

PROLOGUE

They were all beautiful young women. Even in the black-and-white crime scene photos from the coroner's files, you could see how attractive they had been. Each set of dark, shadowy images depicted the final nightmarish end scene of a separate, gruesome horror story. The extreme severity and brutality of the injuries inflicted upon them was shocking to behold.

When the killer came, he came in the late evening or early morning. He would slip in through an unlocked window or door of the residence, brutally attack his victim, and then quietly disappear into the night. This was a killer who was bold and sure of himself. He was quick and efficient. Darkness was his ally. No witnesses ever got a good look at him. There was no suspect description in any of the files, and no one had been arrested or detained.

A number of obvious questions came to mind. What kind of person was capable of perpetrating these atrocities? How could one human being do this to another? Why had no one, as yet, been held accountable? And most perplexing of all, what was being done to bring the killer, or killers, to justice?

It was the fall of 1995. The murders had occurred between 1977 and 1988 in four different cities in Orange County, California. Nothing was being done. No coordinated investigation of any kind was being conducted into any of these cases, nor was one even being contemplated.

Most importantly, I realized it was likely that he was still out there, somewhere, looking for his next victim.