A ROBERT HUNTER THRILLER

# CHRISCARTER

AS ADDICTIVE AS A TV BOX-SET

IF HE'S THINKING ABOUT YOU . . . YOU'RE DEAD

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER

# ANEVIL MIND

#### About the author

Born in Brazil of Italian origin, Chris Carter studied psychology and criminal behavior at the University of Michigan. As a member of the Michigan State District Attorney's Criminal Psychology team, he interviewed and studied many criminals, including serial and multiple homicide offenders with life-imprisonment convictions.

Having departed for Los Angeles in the early 1990s, Chris spent ten years as a guitarist for numerous rock bands before leaving the music business to write full-time. He now lives in London and is a Top Ten *Sunday Times* bestselling author.

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Also by Chris Carter

The Crucifix Killer
The Executioner
The Night Stalker
The Death Sculptor
One by One

# Carter AN EVIL MIND



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This novel differs immensely from all my previous books, mainly because this is the first thriller I've written in which most of the plot and characters are based on real facts and people I met during my criminal-behaviorpsychology days. The names have been changed for obvious reasons. I would like to dedicate this novel to all the readers who have entered the competition that was run in the UK to become one of the victims in this thriller, and especially to the winner, Karen Simpson, who lives in South Wales and who has been a great sport. I hope you all enjoy it.

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## **Part One**

The Wrong Man

### One

'Morning, Sheriff. Morning, Bobby,' the plump, brunette waitress with a small heart tattoo on her left wrist called from behind the counter. She didn't have to check the clock hanging from the wall to her right. She knew it would be just past 6:00 a.m.

Every Wednesday, without fail, Sheriff Walton and his deputy, Bobby Dale, came into Nora's truck-stop diner, just outside Wheatland in southeastern Wyoming, to get their sweet-pie fix. Rumor had it that Nora's Diner baked the best pies in the whole of Wyoming. A different recipe every day of the week. Wednesday was apple-and-cinnamon-pie day, Sheriff Walton's favorite. He was well aware that the first batch of pies always came out of the oven at 6:00 a.m. sharp, and you just couldn't beat the taste of a freshly baked pie.

'Morning, Beth,' Bobby replied, dusting rainwater off his coat and trousers. 'I'll tell you, the floodgates from hell have opened out there,' he added, shaking his leg as if he'd peed himself.

Summer downpours in southeastern Wyoming were a common occurrence, but this morning's storm was the heaviest they'd seen all season.

'Morning, Beth,' Sheriff Walton followed, taking off his hat, drying his face and forehead with a handkerchief, and quickly looking around the diner. At that time in the morning, and with such torrential rain outside, the place was a lot less busy than usual. Only three out of its fifteen tables were taken.

A man and a woman in their mid-twenties were sitting at the table nearest to the door, having a pancake breakfast. The sheriff figured that the beat-up, silver WV Golf parked outside belonged to them. The next table along was occupied by a large, sweaty, shaved-headed man, who must've weighed at least 350 pounds. The amount of food sitting on the table in front of him would've easily been enough to feed two very hungry people, maybe three.

The last table by the window was taken by a tall, gray-haired man, with a bushy horseshoe mustache and a crooked nose. His forearms were covered in faded tattoos. He'd already finished his breakfast and was now sitting back on his chair, toying with a packet of cigarettes and looking pensive, as if he had a very difficult decision to make.

There was no doubt in Sheriff Walton's mind that the two large trucks outside belonged to those two.

Sitting at the end of the counter, drinking a cup of black coffee and eating a chocolate-coated donut, was a pleasantly dressed man who looked to be in his forties. His hair was short and well kept, and his beard stylish and neatly trimmed. He was flipping through a copy of the morning's newspaper. His had to be the dark-blue Ford Taurus parked by the side of the diner, Sheriff Walton concluded.

'Just in time,' Beth said, winking at the sheriff. 'They're just out of the oven.' She gave him a tiny shrug. 'As if you didn't know.'

The sweet smell of freshly baked apple pie with a hint of cinnamon had already engulfed the entire place.

Sheriff Walton smiled. 'We'll have our usual, Beth,' he said, taking a seat at the counter.

'Coming right up,' Beth replied before disappearing into the kitchen. Seconds later she returned with two steamy, extra-large slices of pie, drizzled with honey cream. They looked like perfection on a plate.

'Umm . . .' the man sitting at the far end of the counter said, tentatively raising a finger like a kid asking his teacher's permission to speak. 'Is there any more of that pie left?'

'There sure is,' Beth replied, smiling back at him.

'In that case, can I also have a slice, please?'

'Yeah, me too,' the large truck driver called out from his table, lifting his hand. He was already licking his lips.

'And me,' the horseshoe-mustache man said, returning the cigarette pack to his jacket pocket. 'That pie smells darn good.'

'Tastes good too,' Beth added.

'Good doesn't even come close,' Sheriff Walton said, turning to face the tables. 'Y'all just about to be taken to pie heaven.' Suddenly his eyes widened in surprise. 'Holy shit,' he breathed out, jumping off his seat.

The sheriff's reaction made Bobby Dale swing his body around fast and follow the sheriff's stare. Through the large window just behind where the mid-twenties couple was sitting, he saw the headlights of a pick-up truck coming straight at them. The car seemed completely out of control.

'What the hell?' Bobby said, getting to his feet.

Everyone in the diner turned to face the window, and the shocked look on everyone's face was uniform. The vehicle was coming toward them like a guided missile, and it was showing no signs of diverting or slowing down. They had two, maybe three seconds before impact.

'EVERYBODY TAKE COVER!' Sheriff Walton yelled, but he didn't have to. Reflexively, everybody in the restaurant was already scrambling on their feet to get out of the way. At that speed, the pick-up truck would crash through the front of the diner and probably not stop until it reached the kitchen at the back, destroying everything in its path, and killing everyone in its way.

A chaotic mess of desperate screams and movement took over the restaurant floor. They all knew they just didn't have enough time to get out of the way.

#### **CRUUUUNCH-BOOM!**

The deafening crashing noise sounded like an explosion, making the ground shake under everyone's feet.

Sheriff Walton was the first to look up. It took him a few seconds to realize that somehow the car hadn't crashed through the front of the building.

Frowning was followed by confusion.