



I am not a serial killer. Some are called to preach and some are called to act, so I don't apologize for what I've done or anything I will do. I am God's hitman. This is my blessing or my curse. It really just depends on what side of my knife you're standing. So to those too blind to see, I simply say, You're Welcome!

JUVENILE X

by The Brothers Rodemeyer

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JUVENILE X



THE BROTHERS RODEMEYER

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ISBN: 978-1-64718-648-7

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Published by BookLocker.com, Inc., St. Petersburg, Florida.

Printed on acid-free paper.

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BookLocker.com, Inc.
2020

First Edition

CHAPTER ONE

Seattle Police Department
10049 College Way N.
Seattle, WA 98133

I am not a serial killer.

My acts are not random or spontaneous and I'm no maniac. I'm just doing my job and I want to explain myself because people are freaking out for no good reason.

Cool?

Okay, everyone can chill.

Some are called to preach and some to act, so I don't apologize for what I've done or anything I will do. I live on the fringes by choice and you don't know my name because I choose not to share. Just resist the urge to pin a label on me before you hear me out.

Now that I have your attention, I'd like to break into a sermon. Please open your hymnals...

I'M MESSING WITH YOU!

I'm not a Bible-banger, I just follow orders.

I am God's hitman.

Seriously.

It's not an official title or anything, but it fits and I Kinda like the way it sounds. It can be a lame gig sometimes, but like the old man says, if nobody was willing to do the crap work we'd all be buried under a mountain of poop.

This is my blessing or my curse. It really just depends on what side of my knife you're standing.

I know writing a crazy letter to the police is the Kinda thing a serial killer would do, but it only seemed neighborly. And like a good neighbor, I'm just looking out for your kids.

So to those too blind to see, I simply say,

You're Welcome!

CHAPTER TWO

²⁵Under a sky gone black as sackcloth, poets wailed soliloquies while the Emerald City burned. ²⁶Into this land of sheep, the wolves descended. ²⁷Donning wooly masks, the beasts blended with the flock to feed upon the innocent. ²⁸With no shepherd to save them, a child proclaimed, “Are you freaking kidding me? Not cool, dudes, not cool...”

2 David 3:25-28

Once history, now myth, the legend of the boy king has passed from fact into storybook fable.

Cynics confirmed a descent into madness.

Believers hailed an ascent to enlightenment.

Everyone else was too busy texting to notice.

Whichever the case, David’s journey began at the age of six when he arrived at the Wayland Institute. That’s the standard telling of the tale at any rate. Like most stories, the version most told is the furthest from fact. In truth, the legend began on a winter’s eve more than a decade earlier.

Arlo was the name on his birth ticket, but everyone called him Chuck. A stubby fireplug of a man with a booming voice and perpetual grin, he dedicated his life to the well-being of children.

His standard white doctor's coat showed strain on the buttons from being stretched across a generous midsection, and a slew of pens jutted from his ink-stained breast pocket due to Chuck's penchant for losing them so often. A dangling stethoscope framed a bushy beard gone gray before its time, but much like its wearer, it only improved with age. The lone article that threw off Chuck's typical physician's garb was his tattered blue baseball cap which, if not on his slightly balding dome, was always close at hand.

One of Seattle's foremost child psychologists, the good doctor was in his fifties and contemplating early retirement when he made the decision to return to Ahnkuttie.

Over one-hundred-seventy islands lined the seaward passage from the Pacific Ocean through the Strait of Juan De Fuca to the city of Seattle, Washington. Some were well-known, but most were just uninhabited dots on a map.

Ahnkuttie was one of those lonely little dots.

Translated from the native Chinook Indian, Ahnkuttie meant, "Once upon a time." Not unusual considering the island was a place of kings, queens, and fairytales.

Unless, of course, belief in such childish things has fallen victim to time.

If that's the case, Ahnkuttie was nothing more than an abandoned rock floating smack in the middle of nowhere. A speedbump on a murky shipping canal serving no practical purpose.

However, for those who dared to dream childlike dreams, Ahnkuttie was a magical place where love made miracles happen.

Well, love and a big-ass knife.

Wayland was the surname of the seafarer who discovered the island back in the latter half of the eighteenth century.

Claiming the land for farming, he cleared the acreage where the institute now stands. Ultimately, harsh weather conditions quashed his plans, so he returned to the sea and was never heard from again.

For generations, Ahnkuttie stood uninhabited, waiting for another Wayland to claim his birthright. Now, Chuck Wayland saw it as an opportunity to provide a lasting home to those who had none.

Throughout his career, the kindly physician found himself disheartened by how many children slipped through the system. Abuse-related behavioral disorders excluded more than a few from Foster Care or adoption. Society's stepchildren were then locked away until their eighteenth birthday before being released into a world they were ill-prepared to survive.

The thought of the inexcusable evil perpetrated upon these innocents, often by the very people they loved most, drove Chuck to drink. A silent plea tortured him through countless sleepless nights and far too many bottles of scotch.

If only there were a place where these kids could get a second chance at the life stolen from them...

This was the reason Chuck returned to Ahnkuttie and built the Wayland Institute.

At least that's the reason he gave when asked because he feared the truth might earn him a one-way ticket on the loony caboose.

News of a special child in need of his help was personally delivered by Chuck's Aunt Jackie. Such a request would not normally cause alarm but for one disturbing fact.

Aunt Jackie was dead.

CHAPTER THREE

Before that fateful night, Chuck lived his entire life as a man of science, bound by reason. Now, for the first time, he would defy all logical arguments.

Never one to flaunt the good Book, the doctor was a confirmed atheist believing only what he could see and hear with his own eyes and ears. In those days, he was prone to ask, “If God is so almighty, why are so many children suffering?”

The old man liked to believe that the entity who appeared to him in a dream that night was a ghost because he found it difficult to accept the alternative. Even still, he could not deny what he saw and heard.

Chuck’s Aunt Jackie died long before he was born when she and his late father were in their teens, and the how’s and why’s of her early demise were things his dad never shared. Made mute by unspeakable trauma, the siblings lived a psychological nightmare long after their visible scars healed.

Sometimes, Chuck would catch his father staring at Jackie’s photo with tears in his eyes. He loved his old man even though he never told him enough. It made him sad to see his dad cry, and the memory left him sadder still.

In Chuck’s dream, his Aunt Jackie didn’t sprout white wings, wear flowing robes, or don a halo. In fact, she bore none of the traditional earmarks of the Biblical Angels he’d seen in books and paintings. When she talked, she didn’t quote scripture, and her voice did not thunder with almighty

resonance. Jackie just flashed a crooked smile and said, “Your father is proud of you.”

At that moment, the good doctor did not need a book to know what he felt, and he wept as he’d never cried before that night.

When Jackie shared news of the coming of a special child, his destiny was made clear.

“You will provide a home and raise this child into the man who will rid this world of those you detest most,” she revealed. “The monsters who prey upon innocence and ruin lives will soon meet their judgment.”

Over the following week, the puzzled pediatrician struggled through headaches trying to find cause for his delusion. After all, there was that time he swore up and down that a lizard was nibbling on his toes while he slept. A thorough search included disassembling his bed and even hiring an exterminator. In the end, he found his feet just got cold at night and tended to tingle. A thick pair of socks ended that mystery. There was no tiny reptile chewing on Chuck’s “big piggy,” but his bed frame would forever squeak after being torn apart so many times.

The befuddled doctor spent days pouring over medical journals. Research uncovered several plausible explanations for his dilemma, but none that could alter his sense of purpose. A furious debate waged in his head for six full days. Each night he went to bed hoping to see Jackie again if only to ask a few more questions, but she never returned.

On a Sunday morning, Chuck awoke with the dawn, shuttered his successful practice, and packed his bags. He would not speak of Jackie’s visitation or his Divine mission for the remainder of his years.

It took several seasons to reclaim the old homestead back from Mother Nature at the cost of most of Chuck’s savings. When

the Wayland Institute opened, there was little fanfare, but immense pride. The original farmhouse, now converted into a dormitory, held two dozen beds where he and his small staff would care for children deemed lost causes by the state.

For ten years, Chuck took in children who needed a home, and for ten years he waited for the child Jackie prophesied. In those days, the good doctor wore many hats. First as a mentor and father figure, but also as a schoolteacher during the week. And because it was the regular cook's day off, every Sunday he would put on his apron and chef's cap.

Chuck's go-to meal was from his father's famous chili recipe. Voted Best Chili at the Peoria Fair back in '63, the formula his dad handed down was his most prized possession. Ladling the concoction with pride, he called his dish, "The finest chili north of San Antonio." This despite the fact he'd never set foot in Texas or even ventured south of Portland his entire life.

Home-schooling was new to him, but Chuck's students always scored above average on state-sanctioned exams even though he hated standardized testing. The implication that kids could be slotted into neat, narrow boxes rubbed him all kinds of wrong. As a result, he petitioned the School Board and argued his case all the way to the State Supreme Court. In the end, Might won out over Right, but Chuck fought the good fight. The kids deserved that much.

After turning eighteen and leaving Ahnkuttie for good, his former students would always share credit for their future successes with the kindly old soul who took them in when no one else would. They arrived at the Wayland Institute damaged, scared, and abandoned. They left as confident adults, showered with love, and made whole by the power of that love.

Chuck always felt a tinge of heartache when one of his kids "graduated" from childhood. The pain was short-lived,

however, since he knew that space was now available for another child who needed a home. During that time, he spent many sleepless nights wondering if Jackie had been a booze-fueled hallucination, or worse, a symptom of his failing faculties due to advancing age.

“Maybe I am a crazy old fool,” he teased himself.

Sometimes he felt like the old lady who lived in a shoe who had so many children she didn’t know what to do. Chuck liked that comparison. In time, he rationalized it didn’t matter if Jackie was real or not. He was right where he belonged, doing precisely what he was meant to do.

There was a reason for every season, and the world was Chuck’s classroom.

Every spring, he would show the children how to plant and tend a garden, teaching the importance of building a strong foundation for growth.

Summertime brought nature walks through the surrounding forest. Chuck’s short legs and choppy stride resembled a penguin’s waddle, and the children would follow in his footsteps, mimicking his bow-legged gait to his endless delight. Then they would have a picnic and he’d school them about the abundance of beauty the world offered to those not confined by narrow perceptions.

In autumn, leaves painted the island in magnificent hues of red and gold. The good doctor used the fall to exemplify that splendor was not restricted to the early seasons of one’s life. “Sometimes true magnificence can only be found near journey’s end,” he’d say while rubbing his silver beard with a knowing glint in his eyes.

Chuck and the kids braved harsh winters standing around bonfires, roasting marshmallows, and singing carols. In the glow of firelight, he preached about finding joy even in our coldest and darkest times.

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Each Christmas, he would dress as Santa Claus and hand out gifts. On Easter, eggs were hidden and found. Halloween was a time for scary stories and candy. And every New Year's Eve, he would splurge on bottle rockets and sparklers for the kids.

As the calendar signaled the beginning of his eleventh spring on Ahnkuttie, Chuck was in his sixties and blissfully resigned to his fate.

Then one day, a seaplane arrived from the mainland carrying one small child.



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