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can't resist
the urge to kill...*

*"Page-turning
excitement...riveting,
fast-paced true crime."
—M. William Phelps*

BODY PARTS

New York Times Bestselling Author

CAITLIN
ROTHER

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LOST GIRLS

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PROLOGUE

Rodney Ford had just gotten home after quitting his job on Monday, November 2, 1998, when his brother, Wayne, called.

“I’m in some real bad trouble and I think the police are looking for me. I need your help,” thirty-six-year-old Wayne said, crying. “I need you to come get me.”

Rodney was nearly two years older than Wayne and had always been stronger emotionally than his little brother. They’d been close since childhood, when they weathered their parents’ divorce and had only each other for company in faraway places, like Okinawa, Japan.

When they were boys, their personalities were as stark contrasts as their hair color. Rodney, who had brown hair, had always been easygoing and outgoing; Wayne, a blond, kept mostly to himself and seemed to have a harder time dealing with life. *Much harder.*

It was already 7:00 P.M. when Wayne called, and Rodney was tired after a long, frustrating, and final day as a general superintendent for a big construction company, especially after commuting two and a half hours each way to South San Francisco.

He didn’t relish getting back on the road, but he could hear in Wayne’s voice that something was wrong—more wrong than the half-dozen times Wayne had asked for help in the past. Wayne needed him. And Rodney wanted to be there for his brother.

They were family, and family was important to him.

So Rodney quickly threw some things in a bag and hit the highway, heading north to the Ocean Grove Lodge in the seaside town of Trinidad, California. His destination was a five-hour drive from his house in Vallejo, and about a half hour north of Eureka, the coastal city in Humboldt County where he and Wayne grew up.

It was after 1:00 A.M. when Rodney pulled off the coastal Highway 101, headed east, and turned into the driveway of the motel, which was surrounded by a commanding stand of redwood trees, some three hundred feet tall.

Immediately to the right was the main motel building, which housed the office, a restaurant, and a bar, where Wayne had spent most of the day, drinking and playing pool with the bartender. A giant neon sign on the roof that read COCKTAILS lit up the night.

To the left of the driveway was the rustic cabin where Wayne was staying, and the phone booth he’d used to call Rodney.

There were eight of these cabins, most of which were split into two units with queen-size beds. Wayne had asked for the cheapest one, which cost only \$38.50 and was also the smallest of the lot. They called it room zero.

Years earlier, room zero had been a barbershop in the same unit known as room one. When the barbershop closed, the motel owner turned it into another sleeping unit, thus the strange name. Room zero had two twin beds, a color TV, and a shower, but no kitchenette like the bigger rooms. The décor was simple: white walls and gray carpet.

Rodney parked in front of the cabin and walked up the stairs leading to a wooden deck, where Wayne was standing in the open doorway, waiting for him, with the

television on.

Wayne looked bad. Unkempt and emotionally ragged. His hair, now brown and straight, was an unruly mess. He was crying as Rodney came up and gave him a hug.

“What’s going on?” Rodney asked, genuinely concerned.

“I’m glad you’re here,” Wayne said through his tears. “I really needed you to be here. I really wanted your help.”

They went into the cabin and closed the door behind them. As they talked for nearly two hours, facing each other on the twin beds, Rodney often couldn’t follow what Wayne was saying. He kept crying as he rambled on, jumping from one topic to another. Talking nonsense, really.

After about fifteen minutes or so, Wayne started settling down a bit and wanted to discuss their troubled past.

“Why did Dad treat us the way he did?” Wayne asked. “Why did our mom leave us? Nobody loves me or cares about me.”

“Well, I love you,” Rodney said. “I care about you. I mean, I’m here.”

Rodney was not the crying type, but he was crying now, too. He didn’t like to see his brother so upset. It made him a little emotional.

Then Wayne shifted gears and wanted to talk about cars, an interest they’d always shared. Rodney restored muscle cars as a hobby, and Wayne wanted to know what kind of motor Rodney put into a certain model, that sort of thing. But that topic lasted only five minutes or so before Wayne started weeping again.

Over the past year, Wayne, who worked as a long-haul truck driver, had come through Vallejo twice a month to see Rodney. Often, they’d meet up for breakfast, or Wayne would have a meal with Rodney, Janell, and their two daughters at their condo. But Rodney usually couldn’t spend as much time with his brother as Wayne would have liked.

Wayne would always complain that his ex-wife Elizabeth wasn’t letting him see their baby son, Max.

“I miss my boy,” Wayne would say. “I can’t see my boy.”

Rodney had told Wayne not to marry Elizabeth in the first place, that she was too young and they weren’t a good match. Wayne didn’t take his advice.

Rodney had seen Wayne shed a tear or two since the divorce, but nothing like what he saw in the cabin that night.

After a while, the conversation took an unexpected turn. “I hurt some people, and I don’t want to hurt anybody anymore,” Wayne said.

“You hurt some people?” Rodney asked, confused.

“Yeah.”

The two of them used to throw punches, wrestle around, and give each other bloody noses as kids, but Rodney always won. As an adult, though, Wayne often got into brawls when he drank. That was nothing new.

“Did you get in a bar fight, or did you break a guy’s arm?” Rodney asked.

But Wayne wouldn’t discuss the extent of his actions. He simply said he wanted some help, because he didn’t want to hurt people anymore.

“I’m here to help,” Rodney said. “I want to help you.”

“I want to go to the sheriff’s,” Wayne said. “I want to turn myself in.”

After working all day, quitting his job, driving for ten hours, and now having to deal

with this, Rodney felt like he couldn't cope with another single thing.

Despite the surreal feeling that filled room zero, Rodney knew why he was there and what they had to do. But for the moment, all he wanted was to close his eyes and shut everything out for a few hours.

"Let's just go to sleep," he said. "We'll wake up in the morning, go get some breakfast, and work this out."

When they got up around 7:30 A.M., Rodney suggested they both shower and get cleaned up before getting something to eat. Wayne, who had been staying at a campground down the road for the past week, clearly hadn't bathed during that time.

Wayne seemed more like himself that morning. He was in a pretty good mood, in fact. He put on a blue knit cap, a pair of black combat boots, some faded jeans, a long-sleeved T-shirt, and a camouflage jacket over his six-foot-two-inch, two-hundred-pound frame.

They decided to go to the Denny's just off the highway in Eureka, where, over breakfast, Rodney tried broaching the subject again about the people Wayne had hurt.

"I don't want to talk about that right now," Wayne said. "I just want to spend the day with you. Let's go and look at the apartment where we lived as kids."

So that's what they did. Rodney drove them to the zoo and some of their other childhood haunts. They searched for the houses where their aunts and uncles used to live, went into a couple of motorcycle shops and checked out the bikes.

One minute Wayne would be fine, but then he'd start crying again, babbling about things Rodney couldn't understand. He just wasn't acting like the Wayne that Rodney knew.

Counting the night before, Wayne must have gone on six or seven of these crying jags, his mood shooting up and down like a yo-yo. Wayne had had a short fuse ever since the bad head injury he'd gotten in 1980, but this was different.

Rodney wondered what Wayne wasn't telling him.

"How did you hurt some people?" Rodney asked.

"If I tell you, you won't love me. You'll hate me."

"I love you," Rodney said. "I'm your brother."

"I hurt some people bad and they don't have to worry about anything anymore."

Rodney didn't like the sound of that at all. Did he mean it was too late to save any of these people from the danger they were in? Was anyone tied up or being held hostage? Or was it something worse? Rodney wondered what the hell his brother had dragged him into.

As they talked some more, they agreed that Rodney shouldn't be placed in the position where he would get into trouble for whatever Wayne had done. But by the same token, now that Rodney knew what he did, he wasn't going to let Wayne walk away—especially when Rodney could be viewed as an accomplice after the fact.

Aside from that, the two brothers had forged an unspoken alliance long ago, and Rodney intended to carry out his part of the deal.

"He knew that if I was involved, it would get done," Rodney said later. "He knew I would do what was right, regardless of the consequences."

This had been going on since Wayne was fourteen, when he broke into a sporting-goods store through the skylight and took \$1,700 worth of merchandise, including a couple hundred shotgun shells and some fishing rods.

Afterward, he showed Rodney his stash, piled up in his bedroom closet. Wayne knew that Rodney would have to tell their father what he'd done. It was all part of the implicit agreement in their twisted brotherly version of show-and-tell.

Wayne even told his brother so, later on: "I knew you would make me follow through with it," he said.

This time, Rodney knew the situation was much worse, and his brother's emotions were far more complicated. Wayne kept talking about how screwed-up his life was, and how he was never going to see his son again.

"Why do you think you're not going to see your son?" Rodney asked.

Rodney was concerned because Wayne had tried to commit suicide a couple of years earlier during the divorce, and had been talking about killing Elizabeth, too. But that morning, Wayne assured him that Elizabeth and Max were okay.

Wayne wouldn't say much more than he already had. He still wanted to turn himself in at the sheriff's department, only he didn't seem to want to actually *go* there.

He was distraught, drawing out their day together as long as he could, to make the most of what time he had left with Rodney. Once he gave himself up, he said, he knew he wouldn't see Rodney anymore because he was never going to get out of jail—the only one who could forgive him was God.

"I don't want to live anymore," Wayne kept saying. "I don't want to live with myself. I deserve to die."

Later that afternoon, Wayne suggested they go to a movie, so they picked a vampire flick, a genre both of them liked.

It was quiet and dark in the theater, which gave Rodney a chance to think for a minute. By the time the movie came on, he was feeling pretty antsy. He knew he was too nervous to sit still for two more hours, given their peculiar day and knowing what was to come. He wanted to get this thing over with.

About fifteen minutes into the movie, Rodney leaned over and said, "We need to go to the sheriff's. It's getting late."

"I don't want to go now," Wayne said, meaning not *right* now.

"Well, we're going."

Rodney led Wayne out of the theater, then drove them over to their grandmother's house. It was only a few blocks from the courthouse, which housed the sheriff's department and jail. He figured they could use a calm, relaxing walk before doing the deed, but he also didn't want the sheriff's deputies to impound his truck, mistakenly assuming that it had something to do with Wayne's crimes.

They were about ten minutes away when Wayne started to change his mind.

"I don't want to go now," Wayne said belligerently, meaning he no longer wanted to go, *period*.

"We have to go," Rodney said firmly. "There's no way that we're not going to go."

"I'm worried that if I go there, I'll never come out."

"What do you mean by that?"

Wayne described an incident that had occurred when he was a teenager, living in Redding with a woman named Melva Ward, a dispatcher for the Shasta County Sheriff's Office. He told Rodney that Melva came home one day and said a guy had killed someone and then hung himself while in custody.

"I think he had some help," Melva said, laughing. Wayne took her remark to mean

that a correctional officer had killed the guy in his cell.

Trying to calm his brother's fears, Rodney said he would stay with Wayne as long as he could once they got to the station, but in the meantime, he would see what he could do.

"I'll call the FBI," he said. "I'll call whoever I need to, to make this easy and make you feel better. We have to do this."

Rodney made a call on his cell phone around 6:00 P.M. to an 800 number he thought was the FBI's field office in San Francisco, although he later learned it was a private company known as Federal Prison Industries. He got a recording and left a message, which comforted Wayne enough to continue on to the sheriff's.

After entering the sheriff's lobby, Rodney picked up a wall phone, which connected to a receptionist sitting behind bulletproof glass. He explained that he and his brother needed to see the sheriff so that his brother could turn himself in.

"Why?" she asked.

"He said he hurt some people and he wants to be off the street."

The dispatcher ran Wayne's name and date of birth through the computer system, but nothing came up, so she asked to talk to Wayne. He told her the same thing his brother had.

She asked if he had any weapons and he said no, so she told him to have a seat and said someone would be out to talk to him.

As Rodney and Wayne were waiting on a couple of benches, Wayne said he wanted to go.

"No," Rodney said. "You're not leaving."

They waited for twenty minutes before Deputy Michael Gainey came out.

Memories vary about what transpired in that lobby over the next few minutes, but here is what happened according to law enforcement authorities:

Gainey approached the Ford brothers, then asked Wayne why he was turning himself in.

"I've hurt a lot of people," Wayne said.

Gainey told him that they needed to take one step at a time; he needed some basic information, such as where Wayne lived and what he'd done to warrant this trip to the sheriff's.

"I don't want to hurt anyone anymore," Wayne said.

Sergeant Michael Thomas joined them a couple of minutes later, thinking that Wayne looked anxious and unsettled. As he and Gainey explained that they still needed more specifics, Wayne motioned toward one of his jacket's front pockets.

"Once you see what I have in my pocket, you'll know," he said. "It's just the tip of the iceberg."

"What's in there?" Thomas asked cautiously.

When Wayne did not respond, the sergeant asked if he could look inside. Wayne started reaching toward the pocket, but Thomas stopped him.

"No, no, don't do that," he commanded. "We'll do that. Please, just for our safety purposes. We don't know what you have in there. Is there anything in there that'll hurt me or hurt us?"

“No, it’s nothing like that,” Wayne said, raising his arms to signal to Thomas that he could have unfettered and secure access to the pocket.

The sergeant reached down and lifted the external flap of Wayne’s pocket and the deputy pulled it away from Wayne’s chest. Inside, they could see what looked like a plastic Ziploc sandwich bag. So, not knowing what they were going to find, the officers each put on a pair of latex gloves. The deputy pulled out the pocket again while the sergeant reached in to retrieve the bag.

Wayne looked down at the ground as Thomas examined the bag, which contained something fleshy and was leaking fluid into his palm.

Thomas immediately recognized what he was holding: some fatty yellow tissue with a brown nipple.

It was a human female breast.

“Things are so screwed-up in my head now,” Wayne said. “I just want help.”

Gainey told Wayne to stand up. Wayne started crying as he rose to his feet and asked if he could hug his brother. As they embraced, Rodney began to cry as well.

The officers told Wayne to turn around, placed handcuffs on his wrists, then Gainey walked him out of the lobby and across the street to the jail. Thomas asked Rodney to stick around and answer some questions.

Both officers testified later that Wayne was arrested on suspicion of aggravated mayhem—the unlawful removal of a body part—in the lobby before he was handcuffed.

In his initial incident report, Gainey wrote that Wayne “mentioned at the outset that he had wanted an attorney present while he had spoken about the tissue found,” and repeated the request during a brief interview with him and a detective later that night.

In 2001, Gainey scaled back the urgency of Wayne’s request, saying he remembered Wayne telling him in the lobby only that “Maybe I should have an attorney.”

According to Rodney, he and Wayne discussed his need for an attorney in front of the officers and then Wayne explicitly stated that he wanted a lawyer.

Thomas went back to his office and called Detective Juan Freeman, who had been working tirelessly to solve a homicide case involving a young female victim whose body had been left in a waterway north of Eureka, known as Ryan Slough, about a year earlier.

It was an unusual case. The woman had been dumped after someone had cut off her head, arms, and legs. She was a Jane Doe, known more affectionately among local law enforcement as “Torso Girl.”

Since then, Freeman had tried to identify her through more than one hundred missing persons reports nationwide, but the trail had grown cold. He still had no idea who she was—and, until that night, had no solid suspects.

The sergeant explained to Freeman about the two brothers in the lobby and how he’d come to possess the plastic bag of human flesh that he was carefully guarding.

“We think it might have something to do with your torso case,” Thomas said.

“That’s a great guess,” Freeman said. “I’ll be right down.”

During a series of shocking interviews over the next three days with sheriff’s detectives from four California counties, Wayne would reveal a tale of rough sex,

bondage, rape, torture, and sometimes death, involving dozens of women, most of them prostitutes. And, in a move that attorneys would later wrangle over in court, he would do so without an attorney present.

PART I

CHAPTER 1

KAREN AND GENE

Wayne Adam Ford was born on December 3, 1961, in Petaluma, a relatively small and mostly white community in northern California, just off Highway 101 in Sonoma County.

Petaluma, ranked recently by *Money* magazine as the eighty-eighth best community to live in America, first earned a place on the nation's crime map when twelve-year-old Polly Klaas was kidnapped and killed after being abducted from her bedroom by a stranger in 1993. Also a lesser-known favorite for movie directors, Petaluma was chosen as a location for parts of *Basic Instinct*, *Peggy Sue Got Married*, and *American Graffiti*.

Wayne's German mother, born Karen Brigitte Danziger in January 1942, was a stay-at-home mom, albeit without the nurturing gene that most mothers possess. However, this particular parenting deficit was one that Karen openly admitted to having.

When she was growing up, Karen moved between Germany and the United States as she was traded between her grandmother, who she'd thought was her mother until Karen was nine, and her real mother, Vera. Karen never played with dolls, preferring instead to walk in the woods or play with trains and string tops. She never pictured herself as becoming a mother someday.

Karen developed early, and by thirteen, she was already feeling the power that came with her shapely physique. She used her body and her precocious sexuality to tease her older male teachers. She got one of them so aroused that he tried to sneak into her room one night.

She liked older men. She felt they offered her the safety, the security, and the mature father figure that was missing from her life.

Wayne's father, on the other hand, had no choice but to learn parenting skills at an early age. As the eldest of eight children, Calvin Eugene "Gene" Ford began babysitting while he was still a child himself.

Born in Missouri in March 1938 to Murl and Myrtle Ford, Gene grew up in northeast California. But because his father worked in lumber mills, his family soon followed the work to the coast.

When he was almost eighteen, Gene and a group of friends decided to join the army in 1956, looking for new opportunities. His father had been a navy man, but Gene never cared much for the water. His entrance test results were so good—among the top 1 percent of inductees—that he was selected for intelligence work, which involved the interception of global radio signals.

When Gene met Karen in 1957, he was stationed at Herzo-Base in Herzogenaurach, Germany, about fourteen miles from Nuremberg.

Karen was just sixteen—and no longer a virgin—when she met Gene at a birthday party on the base shortly after she, her mother, and her stepfather, Billy Lane, had moved back to Germany from Texas. Karen and her mother had a slap fight on the

voyage over, which Billy, an army tank commander who was ten years younger than Karen's mother, and twelve years older than Karen, had to break up.

Gene was four years older than Karen and physically mature for his age. Standing a sturdy six feet three inches and 235 pounds, and sporting a dark mustache, he reminded her of Rhett Butler. Karen, who liked to think of herself as Scarlett O'Hara, was smitten, and the feeling was mutual.

Karen, a petite five feet two inches and 106 pounds, went by the nickname "Kitten." Gene enjoyed watching her sing in the military version of the musical *Oklahoma*.

"I thought she was cute, but it was kind of a taboo thing, because she was an American dependent and I was a GI," Gene said.

Karen and Gene dated for about a year and a half, often sneaking away to the village of Höchstadt an der Aisch, where her grandmother lived. Karen later claimed that this was because her mother didn't approve of the relationship, but Gene never had that impression.

Karen wasn't getting along any better with her mother, whom she found overbearing.

"I was wanting to kill her," she recalled later. "I had thoughts about it because I was so desperate to get away . . . but it didn't go very far. . . . You know what kept me from pursuing the thought was I didn't want to go to jail."

Karen soon saw an opportunity: Why not marry Gene and escape from her mother's clutches?

One day when Gene was over, Karen announced her intentions, only to have her mother decree that there would be no such marriage.

"Well, I'll just get pregnant and then we'll have to get married," Karen declared.

Later, Gene didn't remember this conversation, but said Karen might have been arguing with her mother in German. He'd always thought that Karen's parents wanted them to get married.

Whatever the reason, Karen felt something snap inside her, went into the bathroom, and impulsively stuffed her mouth full of her mother's pills.

"I swallowed them and went in the bedroom and lay down, waited to die, and after some time, they missed me. They came in and I was already out, [so they] called the ambulance and took me, pumped my stomach, and kept me there for two or three days."

Gene said Karen did not stay overnight in the hospital. Rather, he said, he followed the doctor's advice and walked her around her family's apartment on base for hours, until the drugs worked their way out of her system.

"She got mad because, if I recollect properly, I spent too much time talking to her father," Gene recalled. "She could not stand having to share her attention with anyone."

Karen later contended this was the only time she tried to kill herself, but Gene claimed Karen's parents told him this was her second suicide attempt—the first being while he was back in the United States on emergency leave, shortly before this

incident, when Karen was scared he would not return.

Over the years and during interviews for this book, the perception of this and other events voiced by Wayne's mother and other Ford family members varied widely—and often conflicted dramatically as accusations of abuse, behavioral problems, and moral and criminal wrongdoing were exchanged in the recounting of events deemed relevant in evaluating Wayne's crimes.

When Karen and Gene were wed, she was two months pregnant with Rodney, although she didn't know it at the time. The ceremony took place in her grandmother's town, Höchstadt, presided over by the mayor. Karen wore a midcalf dress with a black-and-white floral print.

According to Karen, Gene's sexual behavior toward her began to change on their wedding night.

"I don't remember the details," she said later, only that Gene "was just going to do whatever he felt like doing, regardless of whether I wanted it, too."

In this case, she said, whatever he wanted to do wasn't mutually acceptable, let alone enjoyable.

"All I know is that I was very upset, and I locked myself in the bathroom, and I went to sleep on the floor that night," she said.

Gene said none of this ever happened. "We'd been having sex all along and our wedding night was no different."

Karen said the two of them made up afterward, but it wasn't long before she felt that Gene just wanted her around for sex.

"I realized that now I had married somebody very similar to my mother. He was totally dominating . . . I was his little girl... I realized that I had jumped out of a fire into a bigger one."

When they were first married, Karen would want to go out dancing, and according to Gene, this caused some barroom incidents because she flirted with other men. One night in particular, he said, he told her he needed to go back to the barracks.

According to Gene, Karen said, "You can go, big boy, but I'm staying."

So he picked her up, tossed her over his shoulder, and dumped her in the car. When a soldier on the street questioned his actions, Gene said he "punched him once and down he went."

Gene said Karen got physical with him on two occasions in those early months. One night, he said, Karen slapped him during an argument, drawing blood from his nose and mouth. Gene said he threw her on the bed with enough force that she rolled off the other side.

The next time she tried something like that, he wanted to make sure she understood it wouldn't happen again without consequences. She hurled something at him while he was reading, smacking him in the side of the head, so he took her by the shoulders and told her, "Don't ever do that again or I'll take care of it. You'll put yourself in the place of a man," he said, meaning that he would hit her back.

Karen said she acted like “a little puppy” and a “good German hausfrau” around Gene, trying to please him by lighting his pipe and bringing his slippers when he came home from work.

Yet, all she felt from him was indifference. She said he made decisions without talking to her and never gave her enough money.

Gene said he didn’t marry Karen for sex; if that’s what he wanted, he could have gotten it from any of the young women who wanted to hook up with a soldier. He married her because he loved her.

He said Karen was in charge of the household budget, but he would pay the bills. That said, he acknowledged that he probably bought and sold a car without talking to her, but he noted they didn’t have much money to begin with.

The prime emotion that Karen felt about being pregnant with Rodney was not joy, but fear. Fear of being trapped in a life she didn’t want. On top of that, she was worried she would get fat, so she put herself on a nine-hundred-calorie-a-day diet and was on the verge of being anorexic after Rodney was born in Nuremberg on March 26, 1960.

Although Gene said he didn’t remember Karen taking birth control pills, she claimed she took them because she did not want to get pregnant a second time. But for some reason she couldn’t remember later, she said she was off the pill one weekend when Gene was playing in a football game out of town. She said Rodney had stayed home with his grandmother so she could join Gene in a hotel, where the couple got into another argument about sex. Karen later claimed that Gene raped her that night.

Again, Karen claimed not to remember all the details, but she said he climbed on top of her, spread her legs, and held her shoulders and arms down so that she couldn’t move.

“Basically, he forced me, and I was screaming, and I was crying, I remember that. I was pleading, ‘Please don’t, don’t,’” she recalled later. “Of course, in those days, that wasn’t considered rape if it was your husband.”

Karen said she sensed that she got pregnant that night, and she was right. She never said a word of this alleged incident to anyone until years later. However, the damage had already been done because, according to Wayne’s defense team, Karen told him at some point that he was the product of rape.

Only she and Gene know the truth about what happened that night, but when Gene recently learned of her accusation, he fervently denied it.

“She’s fantasizing,” he said. “I probably didn’t want to have sex if she didn’t want to. I don’t want to be in bed with somebody who doesn’t want to.... ‘No’ means *no* and I respect that.”

He said he didn’t remember arguing with Karen about sex—ever—and said they never stayed together in a hotel when he played football out of town.

When he heard that Karen told Wayne he was the product of rape, he said, “That’s sad. That’s really sad.”

Curiously, when Karen’s mother, Vera, gave an interview in Wayne’s court case, she, too, said that she had been raped as a young woman. She also said that when she was pregnant with Karen, she tried to have a miscarriage for fear of what her mother would do. However, it’s unknown whether she communicated that to Karen.