

Chapter

5

CRIMES AGAINST HUMANITY

November 2, 1971

Bedlam Falls, MI

Blood spilled by violence leaves a stain far different from blood which is shed in any other way. As Lionel stood on the tips of his toes at the kitchen sink, he was surprised by how much more difficult blood was to wash away than the dirt he was accustomed to. The dish rag had done little to clean the gore from beneath his fingernails. It had taken a fork from the drawer to scrape most of it out. As for the streaks and spatters that coated his forearms, neck and face - they seemed to be a lost cause. Lionel had considered showering, but that would have meant removing what was left of Mrs. Reed from the bathtub. In the end he did what he could with a wet towel and decided not to worry about the rest.

Not that the mess was limited to the kitchen; bloody tracks led from one end of the small Cape Cod to the other and smeared fingerprints were on everything from the

kitchen knives to the golf club he discovered in the hall closet. Even the hedge clippers he had picked up in the garage were bloodied – and broken. The blades had actually bent and snapped clear off from the wooden handles. The dull and rusty shears had worked just fine on the kids, but Mrs. Reed was a big woman with thick bones – and thick bones, he learned, required a hacksaw. Lionel had to make the long walk from the bathroom to the garage three times for new blades.

The white plastic bracelet hung loosely on his wrist throughout the entire ordeal. It, too, had been stained beyond any hope of coming clean. Most of the words, however, were still legible beneath the smears of blood.

Ellis Arkema #00981

SOUTH WING, LAKE VIEW ASYLUM

DOB: UNKNOWN Age: NA Sex: M

SSN: UNKNOWN Dos: NA Dr. W. Clovis

Lionel liked the feel of the cool plastic against his skin. He had found the bracelet while fishing with his father. It was the only thing he had hooked all day. He felt compelled to hide it away in his pocket before his father could notice. Ever since then he had gradually set aside most of his other interests – everything from comic books to baseball cards – and instead found himself spending his time alone in his room imagining stories about who Ellis Arkema was and how he may have lost that bracelet in the lake.

At times it almost felt as if he were listening to someone else tell these stories – a faceless and shadowy voice inside his head that was both scary and reassuring. Sometimes the stories made him cry and other times he laughed out loud. It all

seemed to make his parents more than a bit uncomfortable. He had thought, and the voice agreed, that maybe he should keep the bracelet a secret.

He turned from the sink and decided to make one more trip through the house before leaving. He followed the trail of blood and gore from the hardwood floor in the kitchen to the orange shag carpeting that led through the living room and down the hallway. A dead body is difficult thing for anyone to move, and at only twelve, it had taken quite an effort for Lionel to drag it all the way to the bathroom.

The door to the nursery the twins shared was wide open. He could see their small forms huddled close together on the floor as he paused in the hallway. The pools of blood that spread from under their lifeless bodies formed giant wings in the carpet. It was an oddly beautiful sight – the pale light coming in through the window falling gently across their outstretched wings. Their bodies, he reasoned, were mere cocoons from which he had helped them escape. He envied the flight of their spirits.

Slicing their tiny throats had proven to be much more difficult than he had anticipated, but the hedge-clippers had taken away their hands and feet quite easily. As he continued down the hall, Lionel tried unsuccessfully to remember where he had put them.

The bathroom looked like someone had flung red paint violently across the walls and floor. Spattered blood ran down and across the mirror hanging over the vanity and onto the toilet nearby. The broken hedge-clippers had been thrown into the corner near the trash. Dull hacksaw blades and an assortment of knives and other tools lay scattered coldly on the tile. The back of the toilet reminded him of the meat case at Dell's Grocery – filets and various other cuts of the late Mrs. Reed were neatly

stacked into three identical, gooey rows. Blood trailed from the oozing stacks down the side of the tank and onto the floor, forming clotted pools.

Lionel drank in the coppery smell of the blood and gore, a devious smile flashing across his innocent lips.

Stepping carefully toward the tub, he attempted to avoid the slick pools of blood. He had slipped and fallen once already, banging his elbow painfully against the toilet. It had sent a jolt throughout his entire arm that throbbed with every step he took.

Looking up, Lionel noted sadly that the shower curtain had been torn aside and hung clumsily by the three remaining rings that still encircled the pristine rod – the one part of the bathroom that remained untouched by the gore around it.

He stared into the red soup of bones and chunks as they floated on the surface of the nearly over-filled tub. Others pieces rested at the bottom and clung to the sides of the tub; he fought the urge to reach in and stir them around with his hand. Instead, he raised his eyes to look at the shower wall. A single lonely word, written in blood, glistened on the white tile:

REPENT

The sound of heavy footsteps approaching from down the hall roused him from admiring his handiwork. Lionel's knees wobbled and his thoughts became fuzzy as a wave of dizziness washed over him. He closed his eyes and rubbed at his temples in an attempt to ease the feeling. When he opened them and caught sight of the grotesque

display that surrounded him, a mixture of bile and recently eaten cookies rose in his throat. It burned as he swallowed it down.

“What the...Oh, Lord no!” A pained cry came from the next room.

His heart began to pound so heavily he thought for sure it would beat right through his chest. The room was spinning now as fear swept through him. He felt the earth shift beneath his feet and thought for sure he would faint. Just as he was ready to give in and let go the voice inside his head began to scream. “Kill him! Kill him now!”

His arm shot forward involuntarily and grabbed the broken hedge-clipper shear from where it lay on the floor. As he caught sight of the bracelet on his wrist his racing heart slowed. He took in a single deep breath and blew it out releasing it in a slow and soft hiss. A quiet calm settled upon him.

The sound of more footsteps, this time retreating quickly towards the living room, urged him forward. He stepped into the hallway and silently made his way towards the twin’s room. Anger rushed through him as he looked at their once perfectly posed bodies now lying disturbed on the floor. Their butterfly wings had been trampled by large booted feet.

He followed the fresh tracks from the room. He could hear movement ahead and emerged to see Mr. Reed standing at a small desk in the living room with one hand pressing the phone to his ear as the other frantically tried to turn the rotary dial. His blue work overalls were stretched across his large frame and his dark brown boots creaked as he shifted his weight nervously from foot to foot. Below the soles of his sneakers, red patterned designs etched themselves deeply into the carpet.

The dull shear bit into the palm of Lionel's tiny hand as his grip tightened around it.

"P-p-pl-ease...something has happened," he cried into the phone. They're dead...my babies...they're dead." And then the revelation that he hadn't seen his wife lying with the kids dawned on him. He dropped the phone and quickly turned, ready to run back into the bloodied mess he had just retreated from. Lionel struck quickly and brought the rusty shear up and across the much taller man's throat with one quick and surprisingly powerful stroke. The dull blade tore into his neck as he cried out for his wife. Her name rose in a gurgling spray of blood that spread across the room and onto the bookshelves and wall. It ran down the screen and across the top of the large console television that sat nearby. Reed fell to the floor at Lionel's feet where he lay twitching...and finally, dying.

Lionel dropped the blade and casually stepped over the body. He reached down and pulled the knob on the television and then turned the dial until the theme song from Gilligan's Island began to waft from the set. He walked to the sofa and plopped down on the edge of a freshly blood-spattered cushion. Beneath a thick coating of blood that now included both the dried and fresh varieties, an impish grin played across his delicate features. His eyes remained frozen on the gore-covered television screen as he absently worked at wiping the bracelet clean on his pants. Within minutes the sound of sirens outside drowned out Gilligan and the Skipper arguing about coconuts. Lionel heard neither, however. He was lost to the voice inside his head.



Deputy John Tanner was the first to arrive at the Reed residence. He knew Ken Reed only in passing, mostly from Sundays at church. They shared polite handshakes and brief, innocuous conversations about everything from the weather to the current sad state of the Lions. Ken was a big man and quiet - definitely not one to be rattled easily. Tanner was at the station when Ken's call came in and the voice he heard over the line carried with it neither the size nor strength he had always attributed to him. Its tone had left the deputy rattled and more than a bit curious about what could panic the mountain of a man so horribly.

From the outside, at least, he found the Reed home to be nothing less than ordinary. Piles of leaves dotted the large yard and a single rake leaned precariously against the mailbox. The garage door was open and no vehicles were in the driveway. He parked on the street and cut the sirens - leaving the lights on.

He reached for the radio and pressed it to his lips. "Maddie, you read me? It's John. Where the hell is Frank?" Maddie worked dispatch for the Bedlam County Sheriff's Department, and Frank - simple words couldn't describe Deputy Frank Griggs. He was...an experience. And John had been experiencing Frank's antics since they were in grade school together. He had long suspected that Frank and Maddie were more than merely co-workers, which was frowned upon by the Sheriff, but he hadn't the courage to inquire. If they were happy then he was happy for them.

"Loud and clear, John." Maddie's voice crackled through the speaker. "Frank's been," a pause, "delayed."

It was more in the way she said it than what she actually said that sounded so odd. Frank had once been "delayed" to a drunk and disorderly call in the parking lot

at The Hayloft. It was opening day of firearm season and the story went that he had spotted a fourteen point buck running along the side of Country Road 22 just outside of town. Frank took it down from the driver's seat with his service revolver, the steering wheel cradled between his knees. He pulled into The Hayloft an hour later with the monster tied with yellow caution tape across the hood of his cruiser. The once angry crowd erupted into cheers and high fives. They dispersed peacefully a short time later with most retreating back into the smoky confines of The Hayloft to toast the sharp shooting Deputy Frank Griggs.

John tossed the radio onto the seat next to him and flung open the driver's door of the cruiser. A polite rain was falling – a fine but cold mist accompanied by a sharp breeze that brought with it the warning of a heavier storm in the very near future. He rounded the back of the car and briefly gazed up at the western sky where dark clouds gathered on the horizon. His hand moved instinctually to unbuckle the sidearm holster on his hip as he leaned into the wind and started down the driveway.

He was halfway down the driveway when he caught site sight of the footprints. They were small and red and seemed to double back and forth across themselves both entering and exiting the partially open door that led from the garage into the house. Deputy Tanner paused and drew his weapon. He briefly debated returning to the car for his radio, but at the site of the blood in the garage, Ken Reed's words, "They're dead...my babies are dead," came pounding back into his head, leaving him shaking with fear as the reality of the situation swept over him. His sweaty grip tightened around the gun as he crept forward fearful of who had left those footprints, but

convinced he would soon find out.



Deputy Griggs pressed his face against the window and peered inside, feeling the cold rain running down his neck and back. “Shit,” he cursed as he stepped back and pulled the hood of his yellow slicker over his head. It was the fourth time he had bent down to look into the window, as if he somehow expected the keys would be magically removed from the ignition and safely in his hand instead. Finally, after resigning himself to the fact no magic key fairy was coming to his rescue, he crossed his arms across his barrel chest and leaned against the locked door of the cruiser, listening to the sound of John Fogerty’s raspy voice singing Credence Clearwater Revival’s *Have You Ever Seen The Rain* echo from the comfort of the dry interior of the car. *Yeah, I’ve seen the fucking rain*, he thought, letting the heat from the idling car warm his stiffening back.

Fortunately, he thought to himself, it had been only a half a mile walk to the nearest house. The old couple seemed quite understanding when he explained that he needed to use their phone. Police emergency, he had assured them. If only he had thought of a police emergency that involved asking to use their bathroom before he had decided to stop and take a leak on the side of the road; hindsight. If only -- he wouldn’t be standing out in the rain right now. He could only imagine what Johnny would say when he arrived.

He heard the siren long before the car came into view over the rise. The flashing reds and blues cut through the pouring rain as the cruiser sped towards him.

Puzzled, Frank walked to the front of his car as he watched the lights draw closer. His heart fell as he saw the Sheriff Buck Tanner's face tighten into a scowl behind the windshield wipers as the car rolled to a stop. "Fuck a duck," he muttered as he shook the rain from his slicker and braced for the verbal barrage that was sure to come.

"Get your ass in here, Griggs," the Sheriff yelled as he rolled the driver's side window down. The deputy hesitated momentarily, "Now, Frank – there's trouble!"

The confused deputy sprinted to the passenger door and threw himself into the car. If he didn't know better he would say the Sheriff was scared -- and that was something that just didn't happen. His scowl had been replaced by a very pale and blank expression.

"Sheriff, let me explain," Griggs began, lowering his hood and removing his cap. He ran a shaking hand through his slick hair and continued. "I've been in that car all day, sir and I knew I wouldn't be able to make it all the way back to the station..."

He was interrupted by the crackle of the radio. "Sheriff, can you read me? Power's out here in town and we're running off the generator." It was Maddie's voice, and Griggs thought she sounded as nervous as the Sheriff looked.

The sheriff's hand shot forward and grabbed the radio from its cradle on the dash. "Here, Maddie." A pause and then glancing at his drenched passenger, "We're right here."

Maddie exhaled into the radio with obvious relief and then continued. "John's on-scene, sir – he called in looking for Fra – I mean Deputy Griggs."

“Well, get him on the horn and tell him we’re on our way,” the Sheriff ordered, glancing again at Griggs, who seemed to have shrunk at least six inches as he sank down into the seat trying to disappear into the upholstery. “I’ve been trying to reach him, but with this storm I think there’s some kind of interference.”

Silence, and then, “Sheriff,” another pause and then with a quivering voice, Maddie said, “I’ve been trying for the past ten minutes and he’s not responding.”

Frank straightened in his seat. “What’s going on, sir? Where’s John?”

Sheriff Buck Tanner reached down and hung the radio back in its cradle as his foot pressed down even further on the accelerator. His eyes blazed from beneath the trademark Stetson hat atop his head but said nothing. They sped away – leaving Griggs’ still-running car along the side of the road. Griggs looked into his side view mirror and watched the cruiser disappear from sight.

He sat in silence waiting for an explanation and watched the speedometer out of the corner of his eye begin to bounce as it shot passed ninety and blew towards one 100 miles per hour. Trees and fields zipped by outside the rain streaked windows as they sped along the slick country roads back towards town.

They drove without speaking as if hypnotized by the scraping of the wipers across the windshield - keeping perfect time with the blaring siren overhead. Grip tightening on the steering wheel, Buck Tanner’s instincts turned from his responsibility as Sheriff to protect and serve the public, to those of a father trying to save his son.



John Tanner entered the garage and approached the open door. He carefully stepped over the bloody footprints, taking note of their relatively small size. He saw no obvious signs of a struggle, only what appeared to be an ordinary garage. An old riding mower was parked in the corner next to a giant snowmobile. The place was clean and orderly, except for the busy trail of bloody prints mapping paths to and from the house. They appeared to lead to the workbench.

Tools sprawled across its surface. The blood became visible as the deputy drew closer. He plucked a claw hammer from the bench and held it up in the light. Torn bits of flesh riddled with long dark hair clung to its claws and both the head and handle was slick with blood. As the realization of what he was looking at sunk in, the hammer slid from his hand landing and bouncing from the workbench with a thud. Revulsion overwhelmed him as he stumbled backward.

Trying to escape the sickening horror as he stumbled away, the young deputy failed to notice the small shadow creep up behind him. As John Tanner turned, however, he could feel the stab of something very sharp and cold bury itself into his chest. The pain dropped him to his knees, bringing him face-to-face with his attacker. The warm spread of blood flowed down his arm and over his hand. He attempted to raise his gun to ward off a second blow but instead felt it slide through his weakening grip.

As his world gave way to blackness, the deputy looked into the eyes of his small, blood soaked assailant. It was like looking into the bottom of an endless well of darkness. He felt small hands on his body -- pulling and tugging -- and then closed

his eyes. The wail of an approaching siren gave Deputy Tanner hope – even as piercing flashes of pain about his face and chest tried to steal it away.