

THE SUNDAY TIMES BESTSELLER

CHRIS CARTER

HE WATCHES

HE WAITS

HE KILLS

THE NIGHT
STALKER

THE NIGHT STALKER

About the author

Born in Brazil of Italian origin, Chris Carter studied psychology and criminal behaviour 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 the *Sunday Times* bestselling author of *The Executioner* and *The Crucifix Killer*.

Visit www.chriscarterbooks.com

Also by Chris Carter

The Crucifix Killer

The Executioner

CHRIS
CARTER
THE NIGHT
STALKER



London · New York · Sydney · Toronto

A CBS COMPANY

First published in Great Britain by Simon & Schuster UK Ltd, 2011

A CBS Company

Copyright © Chris Carter, 2011

This book is copyright under the Berne Convention.

No reproduction without permission.

® and © 1997 Simon & Schuster Inc. All rights reserved.

The right of Chris Carter to be identified as author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988.

Simon & Schuster UK Ltd

1st Floor

222 Gray's Inn Road

London WC1X 8HB

www.simonandschuster.co.uk

Simon & Schuster Australia

Sydney

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Hardback ISBN 978-0-85720-295-6

Trade Paperback ISBN 978-0-85720-296-3

eBook ISBN 978-0-85720-299-4

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either a product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual people living or dead, events or locales is entirely coincidental.

Typeset by Hewer Text UK Ltd, Edinburgh

Printed and bound in Great Britain by CPI Mackays

This novel is dedicated to my family and to Coral Chambers, for being there
for me when I most needed someone.

Acknowledgements

I am tremendously grateful to several people without whom this novel would never have been possible.

My agent, Darley Anderson, who is not only the best agent an author could ever hope for, but also a true friend. Camilla Wray, my literary guardian angel, whose comments, suggestions, knowledge and friendship I could never do without. Everyone at the Darley Anderson Literary Agency for striving tirelessly to promote my work anywhere and everywhere possible.

Maxine Hitchcock, my fantastic editor at Simon & Schuster, for being so amazing at what she does. My publishers, Ian Chapman and Suzanne Baboneau, for their tremendous support and belief. Everyone at Simon & Schuster for working their socks off on every aspect of the publishing process.

Samantha Johnson for lending a sympathetic ear to so many of my terrible ideas.

My love and most sincere thanks go to Coral Chambers, for keeping me from breaking.

Contents

[One](#)

[Two](#)

[Three](#)

[Four](#)

[Five](#)

[Six](#)

[Seven](#)

[Eight](#)

[Nine](#)

[Ten](#)

[Eleven](#)

[Twelve](#)

[Thirteen](#)

[Fourteen](#)

[Fifteen](#)

[Sixteen](#)

[Seventeen](#)

[Eighteen](#)

[Nineteen](#)

[Twenty](#)

Twenty-One

Twenty-Two

Twenty-Three

Twenty-Four

Twenty-Five

Twenty-Six

Twenty-Seven

Twenty-Eight

Twenty-Nine

Thirty

Thirty-One

Thirty-Two

Thirty-Three

Thirty-Four

Thirty-Five

Thirty-Six

Thirty-Seven

Thirty-Eight

Thirty-Nine

Forty

Forty-One

Forty-Two

Forty-Three

Forty-Four

Forty-Five

Forty-Six

[Forty-Seven](#)

[Forty-Eight](#)

[Forty-Nine](#)

[Fifty](#)

[Fifty-One](#)

[Fifty-Two](#)

[Fifty-Three](#)

[Fifty-Four](#)

[Fifty-Five](#)

[Fifty-Six](#)

[Fifty-Seven](#)

[Fifty-Eight](#)

[Fifty-Nine](#)

[Sixty](#)

[Sixty-One](#)

[Sixty-Two](#)

[Sixty-Three](#)

[Sixty-Four](#)

[Sixty-Five](#)

[Sixty-Six](#)

[Sixty-Seven](#)

[Sixty-Eight](#)

[Sixty-Nine](#)

[Seventy](#)

[Seventy-One](#)

[Seventy-Two](#)

[Seventy-Three](#)

[Seventy-Four](#)

[Seventy-Five](#)

[Seventy-Six](#)

[Seventy-Seven](#)

[Seventy-Eight](#)

[Seventy-Nine](#)

[Eighty](#)

[Eighty-One](#)

[Eighty-Two](#)

[Eighty-Three](#)

[Eighty-Four](#)

[Eighty-Five](#)

[Eighty-Six](#)

[Eighty-Seven](#)

[Eighty-Eight](#)

[Eighty-Nine](#)

[Ninety](#)

[Ninety-One](#)

[Ninety-Two](#)

[Ninety-Three](#)

[Ninety-Four](#)

[Ninety-Five](#)

[Ninety-Six](#)

[Ninety-Seven](#)

[Ninety-Eight](#)

Ninety-Nine

One Hundred

One Hundred and One

One Hundred and Two

One Hundred and Three

One Hundred and Four

One Hundred and Five

One Hundred and Six

One Hundred and Seven

One Hundred and Eight

One Hundred and Nine

One Hundred and Ten

One Hundred and Eleven

One Hundred and Twelve

One Hundred and Thirteen

One Hundred and Fourteen

One Hundred and Fifteen

One

Doctor Jonathan Winston pulled the surgical mask over his mouth and nose and checked the clock on the wall of autopsy room number four on the underground floor of the Los Angeles County Department of Coroner. 6:12 p.m.

The body on the stainless steel table a few feet in front of him was of an unidentified white female in her late twenties, early thirties. Her shoulder-length black hair was wet, its tips plastered to the metal table. Under the brightness of the surgical light, her pale skin looked rubbery, almost unhuman. It hadn't been possible to identify the presumed cause of death at the location where the body was found. There was no blood, no bullet or knife wounds, no lumps or abrasions to her head or torso and no hematomas around her neck to indicate she'd been strangled. Her body was clear of traumas, except for the fact that her mouth and vagina had been stitched shut by whoever had killed her. The thread used was bulky and heavy – the stitches untidy and careless.

'Are we ready?' Doctor Winston said to Sean Hannay, the young forensic assistant in the room.

Hannay's eyes were glued to the woman's face and her sealed lips. For some reason he felt more nervous than usual.

'Sean, are we OK?'

'Umm, yes, Doctor, sorry.' His eyes finally met Doctor Winston's and he nodded. 'We're all set here.' He positioned himself to the right of the table while the doctor activated the digital recording device on the counter closest to him.

Doctor Winston stated the date and time, the names of those present, and the autopsy file number. The body had already been measured and weighed, so he proceeded to dictate the victim's physical characteristics. Before making any incisions, Doctor Winston meticulously studied the body, looking for any marks that could help identify the victim. As his eyes rested on the stitches applied to the victim's lower body, he paused and squinted.

'Wait a second,' he whispered, stepping closer and carefully moving the victim's legs apart. 'Please pass me the flashlight, Sean.' He extended his hand towards the forensic assistant without taking his eyes off the victim. Concern crept into his gaze.

'Something wrong?' Hannay asked, handing Doctor Winston a small metal flashlight.

'Maybe.' He directed its beam towards something that had caught his eye.

Hannay shifted his weight from foot to foot.

'The stitches aren't medical suture,' Doctor Winston said for the benefit of the audio record. 'They're amateurish and imprecise. Like a teenager sewing a patch onto an old pair of ripped jeans.' He moved closer still. 'The stitches are also too spread apart, the gaps between them are too wide, and . . .' he paused, cocking his head, '. . . no way.'

Hannay felt his whole body shiver. 'What?' He stepped forward.

Doctor Winston drew a deep breath and slowly looked up at Hannay. 'I think the killer left something inside her.'

'What?'

Doctor Winston concentrated on the flashlight beam for a few more seconds until he was sure. 'The light is being reflected off something inside her.'

Hannay bent down, following the doctor's gaze. It took him only a second to see it. 'Shit, the light is reflecting off something. What is it?'

'I don't know, but whatever it is it's large enough to show through the stitches.'

The doctor straightened up and grabbed a metal pointer from the instrument tray.

‘Sean, hold the light for me; like this.’ He handed the flashlight to the young assistant and showed him exactly where he wanted him to focus the beam.

The doctor bent over and inserted the tip of the metal pointer between two of the stitches, guiding it towards the object inside the victim.

Hannay kept the flashlight steady.

‘It’s something metallic,’ Winston announced, using the pointer as a probe, ‘but I still can’t say for certain what it could be. Pass me the stitch-cutting scissors and the forceps, will you?’

It didn’t take him long to slice through the stitches. As he cut through each one, Doctor Winston used the forceps to pinch and pull the thick black thread from the victim’s skin, placing it into a small plastic evidence collection container.

‘Was she raped?’ Hannay asked.

‘There are cuts and bruises around her groin that are consistent with forced penetration,’ Doctor Winston confirmed, ‘but they could’ve been caused by the object that’s been inserted into her. I’ll take some swabs and send them up to the lab together with the thread samples.’ He placed the scissors and the forceps on the used instrument tray. ‘Let’s find out what the killer has left us, shall we?’

Hannay tensed as Doctor Winston inserted his right hand into the victim. ‘Well, I was right, it’s not a small object.’

A few silent, uneasy seconds went by.

‘And it’s oddly shaped too,’ the doctor announced. ‘Sort of squared with something strange attached to its top.’ He finally managed to grab hold of it. As he pulled it out, an attachment at the top clicked.

Hannay stepped forward to gain a better look.

‘Metal, relatively heavy, looks handmade . . .’ Doctor Winston said, staring at the object in his hand. ‘But I’m still not sure what . . .’ He paused and felt his heart hammer inside his chest as his eyes widened in realization. ‘Oh my God . . .’

Two

It took Detective Robert Hunter of the Los Angeles Robbery Homicide Division (RHD) over an hour to drive from the Hollywood Courthouse to the disused butcher's shop in East LA. He was paged over four hours ago, but the trial in which he was testifying had run a lot later than he'd expected.

Hunter was part of an exclusive elite; an elite that most LAPD detectives would give their right arm *not* to become part of. The Homicide Special Section (HSS) of the RHD was created to deal solely with serial, high-profile and homicide cases requiring extensive investigative time and expertise. Inside the HSS, Hunter had an even more specialized task. Due to his criminal behavior psychology background, he was assigned to cases where overwhelming brutality had been used by the perpetrator. The department tagged such cases as UV, *ultra-violent*.

The butcher's shop was the last in a parade of closed-down businesses. The whole neighborhood seemed to have been neglected. Hunter parked his old Buick next to a white forensic crime lab van. As he stepped out of the car, he allowed his eyes to study the outside of the buildings for a while. All the windows had been covered by solid metal shutters. There was so much graffiti on the outside walls Hunter couldn't tell what color the buildings had originally been.

He approached the officer guarding the entrance, flashed his badge and stooped under the yellow crime-scene tape. The officer nodded but remained silent, his stare distant.

Hunter pushed the door open and stepped inside.

The foul smell that hit him knocked him back and made him gag – a combination of putrid meat, stale sweat, vomit and urine that burned his nostrils and stung at his eyes. He paused for a moment before pulling the collar of his shirt up and over his nose and mouth as an improvised mask.

‘These work better,’ Carlos Garcia said, coming out of the back room and handing Hunter a surgical nose mask. He was wearing one himself.

Garcia was tall and slim with longish dark hair and light blue eyes. His boyish good looks were spoiled only by a slight lump on his nose, where it had been broken. Unlike all the other RHD detectives, Garcia had worked very hard to be assigned to the HSS. He’d been Hunter’s partner for almost three years now.

‘The smell gets worse once you enter the back room.’ Garcia nodded towards the door he’d just come out of. ‘How was the trial?’

‘Late,’ Hunter replied as he fitted the mask over his face. ‘What have we got?’

Garcia tilted his head to one side. ‘Some messed up stuff. White female victim, somewhere in her late twenties, early thirties. She was found on the stainless steel butcher’s worktop in there.’ He pointed to the room behind him.

‘Cause of death?’

Garcia shook his head. ‘We’ll have to wait for the autopsy. Nothing apparent. But here comes the kick. Her lips and her vagina were *stitched* shut.’

‘What?’

Garcia nodded. ‘That’s right. A very sick job. I’ve never seen anything like it.’

Hunter’s eyes darted towards the door behind his partner.

‘The body’s gone,’ Garcia offered before Hunter’s next question. ‘Doctor Winston was the Forensics lead here tonight. He wanted you to see the body and the scene in the exact way in which it was found, but he couldn’t wait any longer. The heat in there was accelerating things.’

‘When was the body taken away?’ Hunter mechanically checked his watch.

‘About two hours ago. Knowing the doc, he’s probably halfway through the autopsy already. He knows you hate sitting in on those, so there’d be no point in waiting. By the time we finish looking around this place, I’m sure he’ll have some answers for us.’

Hunter’s cell phone rang in his pocket. He grabbed it and pulled his surgical mask down, letting it hang loosely around his neck. ‘Detective Hunter.’

He listened for a few seconds. ‘What?’ His eyes shot towards Garcia, who saw Hunter’s entire demeanor change in an instant.

Three

Garcia made the trip from East LA to the Los Angeles County Department of Coroner in North Mission Road in record time.

Their confusion doubled as they approached the entrance to the coroners' parking lot. It was blocked off by four police vehicles and two fire engines. More police cars were inside the lot. Several uniformed officers were moving around chaotically, shouting orders at each other and over the radio.

The media had descended upon the scene like ravenous wolves. Local TV and newspaper vans were everywhere. Reporters, cameramen and photographers were doing their best to get as close as they could. But a tight perimeter had already been established around the main building, and it was being strictly enforced by the LAPD.

'What the hell is going on here?' Hunter whispered under his breath as Garcia pulled up by the entrance.

'You'll have to move along, sir,' a young policeman said, coming up to Garcia's window and frantically gesturing for him to drive on. 'You can't—'

He stopped as soon as he saw Garcia's badge. 'I'm sorry, Detective; I'll clear a path right away.' He turned to face the other two officers who were standing next to their vehicles. 'C'mon guys, make way.'

Less than thirty seconds later, Garcia was parking his Honda Civic just in front of the stairway that led up to the main building.

Hunter stepped out of the car and looked around. A small group of people, most of them in white coats, were huddled together at the far end of the parking lot. Hunter recognized them as lab technicians and coroner staff.