

A tale of murder. A tale of total shock...  
The mystery begins when the murders end...

# CEREAL KILLER



# RANDALL BROOKS

Tisha stood in the kitchen, putting the finishing touches on dinner, as the television blared loudly in the dining room, turned up so that she could hear the evening news while she cooked.

"The latest news on the serial killer terrorizing the area is that he has struck again, his latest victim being found last night in a dumpster outside a bar in the Old City. No names are being released at this time."

"Mom, what is a cereal killer?" four year old Jamie Paul asked, his big bright blue eyes expressing a curiosity beyond words, his face taking on an expression of deep concern.

"What are you talking about, honey?" Tisha asked, not really sure what her son meant by his question, and not really sure why he asked it in the first place either, being that she didn't hear the news broadcast since she had her head stuck in the oven retrieving a cooking bag full of pork chops and wasn't able to hear it.

"Well, they just announced on the news that a cereal killer is on the loose," the little boy replied, sounding both anxious and impatient because he was having to explain something he figured his mommy should understand. "I just hope that he doesn't kill Capt'n Crunch or Tony the Tiger," he added, not realizing the mistake he was making in confusing the words serial and cereal.

Tisha literally had to bite down on her lower lip to keep from laughing, knowing it would probably hurt her son's feelings, something she would never do if she could help it. Even though she had two other children, Jaime Paul was her youngest and possibly her favorite. She had him at a special time in her life, and that had played a big factor in her love for the child, plus there was just that little special something about him that made her feel a little closer to him.

"Oh, whatever are you taking about now?" she asked, smiling, as she walked over and embraced her son in a warm hug, kissing the top of his blonde head.

"Oh, nothing, never mind," Jamie Paul said, smiling up at his mother and kissing her on the cheek.

"Well, don't you worry, young man, your cereal is always safe as long as I'm around, so you don't have anything to worry about," Tisha said, as she reached down and wiped a few strands of hair out of her face. The heat from the kitchen had caused tiny sweat beads to form on her forehead, which in turn had caused her hair to become practically soaking wet, something that almost drove her mad at times. She had been meaning to get a hair cut for the past few weeks, but so many things had kept popping up and preventing her from doing it. Plus, so many people had been telling her they liked her hair long, it made her look like the movie star Reese Witherspoon, something she was prone not to believe, no matter how many times she heard it; which was quite a lot to be honest.

"Thanks, Mommy, I love you so much," Jamie Paul said, his voice sounding so warm and affectionate, making Tisha's heart almost leap from her chest.

"Momma loves you, too, Jamie Paul! Now let me get back to finishing dinner, ok?" Tisha stood up and walked back into the kitchen, leaving her son in the adjoining dining room to continue playing while she continued cooking.

Loretta Bryant was in no mood to deal with having to go to East Town Mall, especially on a Friday evening, right near the beginning to Christmas season. Ok, sure, it was still only October, but she knew how some people in Knoxville were, and how they loved to start

their Christmas shopping as early as September sometimes, and it made her just want to scream. Sure, she was kind of guilty herself of wanting to take advantage of the fall clearance sale she had seen in the newspaper earlier today, but she didn't think she fell in with the type of sheeple -as she called them- that rushed to the mall every chance they got to try and get some kind of bargain. Plus, it wasn't worth fighting traffic for it most times. She had no idea why, but for some reason, no matter what time of day, or what the season may be, traffic would start clogging up in the Westbound right lane of 6-40 almost a whole mile before the Mall Rd exit. It infuriated the hell out of her! She just didn't understand why people felt the need to slow down so far away from their turn. It's like, hey Marge, better slow down, we're going to be turning right three miles from here, Loretta thought, and allowed a smile.

It's just that at 36 years of age, she had lost a lot of patience with a lot of people in the south over the years. Their mentality drove her mad at times, and she was not afraid to let it be known how she felt. She was a fierce, outspoken woman, and had no problem speaking her mind, no matter who it may offend. She had had her feelings hurt several times over the years, and no longer gave a shit if she hurt someone else's. Sure, she didn't set out to offend anyone, or hurt their feelings, but she was prone to do it from time to time, and had long since stopped worrying about it.

Some suspected Loretta of maybe being a lesbian since she was still single, with no children, and no plans of ever having any, and in no hurry to be in a relationship. Plus, it didn't help that she wore her hair cropped pretty short, almost like a man, something she had started doing when she turned 20 because it was so much easier to maintain. She hadn't really been trying to make any kind of fashion statement when doing it, and always got the biggest laugh when she heard people make comments alleging such nonsense. Loretta was a very open minded, and kind hearted individual, who had a great sense of humor, and it didn't bother her one bit that someone might think her sexuality was different than it was. No, she wasn't lesbian, but hell there was nothing wrong with anyone thinking she was, or at least she didn't think there was. Plus, it was yet another example of how backward a lot of people were in the area in which she lived.

She was a little startled at the sound of her cell phone ringing.

"Hello," Loretta said into the phone when she finally retrieved it from her purse and answered it.

"Hi, may I speak with Mr. Bryant?" asked someone with a very deep, husky voice, obviously sounding like a man.

"Hey, Tisha, girl how are you doing?" Loretta spoke between gales of laughter. She loved her friend Tisha, and loved her sense of humor. She felt it was very close to her own.

"Damn, you can always tell it's me!" Tisha said, herself laughing pretty hard at her own prank. "I'm doing pretty good, just got a free moment, Jamie Paul just fell asleep a little while ago, and I thought I'd see what you were up to this time of day."

"Not much, just going to the mall, seeing what kind of trouble I can get into there, if you know what I mean," Loretta said, still gently laughing, as she pulled into the mall parking lot and drove around looking for a vacant spot.

"Oh, before I forget, I was playing around on Facebook earlier, and I sent a suggestion for you and Soup Nazi to become friends. You gotta check out all the shit on his page about 9/11. God, he's a freak!" Tisha lit a cigarette as she spoke, and walked out onto her back

porch to smoke, something she had started doing right after having her first child, and had done ever since.

"I don't know if I want another nutcase for a friend at the moment, I am still missing Crazy Craigers, and it would be like rushing out and replacing a puppy that just died," Loretta said, sounding jovial and full of vibrant enthusiasm. "Oh Soup Nazi accepted my invite. He seems like a nice enough guy, thanks! Plus he's kind of cute, in a Norman Bates psychotic kind of way. Soup Nazi is not a bad looking guy.....and he appears to be a bit lonely, also like Norman Bates. Honey I thought I saw his Mother tied up peering out of a motel window on his page earlier." She couldn't help but break into huge gales of laughter again, as she maneuvered her car into a parking slot right near the entrance to JC Penny's, the shop she most wanted to go to.

"He's a cock-juggling thunder cunt!" Tisha obviously didn't care too much for Don Emert, aka: The Soup Nazi (named that because he looked like a cross between a doctor seen in old photos from Nazi death camps, and a character from the sitcom "Seinfeld"), and didn't care who knew it. He was someone she knew from high school, and had always gotten along with fine until just a couple of years ago when he suddenly started trying to cause some problems in her marriage. And ever since then her husband Ronald couldn't stand Don either. But, she thought he might be right for Loretta to maybe fool around with, get some kicks, and then kick his sorry ass to the curb. It was like Loretta read her mind.

"Girl, I'm thinking I may get to know him a little bit, swap some comments and shit on Facebook, maybe eventually go out with him and treat him like my sex slave for a day or two, and then drop his sorry ass off and never see him again," Loretta said, not caring who heard her as she made her way across the parking lot and into the entrance of JC Penny's, and thus continued to make her way to the women's department.

"Oh. My. God! You kill me, girl! We think too much alike sometimes, it's almost scary," Tisha said, then burst into laughter, taking a few more puffs of her cigarette then tossing it over the balcony.

"Damn, I never can remember where they hide the damn bathrooms in this place, and I've got to pee like a racehorse!" Loretta declared, her voice booming into the phone, and also loud enough to be heard in the store, but she obviously not caring.

"I know! I've been to that Penny's so many times I know it like the back of my hand, and could walk around it blindfolded, but I have had trouble trying to find the bathroom too every time I've ever been there. It's like they move it around the store or something," Tisha said, and started laughing, but suddenly stopped when she heard the voice of some man giving Loretta directions to the restroom.

"I couldn't help but overhear you, ma'am. If you would like, I would more than gladly give you directions," a mall security guard said, walking over closer to Loretta, and startling her a little.

"Yes, you sure can, I would like that very much, thank you," Loretta said, temporarily forgetting she was on the phone with Tisha.

"Just follow me, and I'll show you where it is," the young security guard said, his voice sounding very nice to Loretta's ears. Plus, he wasn't that bad looking either, she thought to herself and smiled. He had already turned around and didn't see the smile, and Loretta followed close behind him.

"Damn, girl, you done landed you a man," Tisha jokingly said, but being unheard, seeing

that Loretta had all but forgotten she had been engaged in conversation before the young security guard had offered to show her where the restrooms were located. “Just be careful, hope he’s not a serial killer or anything,” Tisha added, not seeing the irony yet in what she said.

Loretta followed the security guard up a set of escalators to the second floor, where they then weaved their way across the store like they were inside a giant maze. She sure as hell was glad that the man had appeared and volunteered to show her how to find the bathroom, because obviously she would have never found it on her own.

“I have had to show lots of women in the store where the restroom is,” the young man said. “Matter of fact, on days off, when I shop here with my wife, I have to show her too.” He offered Loretta a very friendly smile that made her feel safe in his presence; plus it turned her on a little.

“Well, thank you very much, I sure do appreciate it!” she declared, letting her voice go as soft and feminine as it could go, hoping he would pick up that she was trying her best to flirt with him in her discreet way, as they started walking toward the ladies room.

“Oh, don’t mention it,” he said, falling in step behind her, and her not thinking anything about it at all other than him maybe picking up on her signals and wanting to have a little rendezvous.

“Damn, girl, I think he is really into you,” Tisha said, not realizing that Loretta couldn’t hear her, but being able to hear every single word Loretta and the security guard said. As Loretta pushed the restroom door open, the young man rushed swiftly up behind her and grabbed her roughly by the throat and forced her into the bathroom. He then pushed her onto the tiled floor as the door shut behind him, and placed both hands around her throat and began to squeeze.

Loretta, of course, tried to fight with all her strength, but it did her no good, seeing that he man had unusually large hands (something she had noticed, but had took it to mean he was maybe large in other areas as well, or at least hoping so at the time) that covered her entire throat, and she was dead within a few minutes.

“Girl, hang up your phone so I can call 911!” Tisha screamed at the top of her lungs into the phone, losing all patience with her friend Loretta, as she heard the struggle from her end of the phone. What happened next made her scream even louder, but for a different reason: fear.

A man’s voice spoke softly and calmly, and couldn’t be any clearer.

“No need to call 911 for her, but you may need to call them for yourself.”

Tisha dropped the phone.

Even though his mother had put him to bed around 9:00, it was now 11:00 and Jamie Paul was still wide awake. He just wasn’t sleepy or tired, and he had tried to explain that, but his mom had not seemed to understand him. She had simply told him, “You’re going to bed, and that’s that!”

He had even tried praying, thinking that praying would help him get to sleep quicker. It had helped before, or so he seemed to believe. He had even written his prayer down on a piece of paper so that he would never forget it. He had scribbled the words in crayon, with his older sister Eva’s help. She was sixteen and in high school, and usually didn’t have too much time for Jamie Paul, but there were times she made special exceptions because she

loved her little brother immensely.

Jamie Paul reached over to his bedside nightstand and grabbed the prayer, and with the help of his ever-trusted night light began to read.

"Now I lay me down to sleep. I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take. And if the Cereal Killer kills again, Tony and Captain will take his life from him. Because Tony and Captain are my heroes. And Mommy says we all need heroes. Amen."

He felt a little better now, but still not anymore sleepier than he was before. He laid the poem down and rolled over to try to go to sleep anyway. He was suddenly startled when he heard a scream from the next room - his parents' bedroom!

He quickly jumped out of bed and ran as fast as he could out of his bedroom and toward his mommy and daddy's bedroom. There was another scream, followed by a loud moan. He waited, his breathing slowing because he was growing a little more scared. He almost screamed out as well when he heard yet another scream coming from inside the bedroom. He threw the door wide open and went busting in, and saw his mom lying on the bed, screaming her head off. And there was a man on top of her, hopping up and down.

"Mommy! Mommy! What's wrong?" Jamie Paul cried out.

Tisha screamed again, this time louder than before.

"Get out of here!" the man bellowed out, Jamie Paul not recognizing his voice.

Jamie Paul ran toward the bed and started hitting the man in the back with his fists as hard as he could. "Get off my mommy!!" he yelled out as he continued to beat on the man over and over.

The man rolled over to face Jamie Paul, and he could now see it was his daddy.

"Daddy, what are you doing to Mommy?" he asked, his curiosity so honest and pure.

"We're trying to make you a little brother or sister, so now go back to bed and we'll tell you in the morning if it worked or not," Ronald Williams said, looking at his son in true bewilderment, keeping his impatience in check.

"Ok. Are you sure you're alright, Mommy?" Jamie Paul asked, looking over at him mom, and still glaring at his dad, questionably.

"Yes, hon, I'm fine. Now go back to bed," Tisha said, her voice sounding as affectionate as she could muster at the moment, given the circumstances.

"Ok then. Goodnight," Jamie Paul said, then quietly turned around and went back to his bedroom and went to bed, and fell fast asleep.

Ted Morris wasn't a typical serial killer, by no means. Matter of fact, that was the last thing he had set out to be in life. But by the young age of only 22, he had succeeded at being one of the most talked about, the most feared and dreaded, one of the most vile human beings on the planet.

It had all started quite accidentally while he was still only a freshman in college, and he had been working part time on a political campaign, a local Nashville man running for Mayor, and one of the campaign managers had asked Ted one night while getting drunk in a small bar not far from the college campus Ted attended how he felt about taking the potential new Mayor's opponent out of the race.

At first Ted wasn't too sure what the man had meant, and had figured he maybe meant some kind of scandal, like getting the man caught in some risqué photos or something, and

had quickly agreed to help in any way he could. It wasn't until two nights later that he found out what had truly been meant, and he stuck to his agreement all the same.

Ted had been asked to track down the other candidate running for the Mayor's office and sneak up on him and put a bullet in his brain. That simple. He was told when to do it, and where the man would be, and even given a gun to do it with.

What Ted hadn't counted on was there being a young woman with the candidate, coming out of the restaurant right as Ted shot the man point blank between the eyes, then tossing the gun into the gutter as he had been told to do. He froze in place when he heard the scream of a woman he had no idea was even there, now standing before him with her hands over her face, screaming at the top of her lungs, the one and only witness to what Ted had done.

He almost felt panic setting in, but then something from deep inside him came out, and a sense of calm he had never known before came forward, and he simply stepped up to the woman and grabbed her by the throat and started squeezing, his large hands covering her entire neck region, closing as tight as he could, making the veins in the woman's face and neck stand out, and her eyes bulge out like a bug's eyes.

Even though the woman had thrashed around and tried to fight Ted off, it had done no good, and she was dead within a matter of minutes; and Ted had stood looking down at her feeling a sense of excitement and exhilaration he had never felt before. He stared at the woman's dead body for a full five to ten minutes before coming out of a sort of trance he had fallen into without realizing it, and then ran off into the alley adjoining the restaurant the man and woman had came out of.

When he heard the news report the next day alleging it was a potential serial killer that had struck again, striking fear into the hearts and minds of Nashville residents everywhere, well, Ted decided that was in his favor, and that it would be best if he continued killing a few more women in the same fashion so the serial killer angle would grow, and suspicion of any conspiracy attempt on the candidate he had been hired to kill would soon hopefully die off.

Ted had struck again just two nights later, killing some woman at random he had spotted coming out of a department store not too far away from the restaurant he had first struck in front of, hoping police and the media would tie it together as being a pattern of some kind, and that it meant that sure enough there was indeed a serial killer on the loose.

It had worked! Every news channel in the whole Tri-State area was bombarded with nothing but around-the-clock coverage of a potential serial killer, TV stations blaring almost non-stop about how young women everywhere in the whole state of Tennessee weren't safe to leave their own homes without some kind of protection.

And, now here it was two years later, and Ted was still on his mission of making sure his crime of killing a potential political candidate stayed covered up. He was full of a sick glee as he walked out of the restroom inside JC Penny's, making sure he wasn't seen as he exited, mainly focused on the cell phone he now held in his hand.

He had to find out who the woman he had just killed had been talking to on the phone when he murdered her, and he had ways of finding out. All it took was for him to get on his computer and enter the phone number that was showing on the caller ID, and he had invested in enough high tech online stuff, that he would then be fed all the info he would need.

As he walked to the parking lot, Ted spotted a young woman with auburn hair, by herself, just getting out of her car, and he approached her cautiously.

"Ma'am, I'm sorry to trouble you, but could you please help me?" Ted spoke softly, looking around the parking lot as if he was in a frantic state. "I seem to have gotten myself lost somehow and forgot where I parked. And this is my first day on the job, and I sure don't want to be fired over something so trivial," he added, letting himself ramble the way some poor lost soul probably would in a situation like he was pretending to be in. "What would you need me to do?" The woman asked, hesitantly, yet flashing a real warm friendly smile.

This one will be easy, Ted thought, and almost laughed, but kept himself under control. And, she was. She was dead within fifteen minutes.

"Within a period of two years the serial killer has claimed the lives of more than forty women in the Knoxville area. And there are clues that he may have struck in surrounding areas over the years as well. Unfortunately, there are still no promising leads so far."

Tisha walked over and turned the television off. Her nerves were completely frayed ever since overhearing what was more than likely the murder of her good friend Loretta Bryant, and hearing about it on the news just made it worse.

Was I really the ear witness to a murder? she wondered over and over for the past two days, her mind still not fully comprehending what she may have heard, and hoping that she was gravely mistaken. But seeing that she hadn't heard from Loretta ever since then, and had no luck when trying to call her, Tisha was growing ever more prone to leaning more toward believing she did in fact overhear what she now was pretty sure the murder of her best friend.

She had considered calling the police several times since the other day, but every time she did, she would convince herself that she really maybe didn't hear what she thought she did, and Loretta had simply ran off with the young man to have a secret rendezvous, and just hadn't had time to call Tisha back, and had turned her phone off and couldn't hear calls coming in.

She was so lost in thought that she almost didn't hear her cell phone ringing in the living room, where she had last placed it when coming home earlier this morning. She almost tripped over her own feet as she took off running through the house, hoping beyond hope that it was Loretta calling her to let her know she was alright.

"Hello," Tisha said, hesitantly, yet anxious and almost out of breath at the same time.

"Hello, ma'am, I am Officer Frank Baum, and I am trying to reach a Mrs. Tisha Williams," a man's voice said from the other end of the line, causing Tisha to feel a whole new sense of panic, because she just knew this call wasn't good news.

"Hi, yes, that is me, how can I help you?"

"Well, we have someone here who says she was attacked yesterday, and all she remembers is that she was talking to you, and that you are the only person she remembers at the moment, giving that she has a bad case of amnesia," Officer Baum said, speaking with a hint of authority, with much patience in his voice. "Her name is Loretta Bryant."

"Oh, yes, I know her!" Tisha declared, feeling every nerve in her body relax at once, feeling so relieved she almost reached over and lit a cigarette inside the house, something she didn't do after having children. "I've been worried sick about her for the past two

days!”

“Well, she is alright, just a little bruised up, and like I said, she is suffering from a slight case of amnesia,” Officer Baum said, speaking slowly, his words carefully chosen, and his annunciation perfect. “She’s been in and out of consciousness ever since she was admitted into the hospital day before yesterday, and only woke up fully about three hours ago. The first thing she did was start calling out for you,” Frank added.

“What hospital is she in? And is she allowed visitors?” Tisha asked, her voice hinting at tearing up, her being an emotional wreck the past two days, and being extremely vulnerable and able to be manipulated at the current moment. Plus, she hadn’t had much sleep, and she always got more emotional whenever she went without sleep for long moments of time.

“Well, that’s why I’m calling you, Mrs. Williams,” Office Baum said, his voice still calm and soothing, and sounding as patient as Job himself. “We were hoping you would be able to come visit her maybe sometime today? Plus, Miss Bryant said she also remembers she was on the phone with you when she was attacked, I was wondering if you may have heard what the attacker sounded like, and could maybe make some kind of voice identification.”

“Well, honestly, I’m not too sure what I heard the other day when I last spoke with Loretta. Matter of fact, I’ve been questioning myself about it ever since,” Tisha said, edging her way over to the sliding glass door that led out to the back balcony, sliding it open, and stepping outside to have a cigarette. “But, I would be more than glad to come to the hospital and visit Loretta, and I’ll try to be as helpful to you as I can.”

“Well, that would be great, Mrs. Williams,” Frank Baum said. “When would you like to come in and visit?”

“I was thinking of maybe later today, maybe in a couple of hours,” Tisha said, tossing her cigarette over the ledge of the porch, then stepping back inside and looking around for an ink pen to write down any information she may need to get while on the phone. “By the way, which hospital is she in?” She was sure it was in Knoxville, being that was where the attack took place, and Loretta was more than likely rushed to the nearest hospital.

“Do you know where Mercy Hospital is located? Just off Broadway.”

“Yes, I know exactly where that is,” Tisha said, already starting to write Mercy and Broadway on a piece of paper she saw laying on the dining table, where Jamie Paul had been sitting and drawing earlier. “What room number?”

“Just come to the lobby, and I’ll meet you there,” Frank said, then hung up.

Tisha clicked her phone off, and when she turned around, Jamie Paul was back in the dining room, sitting at the table he had occupied earlier, looking around for the piece of paper he had been using to draw on.

“Mom, are we going somewhere today?”

“Yeah, hon, it looks like we are,” Tisha said, feeling a wave of exhaustion come upon her suddenly. If only I could take a nap, she mused, and smiled.

“What time are we going?” Jamie Paul asked, knowing full well that he couldn’t tell time, but was just asking for the sake of making small talk with his mommy.

“Just in a minute, first I need to call your dad and let him know where we’re going, and to ask him to maybe meet us there,” Tisha said, feeling herself getting more tired, allowing a yawn, not bothering to cover her mouth when she did. “Why don’t you run along and start

getting ready while I call your dad, and we'll be ready to leave."

"Ok, Mom," was all Jamie Paul said, as he got up and walked toward his bedroom.

It only took Tisha about five minutes to call her husband at work, get him on the phone, and explain what had happened to Loretta, where Loretta now was, and let him know that she was going to take Jamie Paul with her and go visit Loretta at the hospital.

"Well, I will be more than happy to meet you there," Ronald said, glad that his wife had called like he had asked her to do if she heard any news about her friend, Loretta.

"That would be great!" Tisha exclaimed, hung up the phone, then went and got ready to leave, unconsciously smiling, thinking about what a great man she had married. Sure, he may be a little too jealous from time to time, but Ronald Williams has got the warmest and kindest heart of any man I ever knew, and surely was the best candidate of any I dated to be chosen to be the one for me to marry, she thought as she got dressed, rounded up Jamie Paul, and headed out the door.

He watched them from inside his car, taking mental photographs of so many women that walked past, never knowing he was there watching them, not a clue what he had in mind to do to them. He was parked in the parking lot at Mercy hospital, waiting patiently as more than over two hundred women walked past, waiting for one in particular; and before he knew it, he saw her pull into the parking lot, get out of her car and proceed to walk toward the hospital entrance.

He got out of his car, easing the door open so it wouldn't make a sound, and slowly walked up to the woman, falling in step behind her, and tapped her on the shoulder.

"Excuse me, ma'am, but are you Mrs. Williams?"

Tisha turned around slowly, barely recognizing the man's voice that spoke to her, at first mistaking it for someone else.

"I'm detective Frank Baum, I'm the person you spoke to on the phone," the man said, speaking with a hint of familiarity, as if he was speaking to an old friend. "If you'll just follow me, I'll take you to your friend Loretta Bryant's room," he added, offering Tisha a smile, only one corner of his mouth turning up, revealing crooked teeth.

"Oh, hi, nice to make your acquaintance, and I really appreciate you offering to meet with me here," Tisha said, her voice sounding timid and frail. "I'm still feeling a bit frazzled over the whole ordeal, and would have more than likely gotten myself lost trying to find her room on my own."

"No problem, don't mention it, my pleasure," Detective Baum said, speaking very confidently, leading the way into the hospital, heading straight for the bank of elevators along a far wall, when he suddenly realized that Tisha wasn't behind him. He turned around and saw that she was talking to a little boy. The boy appeared to be no older than around 4 years old, and Baum could make out that Tisha was having to stop so she could tie one of the boy's shoes.

"This is my son, Jamie Paul," Tisha said, not looking up, but sensing that the man was looking in her direction and wondering what was going on. She quickly tied the shoe, stood back up and proceeded to walk across the marble floor, with Jamie Paul walking proudly behind her.

Baum reached out and pushed the elevator button, and a cart opened up immediately. How convenient, he thought, and almost laughed, but bit his lower lip to make himself

refrain from it, as he stepped inside the elevator and pushed the button for the top floor. Tisha stepped into the elevator, and when she turned around she saw that Jamie Paul wasn't behind her. He was still standing a few feet away, close to the information desk, talking to some man she thought looked familiar. He was standing with his back to her, so she wasn't sure, and figured it was some stranger her son had engaged in conversation, seeing that he never met a stranger, and was apt to talk to pretty much anybody, whether he knew them or not.

"Jamie Paul!" she called out. "Come here!"

"Hey, Tisha! Hold the door!" Ronald called out just as the elevator doors shut closed, standing in the lobby with his son.

Inside the elevator, the man had placed his hand over Tisha's mouth and told her not to say one word or she would die and never see her little boy again. She happily, but begrudgingly obliged.

They rode silently for the remainder of the trip to the top floor, Tisha hoping beyond all hope that someone on one of the floors would be waiting for an elevator and push the button, making it stop on one of the floors; but that didn't happen, and in no time the elevator was opening on the floor closest to the roof of the hospital, and the man started dragging her out of the car, her heels digging into the floor in protest.

The man had placed one of his hands over her face, covering it from her hairline to her chin, making it practically impossible to speak, and barely able to breathe, as he pulled her along behind him, dragging her out a side door and onto the roof of the hospital. In a matter of minutes, he had her on the edge of the roof, choking her and whispering in her ear.

"You slut! You whore! All of you! Every goddamn last one of you!" he ranted and raved, going on for almost five minutes nonstop. He then tore her dress open and pulled down her panties, and started rubbing her roughly inside her vagina. Meanwhile, Tisha couldn't help but moan and groan, flinching at the mere thought of his touch, still unable to scream.

"You like that, don't you, whore, you like it when Ted here touches you like that don't you," Ted Morris said, no longer hiding behind the detective Frank Baum ruse he had used to get Tisha to come to the hospital. He had looked her information up on the Internet and had found all he needed to find, including a photo and phone number within a matter of minutes. He had even screen saved a photo of her on his phone so that he would know what she looked like when she pulled into the parking lot.

Meanwhile, Tisha tried her best to fight, to no avail, wriggling her body from side to side, but held firmly in place with Ted's huge hands. She thought she saw her husband, Ronald, out of the corner of her eye, and felt herself relax and begin to feel safe, knowing that he would save her. She leaned over and softly placed a hand in the guy's crotch, and gently rubbed it around from side to side, hoping to distract him while Ronald snuck up behind him.

"Yes, Ted, yes! I love it when you do that to me, do you like it when I do this to you?"

Tisha was speaking softly, meanwhile moaning, and her entire body squirming all over the railing, trying her best to fake her way through this moment without giving up and throwing up. She closed her eyes to help better get herself prepared.

"What did you say, whore?" A man's voice belted out. Ted was completely surprised and caught off guard, then an arm grabbed him from behind and without hesitation, threw him

off the roof. He died on impact.

"Oh my god, he just threw that man off the roof!" some woman on the ground shouted out, pointing directly at Ronald Williams, standing on the roof with his wife in his embrace.

"Tisha, what the hell are you doing? Hell, I thought you were in trouble, being attacked, but I heard all of it. You cheap slut! I knew you've been cheating on me!" Ronald slapped his wife hard across the face.

"No, Ronald, let me explain, it's not what you think, not at all," Tisha said, exhausted, tears shooting out of her eyes, make-up smeared all over her face.

"I don't want to hear it!" was all Ronald said as he proceeded to choke his wife to death, his hands around her throat, strangling her, not realizing what he was doing until it was too late. She was dead within minutes, with Ronald still throttling her with all his strength even after she had died.

When Ronald realized what he had done, he slowly released his hold on his wife, her body falling down on the roof, and he started sobbing harshly. He turned around to find his son Jamie Paul and a police officer standing directly behind him.

"Well, sir, I believe you understand your rights, or do you need me to read them to you?"

"The serial killer has finally been caught and apprehended yesterday afternoon atop the roof of Mercy Hospital, after killing his final victim, his own wife, Tisha Williams. He has been identified as Ronald Williams. An eyewitness spoke to police yesterday and said she saw the whole thing from the parking lot, and that she could see the victim, Mrs. Williams, struggling with the assailant when a young security guard came out on the roof, and got into a struggle with Mr. Williams, but Mr. Williams had thrown the young man from the roof, then proceeded to murder his wife."

Jamie Paul sat at the dining table, watching television, coloring in one of his coloring books, as his grandmother washed dishes in the adjoining kitchen.

"Granny?" he asked, then paused as his grandmother turned to face him.

"What, Jamie Paul?"

"What's a serial killer?"

"Your daddy, that's what!" Amanda King almost spat the words out, venom in her voice thinking about what that scum did to her one and only child.

"What do you mean?" Jamie Paul asked, his eyes fully focused on his grandmother, completely enthralled in the conversation he had engaged her in.

"Well, your daddy killed innocent women, even your mommy." Amanda paused for a brief second, wondering if what she was saying might be a little inappropriate for a four year old to hear, then realized it was something he was gonna hear someday anyhow, so why not now from her. "You even testified in court that you saw your daddy making your mommy scream."

"But, they were trying to make me a little brother or sister, he wasn't really hurting her."

Jamie Paul stopped for a second, glancing at the TV screen, enjoying a SpongeBob Squarepants cartoon that was playing. "But, Granny, is my cereal in danger?"

"What's that, Jamie Paul?" Amanda had no idea what the boy was talking about now, but didn't mind humoring him all the same.

“I just thought that my Capt’n Crunch or Tony the Tiger might be in danger. Nevermind,” Jamie Paul said, then smiled warmly as he turned his gaze back to the television. He knew his daddy wasn’t the real cereal killer, and he knew the real cereal killer was dead, and his daddy was really a hero. He smiled to himself as he sat and dreamed about the kind of cereal killer he would be when he grew up.

THE END

