Thanks! And please, you be careful here as well,” he replied.

They then concluded their conversation and then walked back over to the front desk.

“Alright Father, I think we oughta be leaving now,” told Arquette.

“But what about Karman?” the Priest asked.

“Well currently, sir, they’re looking for her. Yeah, she’s missing from her room. So in the meantime, while they’re doing that here, I figured we could already be in route to the next victim’s house,” insisted Arquette.

“But why? I don’t under....,” the Priest probed, before Arquette interrupted him.

“Father, I’ll explain everything on the way,” told Arquette, placing his left hand on the Priest’s right shoulder and leading him away from the front desk.

They then proceeded toward the main door. Dr. Patel watched them as they exited the building. Once outside, Arquette held the notebook up in his right hand and started to explain his reason for leaving the center.

“Alright Father, so the reason we’re leaving for Chris’ house now is because Karman may already be on her way there, judging from this notebook of hers. So, if they don’t find her here, then that could only mean she’s doing what she’s done in the past to get to those other victims, to now get to Chris,” he explained.

“Which is why we now need to get to his house, asap” he added, while handing the Priest the notebook.

He then pulled his cellphone out of his right pants pocket.

“Humm...I see,” the Priest said, as he skimmed over some of the pages from the notebook.

“Now Ryan’s at the precinct awaiting my call. So let me call him and ask him to head over to Chris’ ahead of us because it’s gonna take us a minute to get back over that way,” told Arquette.

“See, it pays to have a game plan ready,” he continued, feeling prideful with his strategy.

“I have to say I agree. You did a really good job setting this up, Detective,” agreed the Priest, impressed with Arquette’s strategy.

“Thanks Father. That means a lot,” replied Arquette.

He then scrolled through his recent calls list on his cellphone for Ryan’s number. After highlighting it, he pressed the call button then held his cellphone to his right ear. The phone rang four times before Ryan eventually answered.

First, there was a yawn and then a tired voice answered.

“Detective Harden here,” Ryan answered, in an exhausted voice.

“Ryan, what, were you sleep?!” asked Arquette, being slightly humorous.

“Nah, I’m just kidding. Listen, I know it’s late. And to be honest, I thought we would’ve had this case wrapped up by now,” he continued.

“Yeah, but from the sound of it, let me guess, it isn’t,” Ryan assumed.

“Alright. So let me just go ahead and ask. What happened now?” he enquired.

“Well, I’mma have to be brief because I feel time is definitely against us now,” Arquette replied.

“Alright, so as soon as we got to the facility, Karman’s doctor told me that they were in the middle of a search for Karman who they say went missing sometime this evening. After she told me this, I decided to leave there for Chris’ house. Though just before leaving, the doctor handed me a notebook Karman had with all the victims’ names in it. And yes, Chris’ name is also in there; him being the only victim still alive, which means she’s more than likely going after him now,” he explained.

“Get out of here! A notebook with all the victims’ names in it?!” asked Ryan, sounding shocked and amazed by this news.

“Oh wow! Alright, well with that being said, I can definitely understand why you felt this case should’ve been wrapped up by now. Hell, that notebook’s her confession,” he continued.

“Exactly!” Arquette agreed.

“Alright then, well let me get up and head over there now. I’ll call you as soon as I’m there,” said Ryan.

“That’s a good idea! Thanks!” Arquette concurred.

“No problem. I’ll see you when you get over this way. Be safe,” Ryan concluded.

“Will do. And you be safe heading over that way, also,” replied Arquette.

They then disconnected.

“Alright Father, it’s that time. You ready?!” asked Arquette, with a partial smile on his face.

“Detective, I believe the Lord’s always ready, so my goal is to not be too far behind Him,” replied the Priest, slightly humorous.

After finally reaching the car, they both got in, then Arquette drove out of the parking for Chris’ house.

Redemption

Back at Chris's house, Chris was unable to remain asleep due to the sound of the wind's sudden change of drift. He opened his eyes and just laid in bed. As he gazed up at the ceiling, he began to reflect on his safety and what things he could do to protect himself. Just then, he got up and went to check on the police officer that was posted outside his house. He exited his room, went downstairs to the living room, then pulled back the right window curtain to look outside. When he looked to the right, he saw that the patrol car was still parked in the same spot, unbothered. Feeling self-confident about his safety, he slowly began to retract himself from out the window. Although just before closing the curtain completely, he happened to glance across the street and noticed something supernatural-like standing underneath a streetlight. It appeared to be a black, ghostly figure standing about 5'6'ft. Yet, though it was dark like a shadow, it had two bright red circles seeming to resemble a pair of eyes. Unsure of what this image was, he decided to close the curtain swiftly and move back away from the window. The officer in his patrol car was reading a magazine but then happened to casually glance over to his right and saw this silhouette. He, too, unsure of what it was, put his magazine down then lowered his passenger window to try and communicate with it.

“Ah, excuse me! Is everything ok?! Are you lost, perhaps, or maybe need some type of assistance?!” he inquired, hoping to get a response.

The silhouette, however, did not respond. Instead, it began flailing its arms about widely as if it were conjuring up an unnatural phenomenon. Within moments, the wind began to whirl vehemently, causing the leaves to sound like a resounding ovation moving about the neighborhood. The trees branches, too, waved furiously as if a hurricane was soon to arrive. After the officer realized how strong this wind had intensified, he rolled his window back up and then got on his radio to alert the precinct. Unfortunately, though, the force causing the wind, intentionally blew a nearby tree down on top of his squad car, instantly smashing his radio. This massive collision was so loud, it actually startled Chris. He came to a pause in the threshold of the kitchen after hearing this crash. Without hesitation, he then dashed back over to the window and opened the curtain again. This time when he looked over to the right, he immediately noticed the tree laying horizontally across the roof of the squad car. As he continued to observe, he soon saw the officer moving around inside, seemingly trying to open his door to get out. Chris desperately wanted to help him, but after looking across the street for that silhouette, he noticed something even more disturbing. This eerie image was now floating calmly toward his house. Seeing it approach brought forth an atypical disturbance within him.

With hastiness, he shut the curtain and then moved back from the window again. As the silhouette neared the house, its red eyes grew slightly brighter, now visible through the burgundy curtains. The wind began to upturn again as the silhouette focused on the front of the house. Its intensity caused the house to start rattling, severely. Within seconds, the housing structure soon felt unstable as the living room began to vibrate underneath Chris's feet. The red eyes, now enlarged, ominously approached the window and started moving slowly from right to left, as if the silhouette was searching the living room for Chris. The reflection of its eyes now beamed off the wall like a bright red flashlight shining. Chris, seeing this, moved back further into the living room to avoid being detected. But then unexpectedly, this red glare came to a standstill as if the silhouette suddenly detected his exact location. Seeing this, he became motionless and remained quiet in hopes to avoid any movements or sounds that would attract attention to himself.

Five minutes had passed before the wind suddenly grew even more intense, as if the silhouette had become infuriated because it could not locate him. The intensity of the wind was now causing the windows to shake violently. To Chris' surprise, they eventually shattered right in front of him. This impact was so powerful, it sent pieces of glass flying abruptly across the room, some striking him in his face and causing him to drop to his knees in pain. As the silhouette neared the house, its force started causing pictures and other objects to fly about the room. Finally, it appeared at the front window. This made

the curtains flail about inward, riotously. With it now able to see within the house, it amassed then formed a line midair with the broken glass from off the floor to project at Chris after locating him. However, as soon as Chris noticed this transpiring, he decided to crawl quickly toward the kitchen. Right then, the silhouette thrust the glass forward in Chris' direction. He was so low to the floor; however, the glass shot directly over him and penetrated the walls, as well as the furniture, as he made his way toward the threshold of the kitchen. Now feeling annoyed and unsuccessful, the silhouette grew enraged again and stirred up another windstorm that ultimately forced another tree down. But this time the silhouette took it and lobbed it horizontally at the front of the house. This damage, of course, now made it extremely difficult for anyone to be able to enter or exit through the front entry.

After finally arriving on Chris's street, Ryan immediately noticed the tree on top of the squad car straight ahead.

"What the hell is going on over here?" he asked himself.

As he pulled up to the squad car, the streetlight on his left reflected off the other tree that was smashed against the front of the house.

"Oh my God!" he exclaimed, now looking to his rights, over at Chris' house.

The strong wind damaged the porchlight which lit the walkway and made the house visible from the street. Ryan switched on his patrol lights then parked his squad car horizontal to the left in the middle of the street to ensure traffic did not bypass the house. Next, with his right hand,

he grabbed the black transmitter from his radio and then dispatched the precinct.

“Come-in Dispatch, this is Detective Harding. Do you read me?!” he announced.

“Go ahead Detective, we read you, over!” responded Dispatch.

“Roger. Listen, I just arrived at 1723 Michigan Dr. and found one of our squad cars down. Yeah, apparently there’s a tree smashed on top of it,” Ryan reported.

“The status of the officer, however, is unknown at this time,” he added, growing slightly nervous to uncover the status of the officer.

“Oh! And there’s also another tree crashed in front of the victim’s home, as well. Again, I just got here, so the status of the victim is also undetermined. I mean, for all I know, he may not even be home,” he continued.

“Anyway, I’m gonna need an ambulance and backup to my location,” he ordered.

“Oh wait! Before I forget! I’m gonna also need the Fire Department, too, so they could maybe help move these trees out the way,” he concluded.

“That’s a copy, Detective! We have an ambulance, the fire department, and backup all on the way! Dispatch out!” replied Dispatch.

Ryan hooked the transmitter back onto the radio. After taking off his suit coat, he opened a medium black utility box that was on the passenger seat and took out a small black flashlight, then got out of his car.

The wind was drifting roughly, pushing against Ryan's door as he opened it to exit the car. After he got out, he closed the door then stooped forward and proceeded toward the wrecked squad car. As soon as he approached the passenger door, he raised up his right arm and then turned on his flashlight. Now able to see inside the car, he discovered the officer tugging at the driver side door handle, trying to open it.

"Officer, how are you?! Are you hurt?! Do you need any medical attention?!" asked Ryan, lowering his light from the officer's face.

"Oh, hey Detective. Nah, I'm fine, thank God. But the way this tree landed on my car, I thought I was done for," replied the officer, looking over to his right at Ryan.

"I know that's right. Hell, I'm shocked you're still alive, too. To be honest, I was actually afraid to find out what happened to you," said Ryan, slightly humorous while assessing the inside of the car with his flashlight.

"Tell me about. I actually been trying to get out for about 15 to 20 minutes now, but this tree might've damaged the door mechanism. So chances are, I may need fire rescue to get this open," the officer stated.

"Well officer, you're in luck cause I just asked dispatch to radio for medical and fire rescue assistance," informed Ryan.

"And now after seeing that your radio's been smashed pretty good, I'm really glad I did. So, help oughta be here shortly. In the meantime, just sit tight, I guess. Right?" he said, with a partial smile on his face to ease the tension.

"Yeah, I guess so Detective. Thanks," replied the officer.

“Oh Detective! I feel I should caution you that whatever it is that’s out there, sure can’t be human, I don’t believe anyway,” he warned.

“I mean, what I actually saw looked more like something out of a horror movie; dark and mystical, under that streetlight over there,” he described.

“Though, I did attempt to speak to it, asking it if it needed assistance, but it didn’t respond. The only thing I recall happening soon after was the wind picking up and then this tree here fell on top of my car,” he continued.

“Humm...dark and mystical, huh? No, that doesn’t sound human at all,” Ryan concurred.

“Alright! Well on that note, I definitely need to be on full alert. Thanks officer!” replied Ryan.

“Oh wait! Do you know by chance if the resident, Chris, is still in the house? I mean, I don’t want to go in if I don’t need to,” he enquired.

“Sir, I know he was in there earlier. But is he still in there now, considering a tree just smashed through his front door? That I really couldn’t tell you,” replied the officer.

“And with me being stuck in here, I couldn’t go in there to check on him after it hit,” he continued.

“I understand officer,” Ryan empathized.

“Well let me get in there then and see if he’s still inside. And if he is, hopefully he’s ok,” he continued.

“Yes sir. Well again Detective, please be careful out there,” the officer advised.

“I will officer. Thanks!” Ryan replied.

Ryan then moved low up to the front of the patrol car but then paused near the hood and started observing the house, looking for any strange or dangerous activities. During that time, the silhouette calmly began to float toward the right side of the house. Because the wind continued to gust roughly, Ryan had to cover his eyes often to protect them from the flying debris. This made it extremely difficult for him to get a clear view of the house. Though, the flashing of his patrol lights didn't help either as they reflected off the dark house, adding to his challenge of assessing the area. Within a brief minute, however, while squinting his eyes to see through the erratic wind and lights, he happened to get a glimpse of the red eyes; though it was still hard for him to determine exactly what he was looking at. Just then, he decided to move away from the squad car and go up to the house. When he reached the front yard, he looked over to his right and saw red eyes within a dark shadow-like figure floating around the corner of the house, as if it were going toward the back.

“Ok. What the hell was that?” he asked himself.

He then thought.

“Oh! So that must've been what he was talking about,” he continued.

He then moved quickly up to the front door, but because it was completely blocked by the tree, he decided to move slowly to the right of the house to reach the front windows. Although the tree was blocking them also, a small space between it and one of the windows allowed for him to get a

peek inside the house. He got as close as he could to the window then started calling for Chris.

“Chris! Hey Chris! Are you in there?! It’s Detective Harding!” he announced, while shining his flashlight through the window.

The living room was pitch black with no sign of Chris in sight. Startlingly, a loud crash suddenly resounded, sounding as if a window had broken from extreme force. Ryan figured that it came from the back of the house as he recalled seeing that dark figure heading that way moments ago. Next, to his surprise, Chris came rushing from out of the kitchen stooped low, then dove to the floor, seemingly taking cover. Instantly after, there was the sound of darts flying sharply about, followed by the knocking at the threshold of the kitchen as these darts penetrated it. Though, of course, these were not actually darts, but pieces of glass.

Some of the glass fragments came flying into the living room, targeting Chris. Ryan, hearing these pieces of glass hitting the wall near the window, decided to duck to avoid getting struck. After a few seconds passed, he stood back up and then shined his flashlight through the window again.

“Hey Chris, it’s Detective Harding! Detective Arquette sent me here to check you, see if you needed any help!” informed Ryan, shining his light at Chris still down on the floor.

“Oh, hey sir!” Chris greeted.

“Well listen, I appreciate you coming here, I really do, but I don’t think you or anyone else can help me now. This spirit, or Karman, or whatever the hell it is, is here to kill

me, just like it killed everyone else I knew,” he cried, while moving back against the wall with his knees folded up to his chest.

Ryan took a second to respond but was unsure of what he could say to help ease Chris’ trepidation. Before long, he decided to just tell him what he felt was the best response.

“You know what Chris, you’re probably right. But I’m still here to help, none-the-less,” he said, trying to build Chris’ confidence and trust in him.

Alarmingly, a strong gust of wind rushed into the living room from out of the kitchen. Chris, unsure if this was Karman now entering the living room, stood quickly to his feet then ran past the front windows for the staircase.

“Chris! Chris!” yelled Ryan, trying to keep him from going upstairs.

But his call for him did not work. Chris had already proceeded up the stairs. At that moment, Ryan turned his flashlight off and began to move to the right side of the house. After going around the corner, he came to another window on his left, though this one was not damaged. He tried to lift it up so he could get inside the house, but the window would not budge, as if it were locked. This then prompted him to put his flashlight in his right pants pocket; then, with his right hand, draw his 9mm pistol from his holster on his right hip. Next, he flipped his gun around and gripped the muzzle then thrust the pistol grip at the window to crack the glass. After cracking it, he turned his piston back around then swept the frame with the muzzle to remove any remaining pieces of glass. Now able to reach

the window latch, he put his pistol in his left hand and then reached his right hand upward inside the window to flip the latch unlock. He then holstered his pistol and then began to lift the window up. As he lifted it, within seconds it became sluggish, creating only enough space for him to try and squeeze through.

He took a few seconds to evaluate this situation before ultimately becoming pessimistic about fitting through this space.

“Yeah right!” he said to himself, softly.

He then continued on toward the back of the house. Now approaching the broken window to the kitchen, he suddenly felt the wind starting to pick up intensely again. Ominously, those glowing red eyes he saw earlier suddenly appeared at the top corner of the house. As soon as Ryan realized that they were floating toward his direction, he immediately ran back to the window he just broke and jumped through it, landing on various household items and other debris. When the silhouette heard this crash, it instantly responded in a furious rage, conjuring up another windstorm to attack whom it thought was Chris. The wind started whirling ferociously, bringing down a third tree and smashing it on that side of the house. But only this time, it was the base of the tree that hit the house, leaving an oversized gap in the wall. Debris scattered robustly across the living room; much of it fell atop of Ryan who was incapacitated on the floor after throwing himself through the window. As this windstorm casually drew near the gap in the wall, Ryan

began to sense that the silhouette was closing in on his location and decided to remain completely still to avoid attracting any attention to himself.

All of a sudden, to his surprise, those red eyes he saw earlier reappeared, descending with elegance as if it were investigating the large space in the wall. But shortly after, it then came to a pause and remained motionless as though it was anticipating some type of movement. Unexpectedly, a noise from upstairs resounded down into the living room. It resembled that of a dresser or bed being moved across a wooden floor. Hearing this, the silhouette began to float to the left of the damaged wall with haste, heading toward the back of the house again. Chris was up in his room attempting to barricade his windows. After moving his bed to flip his mattress up against the side window, he then removed his lamp from off his dresser and sat it on the floor near the door, then started hauling the dresser over to the windows that looked out at the backyard. At that moment, though, he was unsure of exactly where the silhouette was because his mattress was blocking the side window. Moreover, because his lamp was still on, the light made seeing outside even more difficult. But he did not allow his uncertainty to hinder him. He knew that blocking these windows was crucial for his protection, and so he proceeded to move the dresser toward them. He tilted the dresser on its left side then pulled it from the left top corners, across the room. Once he felt it was close enough, he sat the dresser on all fours then positioned it with the

back facing the windows. Next, he moved around to the front of the dresser then began to push each corner back. First, he started at the right corner; then, pushed at the left corner, trying to even the dresser up with the windows. Nearly having it pushed completely back, he happened to notice how the shine from a streetlight near his backyard faded to black, mysteriously. As he continued to assess this dark shade, a pair of red eyes ominously appeared from within it as it gracefully crept downward right outside the window.

Now overwhelmed with panic, Chris pushed both corners of the dresser with urgency to quickly block the windows. Seeing this, the silhouette became incredibly enraged and conjured up another intense windstorm that assertively blasted both windows inward, while also thrusting the dresser and Chris back to the wall near the door. The dresser rammed him into the lamp which then smashed against the wall, causing the bulb to break. Within seconds, the bedroom went completely dark. With the light out, the red eyes became insanely brighter, as if they were a part of an infrared detection system easing its way inside the house in search for Chris. Then suddenly, an eerie voice spoke out, calling out for him.

“Chhhrrriiisss!” it hissed, in a resentful, sinister voice.

“I know who you are!” Chris grunted, while trying to push the dresser from off himself.

“It’s your turn to scream!” the silhouette hissed, moving within steps of the dresser.

Surprisingly, the intensity of the wind suddenly came to a halt as the silhouette hovered closer to the dresser.

Then, out of nowhere, five blade-like nails slowly emerged from within the silhouette. With great force, it swung its nails at the dresser, penetrating the right side of it, then thrust the dresser across the room. It crashed into the bed frame and startled Chris, immensely. The red eyes then gradually approached him, ultimately bringing him to a spellbound state. As Chris attempted to turn his head away, these hypnotic eyes drove him to stare at them again. At that moment, the silhouette lifted its nails high in the air again, but then paused briefly, just to tell Chris, “it’s time to di...!!” in an infuriated voice. Though, just before it could thrash its nails forward to strike, it was interrupted by a loud kick at the door.

Miraculously, the door swung open from the left with vigorous force, slamming into the wall. It was Ryan. He managed to kick the door open and then shined his flashlight straight into the room, impairing the silhouette’s vision instantly and forcing it to close its eyes. In addition, it began to ease back slowly toward the broken window. Ryan looked to his right and found Chris standing motionless against the wall, still under hypnosis. Aware of the silhouette’s temporary instability, he felt this was the perfect time to get Chris out of the room. He lowered his flashlight, grabbed Chris’ left arm, then jerked him with potency toward the threshold. At the same time, Ryan reached his left hand out for the doorknob then pulled the door closed behind them.

This move he made was so sporadic and spontaneous that it eventually resulted with Chris landing directly on top of him after they both fell immediately onto the hallway floor.

The hallway appeared secure, momentarily. Lying beneath Chris, Ryan looked up at him to see if he had regained consciousness.

“Hey, you ok?” he asked, while lightly slapping his left hand across Chris’ face.

“Aahh, yeah. Yeah, I think I’m fine now,” Chris replied.

“Man, I didn’t know what was happening to me in there,” he continued, while shaking his head from side to side, trying to regain full consciousness.

“All I can remember are those red eyes coming at me...and that I couldn’t seem to move after that,” he said, now trying to roll himself to the right, off Ryan.

Ryan assisted him by pulling kindly on his right arm so he could roll off of him with little difficulty. As soon as Chris rolled over onto the floor and sat up, Ryan then sat up next to him.

“And what eyes were those?” Ryan laughed, looking to his left at Chris.

As they chuckled, a disturbing breeze suddenly drifted along the floor. It apparently was venting out from underneath Chris’ bedroom door. Moments later, this door began to vibrate exceedingly, as if there were a stampede of bulls running toward it. In addition, there was also an unusual noise that concurrently resounded with this door trembling violently, and it resembled that of wood being bent with force.

Hearing this noise, Ryan and Chris both looked toward the door with great concern. Within seconds, the door shattered outward with abrupt force, sending pieces of wooden debris darting about the hallway, penetrating deep into the walls and the floor. This explosive sound instantly startled Ryan and Chris, prompting them to embrace one another in fright. Soon after, from within the dark bedroom appeared a semi-bright red glow emerging gracefully toward the hallway, as if it were searching for something, or someone.

“Those there,” Chris replied, now traumatized with fear.

This glow suddenly grew brighter and was now reflecting off the walls, giving the hallway a reddish, vivid highlight. Feeling duty-bound, Ryan slid himself around Chris and got in front of him. The silhouette, after detecting this movement, turned to its right and found them both on the floor. Ryan then immediately withdrew his weapon, but before he could point it at the silhouette, it used excessive wind to thrust him backwards. He went flying back into the wall next to the staircase then hit the floor and became temporarily incapacitated. Unsure of what to do next, Chris just sat there and looked back over his right shoulder at Ryan. With Chris in its sight, the silhouette elegantly floated towards him, its eyes glowing remarkably brighter, which subsequently cast a dim shadow of itself onto the wall. While looking back at Ryan, Chris happened to detect this shadow on the wall to his right as it slowly moved up toward his shadow. This caused him to turn his head back toward the silhouette to see where it was. Unfortunately, it was now

directly in front of him, staring down. As he looked up at it, he soon became impaired and unable to control the affects spawned by its eyes, which then lead him to ultimately fall into another mesmerized state of being.

At that moment, the wind began to decelerate immensely, as if time were slowing down. This was a sign to indicate that the silhouette felt it had total control over Chris and was now ready to strike. It then lifted its nails up high in the air; but just before it could lash them forward at Chris, the Priest heroically appeared from behind him with the intent to save his life. While down on his left knee, he interlocked his arms within Chris' arms then started pulling him back away from the silhouette. Concurrently, he was also being cautious not to drop his bible that was secured firmly in his left hand. After moving him back a few feet, the Priest subtly rolled around and positioned himself in-between Chris and the silhouette. Next, he raised his bible in the air at the silhouette and began to quote memorized scriptures meant to repel the works of witchcraft.

“In that day, declares the Lord, I will destroy your horses from among you and demolish your chariots. I will destroy the cities of your land and tear down all your strongholds. I will destroy your witchcraft and you will no longer cast spells. Thus saith the Lord!!” he recited, quoting scripture from Micah the 5th chapter, versus 10 through 12.

Within seconds, surprisingly, the silhouette began to display signs of frailty as the brightness of its eyes dimmed.

As he continued to quote other various potent scriptures, a miraculous turn of events began to transpire. First, there were signs of bewilderment as the silhouette appeared perplexed about whether to attack the Priest, or to seek out this unknown phenomenon that was interrupting its intentional objective, which was to kill Chris. After about a minute of this, it then began to jerk from side to side while slowly moving back away from everyone. Right then, Arquette suddenly appeared in the hallway ready to help. He immediately noticed Ryan lying unconscious on the floor, first, and decided to check on him to see if he was ok. Kneeling on his left knee in the hallway with right foot still planted on the top step, he put his left index and middle finger on Ryan's neck to feel for a pulse. A pulse was felt. This gave Arquette proof that Ryan was still alive. He then pulled Ryan from the hallway and rested him safely on the top stairs. Next, he crouched low and went back into the hallway, but this time to help Chris. He eased up slowly behind him then started pulling him toward the staircase.

"Hey Chris, it's me, Detective Arquette. Let's get you out of here man," he said.

Startlingly, the silhouette happened to detect this rescue attempt by Arquette and became violently irate. It unexplainably managed to bypass this unseen defending force preventing it from attacking and resumed on to pursue Chris.

After sensing this impulsive, threatening response, the Priest began to speak louder with hopes of distracting the

silhouette again; but, its eyes only grew unimaginably brighter, causing him to close his eyes, temporarily. The silhouette simultaneously conjured up a powerful gust of wind that aggressively forced all three of them back into the wall near the staircase. The Priest, now suffering from minor head trauma, was incapable of resuming his holy sacrament. Arquette looked over to his right and saw him incapacitated. So, without delay, he valiantly tried to maneuver himself around Chris to protect him. But as the silhouette drew closer, it instantly projected its sorcery and started pulling Chris toward it. The moment Arquette realized this, he immediately grabbed Chris' left arm to keep him from drifting away. The silhouette, after noticing his actions, intensified its force, now making it even more strenuous for Arquette to keep a secure grip on Chris. After nearly a minute of tugging back and forward, he ultimately lost his grasp.

Right then, Chris' body slowly began to levitate off the floor and float toward the silhouette. With great effort, Chris managed to turn himself toward the floor, hoping to use his hands to pull himself away. However, this attempt prompted this gravitational pull to strengthen, resulting in him just dragging his hands across the floor. Now feeling that his effort for escaping was futile, Chris ultimately give in and allowed the force to take him. Within a few seconds, he felt himself nearing the silhouette. Alarmed of this, the effect of its hypnotizing eyes suddenly came to mind. Although this time he told himself not to look directly at them.

“Alright Chris, just don’t look into her eyes,” he told himself, softly.

He finally reached its proximity. Next, the silhouette began to slowly straighten him up while turning him around to face it. As Chris saw himself being turned toward it, he immediately closed his eyes tight with hopes of not being spellbound again. The silhouette finally had him right where it wanted him. As it eased up toward Chris, its blade-like nails emerged yet again, ready to shred into his body. But just before it could harm him, Arquette withdrew his firearm from his holster, aimed it high, then fired a few shots at the its head. This caused it to maneuver a bit which temporary delayed its attack. However, this heroic deed was short lived as the silhouette quickly regained stability and then projected another powerful gust of wind at Arquette. Only this time, it first pulled him forward, then it thrust him back into the wall again, instantly incapacitating him. Immediately afterwards, it then resumed its course to kill Chris.

As the it drew him toward its nails, the Priest surprisingly began to shout advising words to him.

“Chris, if you’ve done any wrong towards this thing, anything at all; even from your past, it’s time you confess and apologize or even beg for forgiveness. For Ephesians 4 and 32 says: Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ has also forgiven you,” he yelled, while leaning on his right side against the wall next to Arquette.

But Chris did not respond. Just then, the silhouette began to speak to Chris.

“Chhhrrriiisss, it’s time to diiiieeee!” it hissed.

It was in this moment when Chris decided to lift his head up toward the silhouette and spoke to it.

“Karman, I just want you to know I remember you; and, remember all the things that happened to you at our school. When I look back on those days, I see exactly why you’ve been overzealously irate and expressing extreme anger so violently. I mean, I must admit, my friends and I were undeniably wrong for treating you the way we did. So please, believe me when I say if I could rewind the time when we caused you all that pain, I’d be the first to substitute it with respect and friendship; that’s for sure,” he confessed, expressing empathy and compassion.

Miraculously, while he was expressing his sincere grief and regret, something peculiar began to happen. The silhouette became temporarily motionless, as if it began to cogitate on Chris’ words of clemency.

“But unfortunately, there’s no way that that’s possible. So, if you wanna take your revenge out on me now, I shouldn’t have no reason to object. I take full responsibility for my actions. And so, I’ll let you continue what you started. But, before you do, just know that killing me still might not relieve you of this pain. It’s only when you let this anger go, will you finally be free of this. That’s one sure way to move pass this,” he continued, speaking in an extremely compassionate tone.

As this astonishing transition continued to develop, the silhouette’s overpowering aggression began to weaken as it

slowly lowered Chris to the floor, concurrently, with retracting its nails.

“I’m sorry, Karman, for what I did to you. I truly am. And now, I ask...no, I beg you for your forgiveness,” he pleaded, as tears rolled down his face.

At that moment, an unexpected erratic reaction occurred from the silhouette. After it finally dropped Chris to the floor, it began to inexplicably shake, tremble, jerk, and turn, as if it were fighting with itself. Chris opened his eyes slowly to see what was taking place. When he looked, he saw its incongruous behavior and became incredibly confused about what was happening. Shorty though, while watching this happen, it soon dawned on him that he should use this opportunity to move himself back toward the staircase. He turned himself around and got on his hands and knees, then started crawling away. After reaching the wall near the staircase, he began to assess Arquette and the Priest as they both laid in a debilitated state. Arquette was on the floor, face up, rubbing the back of his head with his right hand. To his left, was the Priest embracing his lower left leg with his left hand. Chris chose to help him first in support his leg.

“Father, you alright? How’s your leg feel?” he asked, trying to assist him.

“Ahhh!! I think I sprained my shin. It feels pretty tight like a muscle’s been pulled in this area,” replied the Priest, expressing extreme discomfort while pointing his left index finger at the lower part of his left leg.

“Yeah, you might be right,” Chris agreed.

“Well here, let me see what I can do,” he offered.

Right then, he took both of his hands and started massaging the Priest’s shin. Arquette stopped rubbing his head then sat up and moved over next to them.

“Father, we need to get you out of here,” told Arquette.

He then propped himself up onto his left knee then began to instruct Chris on how they were going to help get the Priest up.

“Alright Chris, I’m gonna need you to lift Father up on his left side while I lift him up on his right. This way we can carry him down without him risking any further injury to his leg,” he directed.

While they were positioning themselves around the

Priest, the silhouette began to move toward them slowly. The Priest immediately detected this movement and alerted Chris.

“Chris, watch out!!” he yelled.

Arquette and Chris both looked back and saw the silhouette casually easing up toward them. With paranoia and valor spiraling within Arquette, he immediately looked down at the floor for his weapon. Using the red glow, he saw it just a few feet ahead of him on the right. He instantly dove for it, picked it up with his right hand, then moved back over near the Priest and Chris and positioned himself in front of them as a form of protection.

Now in front of them, something miraculous commenced just before their very eyes. This shadowy figure suddenly began to evolve into a spectacular array of colors, resembling that of a rainbow spectrum shining in the sunlight.

Simultaneously, its size and shape also began to reform, which entailed the reduction of its enlarged eyes shrinking down to ordinary human size. Moreover, the red glow that once projected from them subsequently faded to black. After nearly five minutes of reconfiguration, this image ultimately converted into a human shape and then gently descended toward the floor. Astonishingly, this new emergence was now encircled by a white, luminous glow that irradiated the hallway. It was still, however, fairly blurred and indescribable which made it quite challenging for Arquette and the others to confirm the nature of this unknown entity. Though, as they continued to stare at this indistinct reflection, it slowly came into focus. Now distinct and perceptible, the three of them were able to attest that this was the image of a young woman. Yet, it was Chris who was the first to positively identify her.

“It’s...it’s Karman!” he cried, expressing a sense of jubilation and triumph.

At last, this figure finally transformed effusively into Karman. Her face was completely recognizable; though, her lower extremities continued to appear faint. She was dressed in all-white clothing that appeared loosely fitted as it flailed about. The three of them just watched in utter amazement. Remarkably, as she stared down at them, a smile of compassion and peace grew on her face. Chris, feeling a sense of redemption, smiled politely at her, in return. After about a minute or two, Karman closed her eyes, lifted her head up, and began to gradually ascend upward, eventually fading into the ceiling.

Before long, the sound of sirens resonated from outside the house. It sounded as if there was a police ceremony entering the neighborhood. As the flashing lights from the various emergency vehicles twirled about the dark blue sky, decorating the neighborhood in alternating red, blue, and white colors, neighbors began to come outside and stand in their yards to see what all the commotion was about. A few squad cars parked horizontal in the street to assist in managing the flow of traffic. Not far from Chris' house, a few officers created a perimeter made of caution tape to help reduce the risk of unauthorized access up to his home. Moments later, two more squad cars entered the neighborhood, escorting an ambulance and a fire truck. As these vehicles neared the house, two officers lowered the caution tape and allowed them to pass. At a quarter of a mile down the road, the two squad cars veered off to the left and allowed the emergency vehicles to continue onward.

After bypassing both, Arquette and Ryan's sedan, they finally stopped at the house. The ambulance parked diagonal to the left; the fire truck parked diagonal to the right of ambulance, near the squad car with the tree on top of it. With urgency, four firefighters wearing dark brown fire-resistant gear outlined with yellow reflective stripes exited and began to gather their equipment. Now fully equipped with all their supplies, they rushed over to assist the officer ensnared inside his car. At the ambulance, three paramedic personnel dressed in dark blue kaki pants and gray polo shirts swiftly assembled their medic kits then

exited the rear of the ambulance and proceeded up toward the house. Subsequently, four officers wearing all-black full body Kevlar and armed with heavy artillery moved away from their black SUV and tactfully advanced up to the house in search of a point of access. After seeing the front door barricaded by a tree, they decided to separate and head toward the back; two of them went to the right side of the house, while the other two went to the left side. Coming around the right side of the house, the officers found another tree smashed against it. Now, though there was partial space for them to squeeze through to enter the living room, they overlooked it and just proceeded forward with their original plan to access the house through the back door.

Following right behind them were the three paramedics frantically trying to get inside to assist anyone suffering from injuries. The officers reached the backyard then tactfully closed in on the kitchen door, only to find it lying on the floor a few feet away from the threshold. They cautiously peaked inside to see if there were any potential threats. With no signs of danger in site, they then charged forward through the kitchen shouting, police.

“Police! Police!” they yelled, in a unison tone with their flashlights and weapons pointed.

The paramedics remained outside as instructed and was waiting to receive confirmation that the area had been secured. Meanwhile inside, the officers had rushed into the living room then quickly dispersed to secure that area. One of the officers

went to the left side of the room and posted himself next to the tree in the wall. Another officer moved to the right and then stood next to the staircase. The two remaining officers stood guard near the threshold of the kitchen to monitor both, the living room, as well as the kitchen. Just then, the officer standing near the staircase heard movement upstairs.

“Hey, we got movement up the stairs!” he yelled, as he pointed his weapon and flashlight up along the staircase.

The other officers hurried over to his position then pointed their weapons along the staircase as well.

“Hey officers, it’s Detective Arquette!” he yelled, identifying himself from beyond the staircase.

“Yeah listen, the area’s all secure now, so you can lower your weapons!” he continued, advising the officers about the status of the scene.

After hearing this, the officers moved up closer to the staircase, slowly. Their weapons were lowered, but their flashlights remained high. The officer who stood at the foot of the staircase, pointed his flashlight up the steps to illuminate the upstairs. Within seconds, he saw Arquette holding Ryan around his waist on his left side. Moreover, Ryan had his left arm around Arquette’s neck as they began to slowly walk down each step. Another officer decided to get on his radio to inform the paramedics that the area was now secured.

“Alright EMT, the area’s all secure; you can come in now,” he said, holding his radio up to his mouth with his left hand.

The paramedics moved quickly through the kitchen and entered the living room, then turned left and saw the four officers aiming their flashlights at the staircase.

“They’re up there! We see’em!” told the officer at the foot of the staircase, looking over at the paramedics to his right.

His flashlight was still aimed at the top of the stairs.

Right then, the paramedics hustled toward the staircase while shouted for a clear passage.

“Coming through, coming through!” they yelled.

All four officers moved back from the staircase to allow the paramedics access to the stairs; though, they kept their flashlights shining on the stairs to help the paramedics see while they were going up. After reaching the top, they began to assist Arquette with Ryan, first. Arquette removed Ryan’s left arm from around his neck and allowed one of the paramedics to take him downstairs. Immediately after, another paramedic approached Arquette and began to assess him for injuries.

“Detective are you hurt? Do you need any medical attention?” she probed.

“No, I’m ok. Thanks. I mean, I did hit my head pretty hard earlier, but I oughta be fine,” replied Arquette.

“Though Father seems to be experiencing a leg injury. He’s over there with the resident, Chris, who’s been trying to help him,” he continued.

“Thanks sir. We’ll take care of him,” replied the paramedic.

She then eased passed him on his right and went up the stairs. Directly behind her followed the third paramedic.

Thirty minutes later, the officers had successfully swept the entire house then evacuated. Arquette and Ryan were

sitting at the rear of the ambulance getting treated for their injuries. Arquette was sitting to the right of Ryan who was getting his head wound treated by a paramedic.

“So, what’s next?” asked Ryan, curiously awaiting Arquette’s response.

“Well, I know I can’t speak for you, but after today, I’m now officially retired,” replied Arquette, with a slight chuckle.

“Oh, is that right?!” asked Ryan, with a smirk.

“Yeah, I’ve seen enough death, and now a floating spirit killing people. I mean, how much more do you think my mind can take?” replied Arquette, with slight humor.

“Well, I definitely can understand and agree with that. I mean you have been doing this for a while. So maybe now would be a good time for you retire,” Ryan concurred.

“One thing’s for sure, you’re definitely gonna be missed at the precinct. But not to worry, though, because I plan to carry on your legacy,” he continued, with a slight chuckle.

“Oh yeah? Is that right?” asked Arquette, with a smirk on his face.

“Yes sir! I’ve watched you very close and plan to use your strategies during my cases...well, minus this one which involves steaking out ghost,” replied Ryan, with laughter.

“Well hopefully not, anyway. I mean at this point, there’s really no telling what you can expect now-a-days. Case in point here,” Arquette laughed.

As they continued to conversate, they happened to glance straight ahead and saw Chris standing near a squad car providing an officer his statement about the incident.

“So how do you think Chris’ll recover from all this?” Ryan asked.

“Honestly, I think he oughta be fine. I mean, he’s alive, which I’m sure he’s very grateful for. So at this point, moving forward, he just needs to take things one day at a time, you know...and, of course, avoid the old habits which caused all this mess to happen from the start,” replied Arquette, with slight humor.

Out of nowhere, the other two paramedics appeared from around the left side of the house with the Priest. They each had one of his arms around their neck, helping him walk toward the ambulance. The paramedic on his left also had his bible in her left hand. As the Priest tried to walk, he showed signs of discomfort in his left leg.

“Alright! They got Father up and moving,” said Arquette, with minor excitement.

As soon as they reached the ambulance, Arquette and Ryan both stood up then stepped to their right so the Priest could get in.

“Father, I wanna thank you so much for all you’ve done tonight; I really do. You were absolutely incredible!” commended Arquette.

“And when I think about it, honestly, I really doubt we could’ve done this without you,” he added, expressing great appreciation.

“Thanks Detective, this means a lot to me; it really does,” the Priest replied, expressing gratitude.

“I’m just glad I was here to help. Well, with the Lord’s spiritual guidance, of course...definitely wouldn’t have been able to do it without Him, and that’s saying a lot,” he continued.

“I agree with Arquette, Father. I think you were phenomenal, too! I mean, man, I was really stunned with how you handled things tonight,” Ryan added.

“Thanks, Detective Harding! Again, this means a lot to me!” thanked the Priest.

As the paramedics were assisting him up into the ambulance, the Priest looked briefly over his left shoulder at Ryan and Arquette and smiled, then he climbed into the ambulance and laid down on the stretcher. Arquette and Ryan just watched as the paramedics began to apply their bandages on the Priest.

Alarmingly, sirens from resounded from beyond the barricade. As this tan unmarked sedan approached the caution tape, a few officers lifted the tape and allowed it to proceed to the scene. As it made its way to Chris’ house, Arquette and Ryan knew immediately who it was driving this sedan.

“Uhh, and here comes Chief!” they said, simultaneously, while looking at one another.

After maneuvering past a couple of squad cars, the sedan finally reached the ambulance then parked. The sirens came to a cease immediately after, then the driver’s door opened. Right then, the Chief stepped out dressed in his dark blue decorative uniform and his officer’s cap on. His left foot

was planted on the ground, while his right foot was still inside the car. Moreover, he had his left hand placed on top of the door, with his right hand on top of the steering wheel. Before stepping away from his car, he took a minute or two to assess the devastation of both, the house and the damaged patrol car.

“What the hell happened here?” he asked himself, quietly, while scanning the area.

After concluding his observation, he then exited his car and walked up to the ambulance to meet with Arquette and Ryan.

He approached them ready to hear their explanation about what happened.

“Alright Jackson, so what the hell happened here?” he inquired.

Concurrently, Arquette and Ryan looked at one another as if they were trying to agree on a story to tell. After providing each other with a polite smile, Arquette then looked back at the Chief and started to explain what happened.

“Ah, well Chief, basically it’s like this. Chris, who lives here, was attacked by some sort of supernatural force, believe it or not, which was what actually did all this here. Now, Ryan arrived on the scene first, in a rescue attempt, but quickly found this spirit or whatever to be too robust for him to manage alone. That’s when he contacted me as I was on my way here and told me about this thing he’s encountered. I then immediately changed course and went to go get Father, who I knew had experience with situations such as these. As soon as we arrived, Father started doing

his thing, reciting scriptures and all, ultimately repelling this thing back. Then before we all knew it, it was gone,” briefed Arquette.

The Chief looked to his left and took another minute to scan the area again.

“I see. So a supernatural force, huh?” he asked, in a soft tone.

He then looked back at Arquette.

“Yes sir!” Arquette replied.

“Alright then. Well tell me, what’s the status on that Karman Anderson person you were pursuing? Was she tied at all into any of this?” the Chief probed.

Just then, Arquette looked at Ryan again, briefly, then looked back at the Chief.

“Well sir, it actually turned out it wasn’t her after all. Though, we’re not entirely sure what this thing was. But I can assure you it wasn’t Karman Anderson causing these series of murders,” Arquette declared, while clearing his throat, causally.

“Huh. Is that right?! And so the prints found at all the scenes, and the search warrant I went through great lengths to get you so you could interrogate her at the psych ward where what, all based on misunderstandings?” the Chief inquired, with a peculiar look on his face.

Arquette did not reply.

“Alright. Well what about you, Ryan, what’s your take on all of this?” he continued, hoping to get a more accurate story from him.

Though, just before he provided his statement, he looked at Arquette, first, then looked back at the Chief and answered.

“Sir, I know this sounds really difficult to hear, but it happened just the way he described it. It was a ghost or something that went after Chris. Yeah, I got here first and tried to help him, but that spirit or whatever was way too strong. So, I called Arquette and he came with Father, who was the one who got rid of it,” Ryan restated.

“I tell ya, after facing that thing, I know damn well it wasn’t no Karman, or any other human for that matter,” he continued.

“Now, of course, you oughta know had this been her, I would’ve used my training to apprehend her. But, again, it wasn’t. And the training I would’ve needed for such a situation, would’ve been for taking down ghost or apparitions. But because we’re not trained for that, that’s where Father’s experience came in,” he concluded, trying to stay consistent with Arquette’s statement.

Arquette smiled gracefully at the Chief.

“Uh-hum,” said the Chief, followed by a sigh.

“Alright! Well after seeing how things are, I’d say both your stories seem pretty accurate. I mean I see the Priest there, the scene’s been completely destroyed, by a natural disaster it seems, and then there’s no suspects in custody,” stated the Chief, briefly scanning the scene again.

“So yeah, apparently, it must’ve been some sort of spiritual encounter like y’all said, right?” he speculated.

“Besides, having the both of you here at the same time, I just can’t see anyone getting away,” he continued.

“And so, after considering all these facts, I’m just gonna go ahead and accept both of your statements,” he concluded, expressing optimism about the statements they both provided.

“Well there you are, sir, and you’re absolutely right! There’s just no way the both of us would’ve let a suspect get away,” Arquette concurred.

“Yeah I know. Ok. So moving on, I’m just happy to see that you’re both doing ok. I mean I can’t imagine losing either one of you,” told the Chief, expressing compassion for the both of them.

“Thanks sir. That means a lot,” told Arquette, showing gratitude.

“Although, even with these sincere words of yours for our well-being, you’ll unfortunately have to imagine losing me...but not to death or bad health, of course,” he hinted, being mildly witty.

“Yeah Jackson, I already know. You’re retiring. Thanks,” the Chief mentioned, with a smirk on his face.

Arquette just smiled gracefully.

“Alright, well let me take a look around, see the mess y’all made,” he continued, expressing slight humor while looking over at Chris’ house to his right.

“Sounds good sir!” said Arquette.

The Chief then headed toward the house.

“Oh! And sir, I’ll be sure to have my report on your desk first thing tomorrow!” he added.

The Chief suddenly stopped and looked over to his left at Arquette. In agreeance with Arquette's statement regarding his report, the Chief nodded his head at him then resumed toward the house. Arquette and Ryan then looked at each other and started to laugh.

Chapter 28

Difficult to Say Goodbye

It was now Friday. The sun was shining bright, the sky was partly cloudy, and the wind was blowing a gentle, warm, north-western breeze. The traffic along the highway was flowing at a slow pace but then congested as it entered into downtown. Arquette was at home getting ready for his retirement ceremony. His wife, Linda, was downstairs in the kitchen preparing breakfast. Standing in front of his mirror, Arquette was pinning his medals onto the left side of his dark blue service coat. After he was done, he turned around, picked up his red tie from off the foot of the bed, then turned back around toward the mirror. Although, just before putting it on, he paused and stared at himself in the mirror, reminiscing about his time at the precinct. To his surprise, he was able to recall the many critical moments that he felt should have claimed his life; though, his most recent memory was the one which exceeded them all, for it was an unforeseen danger he lacked both, the training and experience on how to necessarily survive.

“Haah. Father God, I thank you for this day. Year after year I’ve been involved in many incidents that should’ve claimed my life, especially that one last night. I mean, I

thought for sure I wouldn't have made it; but You, God, actually saw me through once again," professed Arquette, expressing a sense of serenity and religious deliverance.

"Yeah, it's definitely been a taxing and perilous road, but I made it to this moment. And all I can say is, all praises belong to You, Father," he continued.

He wrapped his tie around his neck then began to fasten it. Suddenly, out of nowhere, Linda appeared at the threshold of the bedroom.

"Honey, breakfast is ready," she told, standing with only the right portion of her body visible at the threshold.

Arquette paused from tying his tie and looked over at her through the mirror.

"Ok love," Arquette replied.

"Real quick, I wanna thank you so much, and not just for breakfast, but for all your unbelievable support throughout the years while I was battling with my mental health issues. It wasn't easy, I'm sure," he continued, expressing appreciation for her commitment and boundless support.

Right then, Linda entered the bedroom. She was wearing her white blouse, long pink skirt, and a pair of medium black heels. She then approached Arquette from behind and embraced him firmly.

"No, I wouldn't leave one of the finest, generous, and most inspiring men in Annapolis, despite your mental health challenges. I stuck with you because I love you; and, because you've proven yourself to me year after year," Linda proclaimed, acknowledging the reasons why she remained at his side.

After expressing this to him, she unwrapped her arms from around his waist then turned him toward her.

“Now sir, we need to take care of one more thing before I can claim you all mines,” she continued, while helping him with his tie.

“Oh yeah, and what’s that?” Arquette enquired.

“Your retirement!” she answered.

After tying his tie, they both exited out the bedroom and went downstairs to eat breakfast. Once they were done, they put their dishes in the sink then went into the living room to get ready to leave the house.

“Baby, you got everything?” asked Arquette, opening the front door with his left hand.

“Yeah, I think I’m all set. Let me grab my purse,” Linda replied, grabbing her purse from off the couch.

After slipping on her stylish pink jacket, and then placing her purse strap over her left shoulder, she walked past Arquette and exited out the house. He then followed directly behind her while concurrently closing the door and locking it. When they reached the car, they both got in then left the house for the precinct. While driving, Arquette’s phone cellphone started to ring. He reached his right hand into his right pants pocket, withdrew it, then held it at the top of the steer wheel to read the caller ID. It read, “Chief.”

Without delay, he pressed the send button to answer then held the cellphone to his right ear.

“Hey sir! I know, I’m running a little behind, but I just left the house and should get there in about 45 minutes or so; depending on traffic,” informed Arquette.

“That’s fine, Jackson. Take your time. I’ll just inform everyone that you’re running a bit late, that’s all. I mean after all, this occasion is for you,” the Chief replied.

“Sounds good sir! Thanks! I’ll see you shortly!” said Arquette.

They then disconnected.

About an hour later, Arquette and Linda finally arrived at the precinct. After parking, they got out the car and started heading toward the entrance. Arquette calmly took Linda by her left hand and escorted her through the parking lot. As soon as they entered through the main doors, they were greeted by fellow officers near the front desk, wishing him a happy retirement. Both, Arquette and Linda expressed their appreciation for these warm wishes then turned to their left and headed for the stairs. Now upstairs, to their right was the conference room which had been transformed astonishingly into a ballroom to host Arquette’s retirement ceremony. After entering the room, they saw the platform to their right, rows of black chairs jointed closely in the center facing the platform, and a festive table to their left, near the wall. Moreover, there were a combination of red, white and blue ribbons pinned all along the walls around the entire room. Awaiting to the left of the stage were five musicians dressed in black and white formal attire, prepared to perform with their various instruments during the ceremony. And lastly, a

three-tier white cake decorated with blue frosting around the trim sat at the center of the festive table surrounded by a large fruit bowl, some miniature snacks, small plates, cups, and eating utensils.

Because the ceremony had yet to begin, there were many public officials and other guest just standing around and conversating amongst themselves. Though, the moment the Chief saw Arquette, he walked over and greeted him and Linda.

“Hey guys, good morning! Listen, I’m so glad to see ya’ll finally made it!” he welcomed.

“Thanks Chief! And I want you to you know that, Jackson and I, both, are very pleased with all the work you all put in to celebrate his retirement,” Linda mentioned, expressing gratitude.

“Of course, Mrs. Arquette. Your husband’s been an incredible asset to our precinct for many years, so it gives us great honor in preparing for this moment,” the Chief stated.

“Please ma’am, after you,” he continued, stepping to his left then extended his right arm out to allow Linda to pass first.

As she went to find a seat, both, the Chief and Arquette went over to the platform and walked up the steps on the right side. This prompted the band to start playing a tone which denoted that the ceremony had now begun. The Chief then approached the podium then put on his reading glasses Behind him sat Arquette and a few decorated city officials. Linda and

the other officials then took their seats. The additional officers and friends remained standing just behind them. The music suddenly stopped. Now ready to begin, the Chief leaned forward into the microphone and opened with his monologue.

“City officials, officers, family, and friends, we’re here today to honor, and to also say farewell to one of our finest members of our family, Detective Jackson Arquette. His service to this precinct for nearly two decades has been the epitome of great commitment and integrity as he has demonstrated amazing leadership and extraordinary sacrifice. His accomplishments are now the inspiration reflecting that of a role model for both, the precinct and for our new recruits, year after year. And so, with all that being said, I’m gonna be the first to admit that his presents will sorely be missed around the precinct,” he addressed.

“In addition, I’m also gonna be the first to tell you thank you for all your hard work and commitment to the force,” he continued, while looking over his left shoulder back at Arquette with a satiating smile on his face.

“Alright Detective, are there any words you’d like to share at this time?” he asked, extending his left arm out toward Arquette.

Arquette glanced at his wife sitting in the front row of the audience, first, then he stood to his feet and walked up to the podium. When he got near it, the Chief casually placed his left arm around his neck and welcomed him to the podium. He then took a few seconds to stare out into the audience with a benevolent smile on his face, then unwrapped his arm from

around Arquette's neck then stepped back, allowing him to have the podium.

"Uhh-um!" Arquette cleared his throat.

"Good morning ladies and gentlemen, senior staff officials, and fellow officers! First and foremost, I'd like to thank all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to attend this ceremony," he recognized, expressing thanks and appreciation.

"You know, I'm actually finding it a bit funny now because although I've been anticipating this very moment for quite some time, it now feels extremely painful for me to tell you all goodbye today," he proclaimed, trying to refrain from crying.

"Yet here we are. And so, I just want y'all to know that you all will truly be missed, even after dealing with all those challenging incidents while on the beat; yes, it's still been an absolute thrill working for this fine precinct. And to be perfectly honest, I still wouldn't trade one moment," he continued.

"Umm, before I leave today, I have to make sure that I give special acknowledgement to all those whom I've had a great privilege of working with. To start, I'd like to thank my amazing Chief, Chief Miller, who was absolutely outstanding as a mentor and leader to me as I developed and thrived into the detective I am today," he acclaimed, while looking back at him standing to his right.

"Next, I'd like to extend this respect and gratitude to my partner, Ryan Harding, who's been a valuable and reliable partner over the few years we've worked together. I truly believe you, Ryan, will become an even finer lead detective

than I,” he acknowledged, looking at him as he sat in the front row of the audience.

“Then there’s my other half; my gorgeous, amazing wife, Linda, who’s been in my corner, relentlessly, since day one of joining the force, providing inspiration, mental health support, and unlimited devotion and sacrifice. I love you and aren’t ashamed to admit I wouldn’t have made it this far without you,” he professed, looking at her again.

“Then last, but certainly not least, I wanna thank all the fellow officers who’ve assisted me through the many years when it really mattered most. Again, it was an honor serving beside each and every one of you. And so, I thank you and pray that God continues to keep you all safe on and off the beat, as well as your families. God bless!” he concluded, expressing tremendous gratitude and affection.

Now done with his speech, he looked back over his right shoulder at the Chief again, but this time it was to cue him that he was now finished. The Chief, after noticing the cue, picked up a wooden placard from off the table to his right and then moved up and stood to the right of Arquette. With the retirement award in his right hand, he presented it to Arquette. Arquette received it with his left hand and then shook the Chief’s hand with his right. At that moment, the audience rose passionately to their feet and applauded with immense excitement. Linda held her black portable camera up with both hands and took a few snap shots of them with the award.

After the ceremony was over, Arquette and Linda toured the room to say their final goodbyes to all who've attended. First, they said farewell to the Mayor and other decorated officials. Then they moved on to wish the rest of the officers and friends a friendly goodbye. After speaking with everyone in the room, they then packed up all their belongings and left the precinct for the car. After reaching the car, Arquette put his award underneath his left arm then reached his right hand into his right pants pocket to pull out his keys and unlock the door. He first opened the passenger door for Linda to get in. Once she was in, he handed her his award then closed her door. Linda then leaned to her left and reached for the door handle on the driver's side to open his door as he came around the rear of the car. He grabbed the door with his left hand and opened it wider, though just before getting in, he took one last look at the precinct to his right and soon began to reminisce about all the times he walked through that parking lot to reach the building. After about a minute of this, he took a deep sigh then got into the car and closed the door. Linda, seemingly full of delight, looked over to her left at him with a smile of happiness on her face, while also showing signs of admiration and pride. Arquette, in turn, looked over to his right at her and smiled gracefully.

"Baby, that speech...was absolutely remarkable. I mean the way you expressed your admiration for all those you've worked with was incredibly thoughtful. I enjoyed it, and I'm very proud of you!" told Linda, expressing a sense of honor and respect for Arquette.

“Thanks honey. That means a lot coming from you,” thanked Arquette.

“Yeah, I’m really gonna miss those guys. But you know what, I feel like they’ll always be a part of me,” he continued, looking just past her, over at the precinct.

He stared at the building for at least another minute before finally inserting his key into the ignition switch. Though he did not turn it right away. He first looked over at Linda and asked her what she would like for him to do for her.

“Well ma’am, now that I’m all yours, what would you like to have me do for you?” he asked, being humorous and charismatic.

“Humm. I don’t know. I guess right now I’d like to be taken to a far-off place where we could enjoy practically every single minute to ourselves, you know, like maybe at a beach or something. Now I think that would be the perfect spot for us to chill,” she relied, staring over at him with her head tilted against her head rest.

“Yes ma’am! Anything you want!” he concurred.

He then turned the ignition switch and started the car and then drove out of the parking lot. As they traveled through downtown, passing quite a few streets to reach the interstate, they eventually came to a red light right and had to stop. This light was next to a small coffee shop. While waiting for the light to change green, Arquette happened to glance to his left over at the coffee shop and saw a couple of people sitting outside. As he observed one each of them, to his surprise, he spotted a woman sitting at one of the tables

who resembled that of the patient Karman Anderson. She appeared to be of Caucasian descent, possibly in her early twenties, with long silky black hair that extend just past her shoulders. She was dressed in a purple sundress displaying yellow sunflowers and was wearing a pair of tan sandals. The table she was at was off to the right of the coffee shop; her chair was facing the on-coming traffic. Lounged back in her chair, she was drinking an iced cold coffee beverage and eating a pastry while reading a novel which the content centered on the belief that no bad deeds ever really to go unpunished. Arquette just stared over at her in a relentless effort, trying to confirm if she was Karman. Unexpectedly, she happened to pause from reading her book and looked to her left, over at the road. Within seconds, she soon realized that he was staring directly at her. And so, she decided to stare right back. For the next minute, they both just gazed at one another before something odd suddenly came about. Amiably, a compassionate smile slowly grew on her face. The red light had finally turned green.

“Honey, the light’s green,” Linda mentioned.

But Arquette did not respond. His attention, instead, was still fixated on the woman at the table.

“Honey!!” she exclaimed, now looking back at the vehicle behind them that blew its horn.

Right then, he snapped out of his trance and began to look both ways through the intersection to ensure that it was clear to move forward, then he drove through the light.

Unsure of what was bothering Arquette, Linda looked over at him and asked him what was wrong.

“Baby, what? What was it? Is everything alright?” she quired, expressing minor curiosity.

Arquette still did not reply, though. He now seemed as if he was deliberating about what it was that he believed he just saw. After nearly a minute of this, and still unable to conclude or confirm his presumption, he just looked over at Linda and gave a response.

“Honey, you ever had a moment when you thought you saw something but wasn’t quite sure if what you were looking at was what you thought it was?” he asked, while looking in the rearview mirror, periodically.

“Well, yeah. I’ve had a few of those before,” Linda replied.

“Why? Did you just see something, or someone back there?” she asked.

“Yeah, I think so, back at that coffee shop. I mean, I’m not 100%, but I think that was that psych patient from that hospital I had a run-in with recently; though I could be wrong,” told Arquette.

“I see. And were you still looking for this person?” Linda asked.

“You think you oughta call it in?” she continued, expressing slight concern.

Arquette took a deep breath, then sighed.

“I don’t know,” he replied, staring straight ahead at the traffic.

Silence suddenly overcame the moment as he thought about what he ought to do. As he pondered on a course of action to take, the reports of her being bullied suddenly

began to narrate in his head. While briefly meditating about them, he soon concluded that it was because of those acts done to her in the past, that has led to her devastating future of despair, today. And so, after acceding to this notion, he became empathic for her and then chose to play-act his dismissal for what he previously believed.

“You know what, I’m...I’m trippin’. I know it’s just not possible, seeing her at a coffee shop like everything’s ok. Nah, that had to’ve been someone else. I mean honestly, from that distance, I could even look like someone else,” he proclaimed, exhibiting denial for what he saw, while concurrently feeling a sense of gladness within himself to see Karman being able to move on with her life.

“You’re definitely right honey. Plus, considering all those cases you’ve worked on, there’s a strong chance that you’ll see someone who looks like someone else you either arrested before or been pursuing, every now and then anyway,” Linda counseled.

“But then again, who’s to say that it wasn’t who you thought it was. Could’ve been. But you’re retired now, honey; it’s time to start living like it,” she continued, implying that he puts his detective profession behind him.

“Yeah, you’re right my gorgeous wife. I’m all for that,” Arquette agreed, looking over at her with a smile on his face.

“Alright then! Next stop, a retired life!” he exclaimed.

Linda smiled and casually interlocked her left hand inside his right, then leaned over close to his right arm and rested her head against his shoulder. After passing through the last traffic light, they turned left and then went up the on-ramp

to reach the highway. When they got to the top, they then merged onto the highway and drove east.

The End

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