

# The Wrong Man

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By Kevin Davis

## Chapter One

THE NEIGHBORHOOD along on Poinsettia Drive in northeast Fort Lauderdale was quiet as usual on the evening of November 8th, 1983. Palm fronds fluttered with the western breeze off the Atlantic, and the cloudless blue sky was deepening to black with the sunset. It was a Tuesday, and the residents who lived along this tranquil block of single-family homes soon would be coming home from work, settling down to dinner, to watch television, to spend time with their children.

Midway down the block, Ed Sciaretta stood at the front door of Susan Hamwi's house at 1656 Poinsettia Drive and wondered whether he should try to open it. He knocked and yelled out Susan's name, but there was no answer.

Sciaretta pulled open the screen door, turned the knob on the wooden door and gently pushed forward. It swung open. He froze with panic and pulled it back shut. His hands were trembling.

Sciaretta was afraid to look any further. He knew something was wrong. Susan never left the door unlocked.

Two of Susan's neighbors were anxiously waiting for Sciaretta in the front yard.

"We better not do anything more until the police get here," Sciaretta said, walking out to the front lawn. "I don't like this. I don't like this at all."

"Oh my God," Candace Patounis said. "Do you think something has happened to Susan?"

"I don't know what to think," Sciaretta said. "The door was open. Something's not right."

Susan's white and brown, 4-door Chrysler Le Baron was parked in the driveway, Saturday's Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel lay on the walkway still wrapped in plastic. There was business card from a John Hancock life insurance salesman at the foot of the door, and the living room windows were open halfway.

Sciaretta, who employed Susan as a part-time real estate scout for his chain of ice cream shops, had driven to the house after Patounis called him in a panic. She said she hadn't heard from Susan in several days. The last time she saw Susan was at a Halloween party at her house week earlier. Susan had dressed her 18-month-old daughter, Shane, as Little Bo Peep. Patounis remembered how cute Shane looked and wondered whether the baby was all right.

When Patounis called Sciaretta that evening, she was breathless. She told him she had walked over to the house and got no answer after knocking several times. She walked around the side, looked through a bedroom window and saw that the room appeared ransacked. An open jewelry box lay on Susan's bed and clothes were scattered about. There were no lights on in the house.

As the three stood in the yard, Fort Lauderdale police officers Russell Sues and Ted Schendel pulled into the driveway. The officers told Sciaretta to wait outside while they investigated.

When the officers walked into the darkened house, they were immediately hit by the overwhelming stench. They knew what they were about to find.

They went into the kitchen and found Susan lying on the floor, face up with a crumpled paper towel hanging out the side of her mouth. Her skin had darkened with blotches of purple and brown. A broken steak knife protruded from Susan's chest. A telephone cord was wrapped around her neck and her white slacks and panties were torn and pulled down below her knees.

Sues and Schendel carefully stepped around a brown syrupy pool of blood that had spread on the tile around her body. On the floor a few inches from Susan's right leg, he noticed a broken bottle and a used tampon. A few inches from Susan's head, a little toy ambulance with a red cross on it lay on its side.

Sues walked down the hallway into the first bedroom. He turned on his flashlight and swept the beam across the room, stopping on a baby crib. He stepped closer, keeping the light on the crib. Inside he saw a baby in pajamas, twisted in blankets and lying on her back next to an empty baby bottle. The baby's eyes were half open, her cheeks sunken.

The baby was dead.

It was just after dark when Bill Dugat turned his van onto Poinsettia Drive. Halfway up the block he could see dozens of flashing red and blue emergency lights, the

beams spinning off the tops of police cars, bouncing off houses and trees and lighting up faces in a crowd that had gathered on Susan Hamwi's front lawn. "Jesus, what is going on down there?" Dugat said to his two passengers.

John Purvis and his mother, Emma Jo Bartlett, looked out the windows of the van and saw police officers, detectives, neighbors and television crews gathered in a yard three houses away from theirs.

"Oh my. What's happened mother?" John Purvis said. "Why are all those police at that lady's house?"

Purvis shifted in his seat. He leaned over and stuck his head out the window.

"It's probably a bad accident, Johnny," his mother said. "Dear Lord, I've never seen so many police cars. I wonder if somebody got killed."

"Oh, mom. I hope everything's all right. Yes, I hope everything's okay."

Emma Jo put her hand on her son's arm. She felt him shaking.

"Now just take it easy, Johnny. I'm sure everything is just fine. We'll be in the house in a minute."

Emma Jo was worried about Johnny. He had been acting nervous all day. In the afternoon he had been pacing around the house and said he felt an unexplained sense of panic. His mother thought he might be on the verge of another mental breakdown. She asked Dugat to stop by and suggested the three go to dinner at Mother Butler's Pies, one of Johnny's favorite restaurants. Emma Jo thought that Johnny might feel better getting out of house and having a hot meal and slice of chocolate cream pie.

Dugat was a close family friend and was familiar with Johnny's erratic behavior. He knew Johnny often acted extremely nervous and would sometimes announce to his mother that he was having "bad thoughts." Johnny would cry for no apparent reason or say he was afraid someone wanted to kill him. Dugat knew the strain that Johnny put on his mother. In the 10 years he had known Emma Jo, Dugat saw how she had always worried about Johnny, how she would plead with the psychiatrists to help her son, how she would pray that Johnny could be normal like other people.

Though he was 42 years old, Johnny still lived at home with his mother, who was 66. Her face showed the years with creases that radiated from her eyes and mouth. She had reddish black shoulder length hair and wore oversized eyeglasses. It was just the two of them at home. Johnny's father died when he was a toddler, and his mother divorced her second husband more than 10 years earlier. Her five children were all adults now, some with their own children. Johnny was still very much a child and had to be treated like one.

Johnny depended on his mother for almost everything, especially to keep him calm when suffered spontaneous fits of anxiety. Each day she dispensed his Mellaril, the psychotropic medication required to treat Johnny's schizophrenia. The drug usually helped control the tortuous fear that haunted Johnny, allowing him to live a fairly normal but simple existence. His greatest freedom was that he could drive the car by himself, but only when he was feeling calm and self-confident.

Some of Johnny's neighbors mistakenly thought he was retarded, perhaps because of his simple look and simple manner. He had a childish face with narrow blue eyes, pale

skin, freckles, oversized ears and a short red hair. Johnny was skinny and awkward in his gestures, easily distracted, often shrugging his shoulders and looking away when speaking with others. He seemed more like a pre-adolescent than a mature adult. Johnny stared out the van window as Dugat drove slowly past the police cars on Poinsettia Drive as they returned from dinner that November evening. He could see Susan Hamwi's house was cordoned off with yellow crime scene tape. He stared in fascination, but said nothing.

Dugat pulled into the Bartlett's driveway. As the three stepped out of the van, a detective broke away from the crowd on Susan Hamwi's lawn and walked up to the Bartlett house. He identified himself as Fort Lauderdale Homicide Detective Rick Rice and pulled a small notebook and pen from his shirt pocket.

"What's happened over there?" Emma Jo asked.

"There's been a murder," Rice said, keeping his eye on Johnny, who had folded his arms and was tapping his foot. "A woman and her baby were killed in that house."

"Dear Lord," Emma Jo said. "What a horrible thing."

Johnny dashed for the front door. He tugged and pulled on it, but the door would not open. He didn't have a key. Rice watched Johnny's frantic attempt to get inside and turned to Bartlett.

"Did you all know the woman who lived there?"

"No, not really," Emma Jo said.

She yelled over at her son, who was still struggling with the door. "Johnny, what's wrong with you? Just wait a minute."

Johnny was pacing in front of the house, waving his hands.

"Mom, open the door, please come and open the door."

"I'd just like to ask you a few questions," Rice said.

"Mr. Rice, I told you I don't know the girl. I don't know how I'd be able to help you," Emma Jo said.

Rice said, "Okay, we'll come back to speak with you and your son later, maybe tomorrow."

Emma Jo, Johnny and Dugat went into the house. Johnny walked straight to his room, turned on the television and sat at the edge of his bed. He switched the channels, but couldn't stay interested in a program. He walked around the house while his mother and Dugat sat in the kitchen. She put on some coffee.

"I'm worried about Johnny," Emma Jo said to Dugat. "You see how he is? I don't know if it's the medication, or what, but he's been very hard to deal with lately. Now this terrible thing down the street. I don't know how he's going to be affected by it."

"I'm sure he'll be okay, Emma Jo," Dugat said. "You can't worry about him all the time. Johnny is a grown man. He'll come out of it. He always does."

"I just don't want him to have to go back to the hospital," Emma Jo said. "You know I can't afford it, and it scares Johnny. I don't even know if the doctors are any help. Johnny is still nervous all the time, no matter what they do, no matter how much medicine I give him. He's always walking around the house, saying he's scared."

Johnny came into the kitchen. "Mom, I want to go back outside to see what all those police and people are doing."

Emma Jo knew that if she said no, Johnny might get upset. "All right, Johnny. But just for a short while. Bill and I will come with you."

The three went back out and stood in the driveway, deciding it was best not to get too close to the scene. Though it was November, the night was warm, the air thick and moist. Most of the crowd had left, but a few police officers stood on the lawn chatting and smoking cigarettes.

The front door of Susan Hamwi's house opened and Emma Jo gasped. She put her hand over her mouth when she saw the Broward County Medical Examiner workers wheel out a body covered by a heavy blue blanket. A police officer followed, cradling a tiny body wrapped in the same material. They slid the bodies into a van and drove off. Johnny stared.

"Is that her? Is that her, mom?" Johnny said. "That's Susan's body, isn't it?"

"Johnny, son, let's go back inside. I think we've seen enough," Emma Jo said.

"There's so many bad people out there, mom," Johnny said. "Bad, bad people."

Johnny got into his pajamas and lay in bed. But he couldn't fall asleep. He was picturing his neighbor, Susan. She was beautiful, Johnny thought. A nice person. Friendly. Pretty. He liked her. He always had wanted her to like him, too.

Dugat left and Emma Jo got into her nightclothes. She kissed Johnny goodnight, went to her bedroom, said a prayer and fell asleep without any trouble.

Johnny lay awake for another two hours before he fell asleep. The television remained on, the screen having turned to static.

The next morning, Emma Jo Bartlett picked up the Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel from the front stoop of her house and saw the page one headline: "Rapist slays mother, leaves baby to die."

Johnny was still asleep while she read the story. It said Susan Bolender Hamwi, 38 years old, was found dead in the kitchen of her home on Poinsettia Drive. She had been stabbed, choked and raped. Susan's daughter, Shane, 18 months old, was found dead in the crib and apparently had starved to death. The home was partially ransacked, suggesting robbery may have been a motive. Both bodies were decomposed and had probably been in the house for several days, the paper said.

Emma Jo didn't want Johnny to see the story. He wasn't a very good reader, but the headline might grab his attention and remind him what happened. She was always careful to try to shield bad news from Johnny. Bad news usually made him paranoid and could trigger an attack.

Johnny woke up about a half hour later and got dressed. His mother made scrambled eggs and toast and they sat at the kitchen table together. The sun was out, and Emma Jo suggested they go to Holiday Park for a nice walk after breakfast. They went to the park almost every day and strolled along the fitness trail. Johnny liked the trees and he liked to look at the people. His mother would usually take Johnny to Denny's afterward for lunch.

They were just finishing breakfast when they heard a knock on the door about 9:30. Emma Jo opened it and saw two men. She recognized one of them from the night before.

They introduced themselves as Detectives Rick Rice and Rich Martin. Rice, who was the lead detective on the case, was the taller of the two, with short brown hair, combed back and shiny from hair oil. He was slightly pudgy with a wide nose, reddish pock-marked face and thin mustache.

Martin had a young, tan face, thick brown mustache and head of white hair that was overtaking darker brown hair beneath it. He was powerfully built like a weightlifter, standing straight and with an air of self-confidence.

Rice asked whether they could come inside for a few minutes.

"What is it you want?" Emma Jo said. "Can't we just talk right here? I told you last night that we didn't know anything."

Rice said, "Well, Mrs. Bartlett, we've been speaking with all of your neighbors about what happened. You know, the murder of Susan Hamwi and her baby. Everyone is cooperating with us. This won't take very long."

"I really, I mean, there's nothing I can tell you," Emma Jo said.

"What about if you come over to the station in about an hour or so to give us a formal statement, Mrs. Bartlett?" Rice said.

"And bring your son, we'd like to speak with him, too."

"What kind of statement would I give you?" Emma Jo said, her voice sounding irritated. "I didn't know the girl, so why would I want to go to the police station? I just saw her walk down the street once. That's all I can say, and I'll say it right here."

Johnny came up from behind his mother and saw the detectives. He poked his head out the door.

"I knew her. I knew her," Johnny said, seeming eager to cooperate. "She was a very nice girl."

"You knew her?" Rice said.

"Oh yes. I've seen her. She's a very nice lady," Johnny said.

"All right, why don't you both come down to the station in about an hour. We'll see you there. Here's my card," Rice said.

Emma Jo was not happy about having to go to the police station. She knew how they would treat Johnny. He already had one bad experience when an officer picked him up after Johnny offered a ride to 12-year-old girl. The girl wrote down his license plate number and told her parents that a weird man tried to pick her up.

A police officer came to the house and spoke with Johnny. Emma Jo tried to find out why he was questioning her son and pleaded with the officer to leave him alone.

"Please don't take him to the station," she had said. "He has a mental problem, a nervous problem and you're going to badger him. You're going to get him upset and he's going to get scared and I'll have to put him back in the hospital."

The officer said he had to take Johnny to the station as a matter of procedure. He promised to bring him back in 15 minutes.

It was an hour before police brought Johnny back home. He was not charged with any crime. He was crying when he walked in.

"Do you know what they did to me, mom?" Johnny said. "They said they knew that I picked up little girls, that I molested girls, little girls and big girls. They tried to

make me say it. When I got down to the police station they took my fingerprints and my picture and then started over again trying to make me say I did something."

"Well, Johnny, did you?"

"I didn't do anything like that, mom."

Remembering that unpleasant incident and hoping to avoid another like it, Emma Jo reluctantly went with Johnny to the police station after cleaning up from breakfast. She might as well cooperate with the police and be done with the matter. She knew Johnny thought he was being helpful. He was proud to be able to assist the police; it made him feel important. But Emma Jo thought the detectives were going to try to intimidate her son again.

Johnny and his mother arrived at the station and were met in the lobby by Detectives Rice and Martin. They brought Johnny and his mother to the second floor detective bureau. Rice took Johnny's arm led him away from his mother.

"We need to talk with him alone, Mrs. Bartlett," Martin said. "It won't be long."

"What do you mean? I thought you wanted to speak with me?" Emma Jo said.

"We'll be back shortly, Mrs. Bartlett. It's just routine."

A policewoman escorted Emma Jo to a waiting area, sat her down on a couch and promised her that the questioning would only take a few minutes.

The policewoman came back carrying a stack of thick books filled with police mug shots. She asked Emma Jo to look through them and see whether she might have seen any of them in the neighborhood recently.

Emma Jo paged through the book, an unsettling collection of robbers, rapists and killers, mean-looking, ugly men with numbers across their chests. Emma Jo scanned the book with little interest. She wanted to get out of there and take Johnny home. She was angry with the detectives for harassing her son. She was afraid they might try to entrap him, make him say things he doesn't mean. Johnny was very pliable. Anyone could make him say whatever they wanted. Johnny didn't like to disagree.

In the interrogation room, Detectives Rice and Martin told Johnny to relax. They said they were nice guys and Johnny was going to help them. The room was narrow with a long metal table in the middle and four chairs. Johnny sat on one side, the detectives on the other. A white fluorescent light hummed from above.

The detectives already knew that Johnny had a mental problem from talking to several people in his neighborhood the night before. Neighbors told the detectives that Johnny acted strangely and that they had seen him walking around Susan Hamwi's house in the past. One neighbor thought Johnny had asked Susan out on a date, but she refused. Johnny was perspiring heavily. His blue and green plaid shirt had growing stains under his armpits and he kept wiping his forehead with a handkerchief.

"You nervous, Johnny?" Rice said.

"Uh huh."

"Johnny, have you ever been treated for mental illness?"

"Yes, yes, I have. Dr. Jordon, he treated me."

"What's wrong with you? Do you have a split personality?"

"Yes. Uh humm. There's a good John and a bad John."

Rice clicked on the tape recorder.

Johnny looked at Rice and Martin alternately, his eyes wide and his fingers tapping on the table in front of him.

Before they could ask another question, Johnny blurted out, "I just knew her as a neighbor, that's as far as it went. I just knew her. I talked to her once and that's as far as it went....I don't want no trouble and I'm not in no trouble at all. That's all I can say, okay?" "Fine, John," Rice said.

Rice asked him whether he understood his rights.

Yeah yeah," Johnny said.

You have the right to remain silent," Martin began.

"I didn't do nothing," Johnny interrupted. "I'm just telling you I didn't do nothing."

Martin continued to recite Johnny's rights, explaining he had the right to an attorney and could stop answering questions whenever he wished.

"I don't need an attorney," Johnny said. He was getting impatient.

Martin said, "John, I wanted to ask you, you know why we're interested in talking to you? You know why? Because you live in the neighborhood where a young lady was killed."

"Yeah I know that," Johnny said.

Martin asked Johnny about Susan Hamwi.

"How long have you known Susan?" Martin said.

"Just a little while, just a little while," Johnny said. "I didn't know her very much. She would come in the car, she would wave sometimes when she'd go down the street and that's all."

Johnny told them he never saw Susan's daughter, didn't know her name. Never been in the house.

"How many more questions are you going to ask me?" Johnny said. He was wondering what his mother was doing.

Johnny told the detectives the last time he had seen Susan was the night before Halloween. He had gone to her house to say hello. She was a nice lady. He wanted to be a nice neighbor.

"I was just concerned about her from time to time," Johnny said. "I said to her 'today people just don't care about nobody.'"

Johnny said he once gave Susan his number, nothing more than a friendly gesture. "I gave her my phone number just in case she needed something, in case she needed some assistance or something like that."

The detectives saw that Johnny was becoming increasingly nervous. His shirt was soaked by now, and he kept shifting in his seat, looking around the room.

"We appreciate you coming down and helping us, because we'd like to find out who did this," Martin said.

"I don't know who did," Johnny snapped back. "I don't know who did it, I'm telling you."

Emma Jo remained in the waiting room, having finished looking through the mug shot books and becoming increasingly anxious. She asked the policewoman several times whether they were done talking with her son.

In the interrogation room, Rice and Martin kept drilling Johnny with questions. When did you last see Susan? Were you over at the house? Did you ever see any of her friends coming and going? Did she seem like a nice lady to you? Did you ever bring Susan anything?

Johnny closed his eyes as if he were straining to remember. He said that he visited Susan several times to check on her well being. She once told him she didn't like living in Fort Lauderdale and wanted to move.

"I'm not in no trouble. I'm just a friend," Johnny said.

"That's as far as it goes. Do you understand? That's as far as it goes."

Johnny recalled he met another woman once in Susan's driveway after stopping by to say hello.

"I just tried to be nice," Johnny said. "I'm a communitist."

Rice and Martin looked at each other in confusion. A "communitist" was a word that Johnny had invented, a term he used for someone interested in his community

"I'm concerned about people in my community," Johnny explained. "I will take them, if they need some orange juice, I'll take them some orange juice."

Rice asked Johnny whether Susan ever brought out the baby for him to see.

"She never brought the baby down," Johnny said. "I'm not in it. I'm not in no trouble. I didn't kill the girl. She was just a neighbor. That's all I know."

However they tried, the detectives could not get Johnny to say anything that might implicate him in the crime or help further their investigation.

"John, we're not upsetting you are we?" Martin said.

"No you're not upsetting me."

"I mean, we're not bad guys. You don't feel like we're bad," Rice said. "I mean, we're here to be nice." Johnny said he wanted to leave.

"Well, we have a couple of other questions," Martin said. "But if you want to leave..."

"I would rather leave," Johnny said.

Detective Martin shut off the tape recorder. The three remained in the room.

Emma Jo lost her patience. She had been sitting nearly an hour and finally got up and looked through the window of a set of double doors that led to the interrogation room. She saw one of the detectives with his back to the window. He was standing over Johnny and appeared to be yelling at him.

Johnny was trying to get up from his chair. When he started to stand, Emma Jo saw the detective's hand push him back down.

She could see Johnny was crying.

Emma Jo ran to the door to try to listen. She heard one of the detectives raising his voice to her son. She pushed open the double doors leading to the interrogation room.

"Hey, you can't go in there," the policewoman said.

Emma Jo heard one of the detectives say to her son, "We know you killed her. We're going to put you in the electric chair or prison for the rest of your life."

Emma Jo stood before the detectives, her fists clenched.

"If you have anything on him, put him in jail or you let him go," she said. "You've had him long enough."

Her eyes narrowed. "I heard what you said to him about the electric chair."

"You didn't hear me say that," Rice said.

"Oh yes I did," Emma Jo said.

"I didn't say anything."

"You did, too."

"Look, Mrs. Bartlett. I'm sorry if we've upset your son. We're just trying to find out what happened down the street from you. We didn't mean to scare him. We just need you both to cooperate with us."

Rice asked Emma Jo whether he and Martin could come to the house to search it. Just a routine matter. If they had nothing to hide, what difference would it make? He handed her a search consent form.

Emma Jo read the form. It gave the detectives the right to search the entire house, including the yard, the garbage bins, every inch of property.

"No, I'm not signing this," Emma Jo said.

"Why not?" Rice asked.

"My children don't ask me if they can go search my bedroom and go through my private things, and I'm certainly not going to let you. That's my private world."

"We won't..."

"No, I won't sign it. I'll give you permission to go to my house, but you can only search Johnny's room, the bathroom, the kitchen, music room and outside. I'll give you that permission. I don't want you in my bedroom."

"Fine. Fine, Mrs. Bartlett. We'll be there later," Rice said.

Emma Jo grabbed Johnny by the hand and left the police station. Johnny was crying. His mother decided he was too upset to drive and took the car keys from him.

On the ride home, Johnny turned to his mother and said, "Mother, do you know what they tried to do to me in there?"

"What did they do, Johnny?"

"They tried to make me say that I killed Susan Hamwi. They told me over and over again that I murdered her, that I stabbed her. They kept saying, 'John, how did she look as she lay on the floor? Tell us how she looked. Tell us.' They wouldn't stop, mom.

"They said 'we know you did it and we're going to put you in the electric chair or in prison for the rest of your life.' They said 'you're going there because we know that you did it.' That's what they said."

"I heard them, Johnny. They should have never said that to you," Emma Jo said.

"And what did you tell them, Johnny?"

"I told them the truth mother," Johnny said. "I didn't do it. I didn't kill that girl and you know I did not, mother."

When they pulled into the driveway, detectives Martin and Rice were already there waiting. So was Emma Jo's younger son, Jerry, who happened to stop by during an

afternoon break from community college in Fort Lauderdale. Jerry lived in Miami, but kept a set of keys to the house so he could come over when he was in the area.

"I didn't want to let them in until you got here, mom. What's going on?" Jerry said.

"They want to take a look at some of Johnny's things. I guess that have some crazy notion that Johnny was involved with the murder of that lady down the street."

"Don't you think we should get a lawyer? I mean this is serious, mom," Jerry said.

"We've got nothing to hide. They'll be out of here soon enough, and maybe they'll leave us alone."

Emma Jo let the detectives inside and followed them as they went into Johnny's room with brown paper evidence bags.

Johnny's room, like Johnny, was simple. He had a bed, a desk, a dresser with a television on top and a closet with his slacks, shirts and several suits. Johnny prided himself on being a good dresser. He never wore blue jeans or T-shirts, always nice slacks and button\_down shirts. Plaids were his favorites. He favored leather loafers and oxfords over tennis shoes.

Johnny always cleaned his own room, though sometimes when he was in a bad mood, he would let it get messy and have to be told by his mother to clean it up, just like a child. His mother always did Johnny's laundry, folded it for him and put in his dresser.

Rice and Martin emptied the dresser drawers on top of the bed, sorting through Johnny's underwear, socks and pajamas. Rice searched through a laundry hamper in the

bathroom and selected some soiled mens clothes. He took a brown pair of Haggard slacks, a pair of white Jockey undershorts, a white handkerchief and a pair of white tennis shorts.

By time the detectives were finished, the house was a mess. Clothes, books, magazines, kitchen items and furniture were strewn everywhere. They had even emptied all the garbage cans.

"Are you happy now?" Emma Jo said. "Will you gentlemen please leave us alone now. I think we've been very polite and accommodating. We've done everything you asked of us."

The detectives placed Johnny's clothing in plastic evidence bags. "We'll let you know if we need anything else, Mrs. Bartlett," Rice said.

"I'm sure you will," she said, and closed the door.

Emma Jo got on the phone to her daughter, Joann, to tell her what had happened. Joann told her mother that she better get a lawyer because this likely will not be the last time the police will want to talk to Johnny.

Joann said she had a lawyer friend named Ed Rumin and told her mother to call him right away. If nothing else, Rumin could offer a little free advice in case the police came around again.

As much as she hoped the matter would be over when the detectives found nothing on Johnny's clothes, Emma Jo decided it would be wise to get some advice. She called Rumin and explained what happened, telling him that Johnny had gone in for questioning, and that police had searched their house. Rumin told her to come to his

office right away. They had to talk now. Emma Jo was sitting in his office within a half-hour.

"This is serious, Mrs. Bartlett," Rumin said. "Johnny is obviously a suspect in this murder case. What the police did today should never have happened. They took advantage of you. You're a good person and they can see that. But you have to know your rights and Johnny's rights."

"Johnny didn't do anything, Mr. Rumin," Emma Jo said. "I don't know what we have to worry about."

"That may be, but the police can make things very difficult for you," he said.

Rumin handed Emma Jo one of his business cards.

"Mrs. Bartlett, tell Johnny that if anybody ever stops him on the street, if anybody ever comes to your home and you are not there and they want to talk about the murder, you call me right away," Rumin said. "Tell him not to say anything. Call me, and I'll be right over. Tell Johnny to keep my name and number with him all the time. Always."

Emma Jo put the card in her purse.

"Remember Mrs. Bartlett, this is a serious situation. No matter what happens, don't let the police try to intimidate your son. We don't want to see an innocent man go to jail. The police might pick him up, and if he goes to jail, it's going to cost you a lot of money to get him out."

When Emma Jo got home, Johnny was in his bedroom watching television. She took a piece of paper from a desk, and cut out a square on which she wrote Ed Rumin's name and phone number. She called Johnny into the room.

"Sit down, Johnny. I want to talk to you," she said. "I spoke with Mr. Rumin. He's a lawyer, and he told me some very important things that you need to know."

"Why? I haven't done anything, mom," Johnny said. "Just listen to me, Johnny. Okay? Listen good. This Mr. Rumin told me that you are to keep his name and phone number with you at all times. Put it in your billfold."

She handed the piece of paper to Johnny. He put it in his wallet.

"You are never to take it out, Johnny. Never," Emma Jo said. "If the police stop you for any reason, tell them you want to call your attorney first. Understand? The police will probably come back looking for you."

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End Chapter One

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Kevin Davis