

The Detective Files

Emma Stevens  
and the Lord of  
Crime

Jeff Fuller

## **Dedication**

This story is dedicated to all the brave men and women in uniform who help to make this world a better and safer place for all citizens to live in. Without them given to us by our Lord and Savior, the world will truly be a chaotic place. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called Children of God" (Matt 5:9)

## Prologue

It was a snowy winter night in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The city was experiencing major winter storms. I was getting my two children ready for bed, hoping that by the time the two woke up in the morning, the storm would have subsided. Although I enjoyed living in the city, I was no fan of snowstorms.

“Mommy, that sure is a lot of snow out there,” Zachary, my youngest child, said.

“Yes, Zach. It is snowing and will keep snowing until it is time to stop,” I said as I looked outside his bedroom window and saw the streets were covered in snow.

“I wish I could go out there and build myself a snowman.”

“I know you would.”

Zachary had just recently turned twelve years old. I laughed to myself as I began to think of how much like his father, Rick, Zach was. If you saw him, you would see Zach looked exactly as Rick had: extremely tall, with light blond hair, and light-emerald-colored eyes. Rick also had a small mustache, which he kept neatly trimmed.

I cried every time I looked at Zach because he reminded me so much of his father. Zach not only looked like him but also had a lot of the same characteristics. Both were outdoor enthusiasts, and both loved to play practical jokes, especially on me but occasionally on our other child, Sophie, who was three years older than her brother.

“Mom, it’s too early. I really don’t want to go to bed,” Sophie shouted as I turned and saw her standing at Zach’s bedroom door. “I’m still trying to talk to my boyfriend.”

“Sophie, you will do as I say,” I said with slight anger in my voice.

Sophie had recently become much more argumentative with me no matter what I told her. She was extremely independent, like I was. That was not necessarily a good thing.

Rick had always told me that despite Sophie and Zachary having the same eye color, Sophie looked more like me, with her bushy dark-red hair and short stature. I was never tall growing up, and judging Sophie’s size, I didn’t think she was going to be tall either. She had a pale complexion like me and was oftentimes told she looked nearly as pale as a ghost. No matter how much she stayed outside, which she did more often than staying indoors, she would never get any darker. She was much more reserved than Zachary, as she hardly spoke to anyone unless they spoke to her first.

“But—” Sophie started to say.

“No buts, Sophie. Just get ready for bed. We have a long day ahead of us,” I said sternly.

“Mom,” Zachary said, getting my attention away from Sophie for the moment.

“What is it, son?”

“Can you tell us a story?”

“A story?”

“Yeah. Like one of your crime stories you always tell us,” Zachary replied.

“Mom, I want to hear one of your stories too. They always excite me,” Sophie added. “I’m sure they do, Sophie,” I said.

“But not tonight. I have had a long day and am exhausted.”

“Come on. Please?” Zachary pleaded.

“Come on, Mom. Dad wouldn’t hesitate to tell us one of the stories,” Sophie bluntly said.

“Please?” Zach asked again.

“Oh, very well.” I sighed with resignation. “Which one will it be?”

“The one we haven’t heard yet,” Zachary replied.

“The lord-of-crime story. The one where you and Dad first met,” Sophie replied.

“Yeah,” Zachary said. “It’s the only one you haven’t told us.”

“That’s not true. There are a few I haven’t told you. Don’t you want to hear about them as well?” I asked.

It had been years, but I was still not feeling comfortable talking about the Alphabet Terrorist case. I especially did not want to talk about that case with my children.

“No. We want to hear about the Lord of Crime. What made him the Lord of Crime, and how did you catch him if he was that dangerous?” Zachary replied.

“We also want to know how you and Dad met and how you knew he was the one. How you knew he was for you and no one else,” Sophie said. “Besides, you told us when we got older you would tell us. I am fifteen, and Zach is twelve, almost thirteen.”

“And I will when you get even older,” I said.

“But, Mom, we *are* older,” Sophie argued. “It has been how many years since the case ended?”

“It has been sixteen years since the case ended,” I said.

“Then talk about it,” Sophie said with a hint of agitation.

“No. I don’t want to,” I shot back. “Maybe when you both turn eighteen.”

“Aw, man,” both Sophie and Zachary complained.

I knew they did not understand, but even though it had been sixteen years since the case ended, I still occasionally had nightmares about the Lord of Crime. With everything that occurred from the time I first encountered the Lord of Crime in my youth until the time he was finally captured, I felt like I was not yet ready to tell them everything about the case.

“Mom, please,” Zach begged, with his puppy dog face he would usually give me when he wanted something.

“Please?” Sophie added.

“I guess there’s no arguing with you two.” I sighed.

“Yes!” Sophie said with excitement.

“I always do enjoy these stories,” Zachary said as Sophie nodded in agreement.

“I guess that is why she left the best ones for last,” Sophie added. “Very well, children,” I said. “Have a seat. It is going to be a long story.” Both Zach and Sophie sat on Zach’s bed as I sat beside them.

“It all started on a dark, cold, stormy, wintry night in Birmingham, Alabama,” I started. “There was lightning. And thunder!”

Flashes of lightning and loud roars of thunder could be heard throughout the city. A major storm was slowly moving across Birmingham. Streets were quickly flooded by the rain that continuously poured down. The wind was not comforting either, as several light poles and trees waved violently back and forth, causing several hundred people throughout the city to lose their power.

The city had been under a severe-weather advisement for several days. While the tropical storm was identified ahead of time, little did people realize the true danger lying within the darkness of that storm.

Despite the tumultuous weather, a lot of people were still out buying their groceries and getting ready for Christmas, which was only three weeks away. Colleges were finishing up their fall terms, and students were taking their finals before getting out for the Christmas break.

Our story begins on this stormy night when a student by the name of Amara Johnson was in her neighborhood small market, doing her Christmas shopping for her family.

Amara was a young, slender Asian girl, with emerald eyes, ivory skin, and silky black hair. She was so beautiful that even strangers would give her compliments. She was also an extremely compassionate and intelligent young woman. Her features, along with her beauty, made her the target of most men in her college.

Despite the attention she would get, Amara refused to distract herself with romance until after she could finish school and afford to be out on her own. She was also strong-willed; she had a compassionate nature, but everyone knew when not to mess with her.

Amara had just finished shopping and was walking up front to a register when one of her classmates bumped into her.

“Oh, I’m so sorry,” the man said before recognizing her. “Amara.”

“Alex,” she replied.

“I take it you’re in here Christmas shopping?” he asked.

The man was short and slender, like Amara, but he had dark-red hair and a freckled face with light-blue eyes. He had a happy-go-lucky demeanor, and like Amara, he was generally friendly with everyone. He had special feelings for Amara, but she only liked him as a friend. He was a clerk at the market, and he boyishly walked behind the cash register counter as Amara walked in front of it.

“I sure am. Just finished the last bit of it,” Amara said.

“Well then, if you’re ready, I’ll ring you up,” he said.

“Sure. Go ahead.” Amara began laying her items onto the counter.

“How did school go this term, Amara?”

“Very well, and you?”

“I made all As and Bs, with the one B being in chemistry,” he replied. “So how much longer will it be before you get your bachelor’s?”

“I’ve got eight more classes before I finish, and after that, I want to either work with the CIA or FBI,” Amara said as Alex started bagging up her merchandise.

“Oh wow. CIA. FBI. I bet it takes a lot of work to get into those agencies.”

“It sure does. Not only do I have to have my bachelor’s, but I must take other tests, and I also have to be physically fit to even be considered.”

Alex continued to seize the opportunity of having conversation with Amara. “But if there is a person that can do it, I know it is you,” he said.

“Thanks,” Amara said.

“Let me know how it goes when you try.”

“Sure will.”

“Um, Amara, is there anything else I can help you with tonight?” Alex asked as he hit the Total button.

“No, thank you,” she said as she handed Alex the money for the merchandise.

“Okay. Then I will see you next term.”

Amara grabbed her car keys and walked toward her car. As she did, she was completely unaware that someone had been following and watching her every move. Only when she opened her car door did she hear someone’s footsteps slowly approach her.

At first, she ignored it and continued putting her groceries and gifts into her car, but when she heard the footsteps a second time, she quickly turned around with her finger on the pepper spray nozzle she carried on her key chain. She continued to look around, becoming relieved several minutes later after seeing nothing unusual.

\*\*\*

Rainy weather was nothing unusual for Birmingham, but the wind chill that assisted the rainfall made for freezing and unsafe driving conditions. Fortunately, the Christmas spirit did much to minimize the focus on the potentially dangerous weather. People continued to go into the stores to shop, and they appeared to not know or care what risks there were outside.

After a brief panic, Amara took a deep sigh of relief. Perhaps what she heard was a teenager playing a prank on her or maybe someone close by was attempting to enter a vehicle at the same time as she was. After standing there for a minute or two without hearing footsteps, she turned around and began loading the Christmas gifts into her car again.

That was when she again heard footsteps, this time getting *closer* to her. She immediately stopped putting the merchandise into her car and bent down to look underneath the cars beside her to see where the footsteps were coming from.

"Is something wrong, miss?" a cart attendant asked.

"Leave me alone!" Amara screamed as she jumped up so fast, she came within two inches of hitting him.

"Whoa!" the cart attendant shouted.

"I'm sorry," Amara said frightfully. She was now fully pale, and her eyes were filled with fear. "You just scared me, that's all. I didn't see you walk by a moment ago."

"Ah yes." The cart attendant laughed. "I'm sorry about that, miss. I do admit I can be too quiet at times. I'm just out here doing my job. Trying to get all the carts back."

Amara looked around and saw that there were only a few carts scattered in the parking lot. She was more at ease when she realized the young cart attendant was just doing his job.

"Here's the last bag. By the way, miss, I'm sorry if I scared you," the cart attendant said as he tried to grab the cart.

But when Amara released her hands from the cart, the two heard the footsteps again.

"Hey, what's that?" the cart attendant asked.

"You hear it too?" Amara asked. "I thought you were doing it."

"I know I can be quiet, but this is very strange," the cart attendant said as they heard the footsteps again. "Strange.

I am hearing someone walking, but I don't see anyone."

The cart attendant looked around one more time to see who was approaching them. There were people continuing to walk through the parking lot to go in and out of the store, but none of them were close enough to Amara's car that she could hear their footsteps.

"Miss, get into your car!"

"Do what?" Amara stuttered with disbelief.

"Get in your car miss," the cart attendant said again.

"You don't have to ask me a third time," Amara said as she got into the car, and as she began to turn it on, she heard a loud, thunderous gunshot. She screamed in horror when she looked out and saw that the young cart attendant had been shot.

"Go! Please!" the cart attendant said as he quickly grabbed his radio. "Security! You are needed outside."

Before the cart attendant could say another word, he was hit by another shot, this time causing him to fall onto the ground.

"Security on its way," the person on the radio said.

Amara yelled as loud as she could. She looked at herself and saw she hadn't been shot yet, but she realized she would be if she stayed where she was. She looked back through the window and began backing out when she heard another loud gunshot.

"Stop where you are," a sinister-sounding voice shouted.

Amara continued to back up when she heard a fourth loud gunshot. She screamed in horror as she looked and saw the windows of the back doors of her car were shattered.

“No. No. Please!” Amara panicked as she stopped the car. She took several deep breaths before calming down.

She looked around again in the parking lot and saw no one was approaching her. “All right, buster. Where are you?”

No one answered. Amara waited for several minutes for an answer. “Amara. Stay calm. You have been trained to handle situations like this.” No matter how hard she tried to calm herself, fear continued to creep into her mind. She slowly turned the car off and got out, holding her pepper spray close to her. As she stepped out of the car, she slowly turned and looked to see where the voice was coming from. “Show yourself. This isn’t funny. I should warn you. I am a black belt.”

“Nothing will help you,” the sinister-sounding voice replied.

It was the most horrifying sound Amara had ever heard, but she continued holding the pepper spray close to her as she slowly began walking away from her car.

“Stay away!” Amara screamed.

“No. Nothing you have will stop me,” the voice quietly replied.

Amara continued to look everywhere to see where the voice was coming from, but just like earlier, she couldn’t tell.

“Show yourself!” Amara screamed.

“I will,” the voice said as Amara slowly continued to walk away from her car.

“Show yourself—show yourself *right now!*”

Amara quickly took out her cell phone and was beginning to dial for the police when she heard another gunshot. She looked down and saw that she had not been hit but only barely. She saw that a bullet had hit the window behind the driver’s seat just inches from where she had been standing.

“Nine-one-one, what is the emergency?” asked the operator.

“Yes, this is Amara Johnson. Someone is shooting at me and talking to me in the shadows. I think they are trying to kill me,” she said as another gunshot was heard.

“What is your present location?”

“I’m at the downtown old shopping center a few miles away from the college!” More gunshots rang in the background.

“What happened?” the dispatcher asked as Amara looked down and saw she was bleeding from where she was hit.

“Ow! I’ve been shot. I’ve been shot!” Amara screamed as she grabbed her right thigh. “They’re trying to kill me.

They’re trying to kill me.”

“Don’t panic, miss,” the dispatcher replied.

“Don’t panic? You must be joking!” Amara screamed.

“Please don’t panic. It will only make things worse. Help is on the way,” the dispatcher replied. Amara whimpered as she heard several more gunshots.

She looked everywhere to see where the shots were coming from and continued yelling, hoping someone would answer. “Who are you? What do you want?”

“I want you,” the voice replied before Amara looked up and saw a tall man whom she didn’t recognize standing over her.

He seemed to be about six feet seven, as Amara guessed, but there was nothing else she could see because his arms and body were covered by his black clothes. The man’s face was also covered by a black mask and equally black goggles, which kept Amara from seeing the color of his eyes. He had a terrifying voice, so much so that Amara didn’t struggle to listen when he gave out commands.

“Please let me live. I’ll do whatever you want. Please,” Amara whimpered as the man got on top of her. He took a knife from his pocket and held it to her throat.

“I know you will,” the man taunted. “You are going to be a good girl, and you are not going to give me any problems.”

“Please don’t. Please,” Amara cried as she realized the man’s plan.

“Don’t worry, miss. It will all be over soon. For you, that is,” the man said as he used his full weight to pin her onto the ground.

“Please. I am begging you,” Amara cried again. She began screaming in agony as the man quickly began ripping off her clothes. “Nooo!”

\*\*\*

For most of my shift, I thought it was going to be another one of those quiet nights in the city. With the major storm that was engulfing the city, I didn't think there were going to be any major crimes to occur, at least not until the storm passed. But Charles assured me it was during storms—such as the one we were in—when major crimes were most likely to occur. His philosophy proved true when we received a call telling us about a couple killings at the neighborhood market.

Charles and I arrived at the scene shortly after receiving a call from the shopping center's security asking us to investigate a double homicide.

*What a night,* I thought to myself.

Neither of us had been working in the department very long, though Charles had a little more experience in law enforcement than I did. Charles, known by his friends as Chuck, was six feet five, with black hair and a small black mustache on an otherwise clean-shaven face. He was a little hefty but not fat, as most of his size came from the fact that he worked out as often as he could in the gym.

Even though Charles was friendly with nearly everyone, he at times came across as someone not to cross, especially to criminals who looked at his size in terror. He had been in the United States Navy for many years as an investigator before retiring and joining the police department. He was also extremely honest, sometimes to the point of being blunt. It annoyed me at times, but I was very thankful for the feedback he gave me at every opportunity.

I was generally more reserved than my partner. Charles, with his outgoing personality, did most of the talking during our investigations, and honestly, I didn't mind. I was much shorter than Charles, standing only about five feet one.

I'm sorry. I am getting a little ahead of myself. My name is Emma Stevens. Although I was originally born with dark-red hair, I changed my hair color to light brown as a perfect complement to my dark-brown eyes. I also kept my hair just a little past my shoulders, and while I have always been slender, I was not always in shape. It was only after my best friend in high school convinced me to join the cheerleading squad with her in our senior year that I got into shape, and since then, I have been exercising and taking karate classes.

Although I didn't consider my body to be perfect, a lot of men did. However, I was always disappointed that I always attracted the wrong people! I had given up trying to find the perfect man before I left England, and now, since I'd moved to the United States, I preferred to keep mostly to myself. I hardly ever socialized, even during social gatherings at work.

"Hey! How are you feeling, Detective Stevens, with this being your first major case?" Charles calmly asked.

"Nervous. How do you think you would feel if your first major case was a double murder and a rape?"

"Nervous, are you? Well, that's perfectly understandable, Detective Stevens. Rape and murder cases are never easy. When I was your age and in the navy, my first case was a triple homicide that also had national security implications."

"Oh, really," I said.

"Yeah," Charles replied. "What's the matter with you? You are being unusually quiet."

"Nothing, sir. You know how I am."

"Yeah, unfortunately, I do. We need to change that, though."

As Charles continued to talk to me, I began to think about the time I got hired by the department and went through the police academy. It was a rough first few months, but I realized they were nothing compared to what I was about to get into. There was something completely different between training and facing real life-and-death situations.

"Sir, if you don't mind me asking, how did your first case turn out?" I curiously asked, hoping to start up a conversation.

Not since my middle school days had I felt comfortable with being around people—especially men—though I had been trying to get better at it without much success.

"It took me a while, Detective Stevens, but I was able to overcome my anxiety, and after a few months, we managed to capture the murderous traitor in Malaysia. It's perfectly all right that you feel like that now and with every case. I'd be worried if you weren't feeling anything. Even now, I admit I am a little nervous." "You are?" I asked.

"You bet I am. You'll be all right," Charles said as he patted me on the knee.

I disliked it when people touched me, but I didn't say a word because I knew Charles didn't mean anything by it.

"Thanks," I quickly replied.

I didn't know what else to say as we approached the crime scene. The medical examiner, who had a knack for being early and for being on top of things, had already arrived shortly before we did to collect evidence.

"Hey, Doc, what do you have for us?" Charles asked as the medical examiner stood up and faced us.

He was an older short bald white man who had razor-thin glasses covering his light-blue eyes. He was also a little hefty, but despite his size, I noticed he quickly got around, moving even faster than some of the technicians he brought with him. Charles had told me a lot about him because they had worked together inside and outside of the country for years.

"New partner you have, Chuck," the medical examiner said as he looked at me.

"Aye. Doc, this is Detective Stevens," Charles said. He turned back to me as he continued. "And this is Dr. Sanders."

"Doctor Sanders?" I repeated.

"First day on the job?" Dr. Sanders asked as I nodded.

"Doc, she is still kind of nervous. First day being a detective, period," Charles told him.

"Ah, that explains a lot. Have you done any police work before?" Dr. Sanders asked.

"I've only done traffic duty before transferring in," I quickly replied.

"Well, Detective Stevens, it is sure nice to meet you. Welcome aboard. You'll find this department to be a lot different than traffic duty," Dr. Sanders replied. "Instead of catching speeders and common crooks, now you will be dealing with a whole new world entirely. A lot of what you are going to see is going to make your stomach turn. I certainly hope you did some praying today. It is going to take a miracle to catch whoever killed these two people. I

mean, whoever killed these two did a major work on them, especially on this poor woman."

"I pray every day, Doc. If I didn't, I don't know what I would do, especially with as crazy as life can be at times.

Prayer has always been a source of comfort for me," I replied.

"Indeed. Anyway, I certainly hope you make it longer than the last one," Dr. Sanders said.

"Last one?"

"Doc is hesitant to trust new officers," Charles inserted.

"Given how most of them that transfer here usually leave after a few months," Dr. Sanders replied.

"All right, Doc, enough with the chatter. What do you have for us?" Charles asked.

"Well, as I said, I have two dead people here, and based on the trajectory of some of the shells we've managed to recover, it was darn lucky there weren't more people killed."

"So have they been identified?" I asked.

"The first victim is Mr. Jonah Myles," Dr. Sanders said.

"It looks like he was shot twice," I mentioned.

"You are correct, Detective. Thank you for stating the obvious," Dr. Sanders said.

I began to get a little aggravated with his sarcasm.

"Don't mind him. As I said moments ago, it takes him a while to get used to new detectives," Charles whispered to me under his breath.

Dr. Sanders continued. "The first shot was not the one that killed him. The first shot, I believe, was used only to knock him onto the ground, whereas the second shot—which, as you can see, went through his chest—that was the one that killed him."

"Just two shots, you say, Doc?" Charles asked.

"Yes, and both shots were done with precision," Dr. Sanders said as he began to point to the wounds.

"So our killer is a marksman," I said.

"Yes. There is something else I need to show you," Dr. Sanders said.

"Lead the way, Doc," Charles said.

"Follow me," Dr. Sanders said as he began leading me and Charles to Amara. "As you will see, Detectives, our first victim, Mr. Myles, had it easy compared to her."

"You're not kidding, Doc. Who is she?" I asked.

"Her name is Amara Johnson. She is a student at the nearby college, and from the looks of it, she was doing some last-minute Christmas shopping."

"She must have come out of the store when the perp attacked her," Charles said.

"Actually, I think she ran into the cart attendant before being attacked by the killer," Dr. Sanders said.

“So the cart boy was the first to be killed,” I said.

“Yep. His death was quick compared to Amara’s,” Dr. Sanders said. “As you can see, she had a slower and more painful death than Jonah did.”

“All right. What is the official cause of death?” Charles asked.

“Strangulation,” Dr. Sanders said as he showed us the dark-red marks around her neck.

“Choked her. My partner and I were told she was shot and that she was also raped and sodomized,” Charles said.

“She was. He used his full weight to keep her pinned down while he assaulted and choked the life out of her. As you can see, she also suffered a few broken ribs as a result.

“Yeah,” Charles said.

“This is her car, isn’t it?” I asked Dr. Sanders.

“As far as we could tell,” he replied.

As the men continued talking, I wondered if Amara always parked as far away from the store as she had tonight. Dr. Sanders must have noticed because he answered my question without me speaking.

“From what we were told, when she entered the store, it was during rush hour,” he said. “So I am guessing this was the only spot she could find.”

“This spot where Amara parked is a perfect spot to commit a murder or two and quickly get away,” I said.

“Why do you say that, Detective? As I just said moments ago, the store was swamped,” Dr. Sanders said.

“Are we sure what time she left the store? Yes, Doc, when she *entered* the store, it might have been swamped, but when she *left*, it could have easily died out, and as far as it is out here where she parked, even with people still here, it would be hard to see what is happening,” I replied.

“Of course,” Charles said.

“And as far as she is parked out here, I doubt the shopping center’s cameras would be able to see all the way out here,” Dr. Sanders added.

“Which means, as Detective Stevens said, the perp had an opportunity to commit a perfect crime. Hardly any witnesses, any video evidence,” Charles said.

“Or hardly any forensic evidence either,” said Dr. Sanders.

“You mean the perp didn’t leave his DNA?” I asked.

“No, Detective. He did not leave his DNA. The perp, as you call him, was really careful not to leave any evidence behind.”

“So our perp wore a condom. What a surprise,” I complained.

“I also can also tell you definitely this isn’t the first time the poor girl has been assaulted,” Dr. Sanders went on.

“I found several scars on her genitals that hadn’t fully healed.”

“Not the first time she had been attacked?” I said with disbelief.

“Yes, Detective. This is not her first time being attacked,” Dr. Sanders said as one of his technicians arrived and handed him a report.

“That is just lovely,” I complained.

“If you think that is bad, Detective, I will also say this: whoever killed Mr. Myles and Amara really knows their forensics as well as their police procedure. I mean, the taping off of the area and leaving the bodies where they were.”

“Taping off. Are you saying this area was already taped off when you arrived?” I asked.

“Yes, Detective. When the first responders arrived, the crime scene was taped off and cleaned up,” Dr. Sanders said. “As I said, the perp really knew his police procedures. Everything down to the wire. The cleaning up. All of the details. If I hadn’t been doing this as long as I have and I didn’t know any better, I could have easily sworn that a police officer was the culprit.”

“How long did it take for the first responders to get here?” Charles asked.

“From what I was told, about thirty minutes,” Dr. Sanders replied.

“Thirty minutes,” Charles said with disbelief.

“I don’t like the sound of that one bit,” I said.

“And neither do I,” Charles added.

“Sir, if you don’t mind me saying, thirty minutes is a lot of time. I mean, a *lot* of time. That is an eternity, especially if the killer has been doing this for years,” I said.

"I agree, Detective. Still, I do wonder how he managed to rape and kill Amara Johnson, clean up after himself, and tape up the crime scene without being seen. Surely someone would have seen something," Charles mused.

"You would think so," I added.

"Detective Stevens, I have no doubt that whoever killed Mr. Myles and Amara is a professional killer," Charles said.

"What a way to break me into the department," I said to myself.

"Detective, welcome to the big leagues. Since you joined the department, I assumed you wanted the tough and gruesome cases. Now here you are. Your first day and you got one," Dr. Sanders said.

"Doc, don't scare her," Charles said.

"I'm sorry, Chuck. I confess I like to pick on the newbies a little."

"Sir, you don't suppose whoever assaulted Amara before came back to finish the job of killing her after assaulting her one last time, do you?" I whispered to Charles.

"I don't know, but there is only one way to find out," Charles replied. "We are going to need to find out everything we can about her. All her relatives. All her friends. People she might have worked with. People she hung out with. People who might know a lot about her. They might be able to help us and shed some light as to who might have wanted to do this to her.

"But based on the extensive injuries she sustained before being killed, I can say this for certain: whoever killed her must have really hated her. I've seen many killings in my life—far too many than I care to admit—and most of the time, when a killing looks really gruesome, it is usually a result of a sadist or a really vengeful and spiteful person." "You're right, Chuck," Dr. Sanders said. "If you don't mind, could you do me one favor?"

"Sure. What is it?"

"Find out if Amara had filed any reports of being sexually assaulted. It might help us and give us a potential clue to who the killer is."

"Will do," Charles said.

"As for me, I will go back to the lab and run some tests, and I will let you know what I find when I do." "Understood," Charles replied.

"Charles, I would like to also go and talk with the security team here and see what the cameras might have picked up, if they picked up anything at all," I told him.

"Okay," Charles said. "While you go do that, I will go back to the office and find out what I can about Amara and why the killer chose her specifically."

"You don't think her death was random?" I asked in a telling tone rather than a questionable one.

"I think Jonah was killed because he got in the way and the perp wanted to leave no witnesses, but looking at how mutilated she was, I think Amara was specifically targeted," Charles replied.

"I don't know how long it will be, Charles, but I will call you after I get through here. See you shortly," I said.

"Very well. Just don't take too long. We have a lot to cover and a short time to do it," Charles said as he got into the car and began leaving.

I stood there for a few minutes after he left before I went into the neighborhood market.