

## CHAPTER 1

The back door of O'Toole's Pub flew open. A thin Hispanic man ran for his life. But a man wearing a blue shirt, with long hair and a beard, stabbed him as he ran out of the building. The Hispanic man quickly fell to the ground, gazing upwards. Gazing, but not seeing, as the chest wound drained the life out of him. Christine had never seen so much blood pooling on the ground. She gasped as she recognized the dying man as Luis, the pub's bartender. He had served fish and chips to Christine and William Evans the night before. He proudly told them he had recently become a U.S. citizen at twenty-three years old. She continued watching from the motel's second floor window as the man in the blue shirt wiped his fingerprints from the knife with Luis' shirt. The killer's actions were incongruous with the tattoos on the back of his hands which Christine thought looked like crosses.

Mr. and Mrs. Evans arrived from Indianapolis at the Family Motel in Long Beach, California, the evening of April 1st. William, age forty-eight, insisted they spend Friday night in Long Beach because their fourteen-day cruise was scheduled to depart Saturday afternoon. The cruise itinerary included four stops in Hawaii and one stop in Mexico near the end of the cruise. The couple almost left when they first saw the motel because it was in

a bad neighborhood and in worse condition than their travel guide promised. After sunset, the area was a hangout for thugs and prostitutes. However, the couple decided to register at the front desk since it would be for only one night. But Christine, age forty-seven, became frightened when the desk clerk, Josef Bengali, said, "If you go out tonight, make sure you take your room key. We lock the motel's front door after 7:00 pm to keep our guests safe."

Christine's face betrayed her fear when she heard Josef's comment. William read her expression and told her, "Don't worry. We'll be fine if we stay in our room after dark."

Christine watched Luis Espinoza's murder Saturday morning after eating at the motel's breakfast buffet. She and William had returned to their room to repack their luggage. It was about 10:30 when Christine asked William, "Why don't you call for a taxi to pick us up? I'll feel safer waiting at the dock than I do here."

William replied, "Okay. It should only take twenty minutes to reach the pier from here."

While William ordered a taxi, Christine walked to the window to admire Southern California's ubiquitous palm trees and clear blue sky. As she looked down to the narrow alley beside the pub next door, she saw a silver Mercedes moving slowly, stop, and park. Two men exited the car and appeared to be arguing. Then the driver went inside the pub via the front door. The second man wearing the blue shirt stood guard near the back door. He looked up and down the alley several times and glanced at her window twice. This man appeared menacing with his dark eyes, long hair, and long

beard. Christine said to William, "Come look at these men. They're up to something."

After Luis had been killed and William completed his phone call, he joined his wife at the window. She was still crying and William supported her as they turned to look out of the window. They watched the Mercedes driver run out of the pub's back door with a small revolver in his hand. He stopped when he saw the thin Hispanic man lying on the ground. The men from the Mercedes spoke for several seconds. Then the driver handed the gun to the man in the blue shirt. He appeared to be wiping fingerprints from it. Christine and William both jumped when they heard two gunshots as the man in the blue shirt shot the driver. He staggered back and leaned on the building. As he slid down the wall, he left a bloody smear arcing toward the ground. The man in the blue shirt cleaned his fingerprints from the revolver and placed it in the bartender's right hand, making sure his index finger was against the trigger. The killer looked up and down the alley and then at their motel window. William and Christine instantly backed away and hoped they hadn't been seen.

Christine gushed, "I don't think I'll ever forget the look in that man's eyes. He looked like the devil himself."

William said, "He definitely made me shiver." When they cautiously looked out of the window again, they saw the killer hop on a motorcycle that had been parked behind the pub and quickly ride away.

They looked at each other and Christine said, "We better call the police and report these killings."

William replied, "We could. But if we become witnesses in a murder case, we can kiss our cruise goodbye. Let's call the police, go downstairs, and wait for the taxi. Whomever shows up first will determine whether we go on the cruise or answer questions for the police."

Christine thought they should wait for the police, but their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary was Monday, April 4th. She knew it wouldn't be any fun to be stuck in Long Beach for a week when they could have been on their way to Hawaii. She decided to go along with William's plan and said, "Okay, make the call."

He dialed 911 from the motel room phone and said, "A man wearing denim jeans and a blue shirt with long dark hair and a beard just killed two people behind O'Toole's Pub in Long Beach.... No, I won't give you my name." He hung up the phone. They left the room with their luggage, pushed the elevator call button, and went downstairs to the motel lobby.

As they checked out of the motel, Josef, the desk clerk, asked, "How did you enjoy our motel?"

William replied, "It was an interesting stay."

When the printer behind the desk finished clattering, the desk clerk handed a receipt to William. Josef smiled and said, "Please stay with us again the next time you visit Long Beach."

William folded the receipt, put it in his shirt pocket, smiled, and said, "I doubt we'll be back in Long Beach any time soon." Then he joined Christine on the sofa in the lobby as they nervously waited for the taxi. Time seemed to stop as both of them repeatedly glanced from

the clock on the wall, to the driveway, and back to the clock. About fifteen minutes later, the taxi arrived. As William rose to gather their luggage, Christine asked, “Are you sure you want to leave before the police show up?”

“Well, it isn’t our fault the hairy guy killed two people. Maybe they had it coming.”

Christine said reluctantly, “All right, let’s roll our bags outside.”

The taxi driver loaded their luggage into the trunk. They told the driver to take them to Intercontinental Cruises, Inc.’s pier in Long Beach. No one spoke for several minutes. It hadn’t been that quiet between the couple since their first spat when they were still undergrads attending the University of Indiana over twenty-eight years ago. As the taxi weaved through traffic, they tried to put images of the bloody killings out of their minds.

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After shooting Gabriel Perez, the killer placed the revolver in Luis’ lifeless right hand. He looked up at the motel window and saw a bald man in a plaid shirt and a blond woman in a pink blouse watching him. When they realized they had been seen, they quickly backed away from the window. The killer knew they could describe him to police, so he had to get away fast. He made a mental note of the woman’s face; pale complexion, short blond hair, and wire rim eyeglasses. The man was four or five inches taller than the woman, bald, ruddy complexion, and wore black plastic frame eyeglasses. The killer started the motorcycle he had stolen a few days before and drove three blocks before stopping at a convenience store. He retrieved a black leather bag from

the motorcycle and went inside to use the restroom. He threw his blue chambray, bloodstained shirt into the trash and washed his face and hands. He cut his long hair and beard with a scissors from the leather bag. He shaved his head and the remaining beard stubble with a disposable razor. When he exited the restroom, he looked totally different. He was clean shaven; his hair and beard were gone. He wore a white T-shirt and blue jeans, like dozens of other men on motorcycles in LA. Then he headed back to the motel to see if the couple had called the police.

The killer drove his motorcycle slowly past the motel twice and didn't see any police cars. He parked across the street from the motel under a large tree. A tall shrub along the street partially hid him and the motorcycle. He waited and watched for any unusual activity at the motel. A few minutes later, a taxi pulled onto the motel's driveway. The man in the plaid shirt and the woman in a pink blouse came out of the motel lobby with several large suitcases. The driver put the luggage into the taxi's trunk. The couple got inside the taxi and it drove away. The killer began hearing police sirens as he started his motorcycle. He knew it was time to get away from the crime scene. He cautiously followed the taxi making sure at least one car was always between them. He knew he couldn't follow too closely but he had to find out where the couple was headed.