

# **The Dreams of Ada Study Guide**

## **The Dreams of Ada by Bob Mayer**

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# Plot Summary

The Dreams of Ada by Robert Mayer is the true story of Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot. Ward was questioned for more than five hours in the disappearance of Donna Denice Haraway, finally confessing to her rape and murder. However, it was later revealed that Ward's confession was full of holes and was based on a dream he had. The police charged Ward anyway and his friend, Karl Fontenot, who also confessed to the murder. Ward and Fontenot spend more than ten months in jail before being convicted, without a body or murder weapon. Four months later, the body of Denice Haraway was found on the same day Ward and Fontenot had been scheduled to die before their stays were granted. Dreams of Ada is a book of mystery, of foolishness, and of justice gone wrong.

Donna Denice Haraway was working in McAnally's convenience store on April 28, 1984 when she disappeared. Three customers stopped by the store and saw a woman and man leave just before walking inside and discovering the store empty. The police were called, but due to a misunderstanding, were sent to the wrong store. When the police finally arrived, they called in the manager who wiped down the counter with no thoughts to possible fingerprints. Denice Haraway's husband was called and informed of his wife's disappearance. The next day, Steve Haraway participated in a large search for his wife, but nothing was found.

Within days, several witnesses came forward. A clerk from another convenience store down the street came forward and told how two men were in her store in the few hours before Denice Haraway disappeared, acting odd and making her nervous. The clerk gave a description of the men and a composite sketch was drawn. The eyewitnesses from McAnally's picked one of the sketches as the man who left the store with the woman, whom the police believed to be Denice Haraway. After the sketches were released, many calls came into the police department giving possible identities to the two men. Two names came up more frequently than others, including that of Tommy Ward. The police called in Tommy Ward, but he had an alibi for the night in question.

More than five months passed. One day a man came into the police station and told a story of how Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot confessed to a group of people at a party how they killed Denice Haraway. Based on this information, which later proved to be inaccurate, the police went looking for Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot. The police found Ward in a nearby town working with a company that put siding on houses. Ward went into the police department willingly. However, Ward changed his alibi for the night in question. The police became suspicious and arranged for Ward to take a lie detector test. Before the day of the test, Ward had a dream about the Haraway disappearance. During his interrogation following the news that he failed the lie detector test, Ward told the police about this dream. Eventually Ward found himself giving a confession on video tape. A few days later, the police brought in Karl Fontenot, who also confessed.

Despite many inconsistencies on the confession tapes, including the fact that Ward and Fontenot both said Odell Titsworth helped them kill Haraway even though the police



knew he could not have, Ward and Fontenot were charged with murder. For several months, the legal wrangling for the case kept the trial from taking place. The body of Haraway had not been found and the defense felt that the prosecution had no case without it. However, in Oklahoma a body is not necessary to prove murder. Based on a previous legal finding, the prosecutor felt confident in going forward to trial without a body. At the preliminary hearing, the prosecutor convinced a judge that he had enough evidence to prove a crime had taken place and to allow him to present the confession tapes to the jury. Also during this hearing, Ward made a statement in court that placed him at the scene of the crime. This too proved to be lies, but further aided the prosecution's case.

When Ward and Fontenot finally went to trial, the prosecution presented several eyewitnesses who placed Ward at McAnally's the night of the crime. The prosecution also established that the confession tapes provided an accurate description of the clothing Denice Haraway was wearing the night she disappeared, something even Haraway's husband could not testify to. The prosecution then presented the confession tapes. After several days of deliberations, the jury returned a guilty verdict. Days later, the same jury returned a recommendation of death for both Ward and Fontenot. Ward and Fontenot were scheduled to be executed on January 21, 1987. Due to a paperwork snafu, Ward did not receive a stay of execution until his appeals could be exhausted until days before his scheduled execution. On the same day Ward and Fontenot were to be executed, the body of Donna Denice Haraway was retrieved from a field where it had been discovered the day before by a hunter. The body of Haraway appeared to have been shot in the head. However, when Ward's lawyer sought a new trial based on this evidence, the court ruled that the wound could have occurred after death, therefore the presence of a gun wound did not prove that Haraway had not been stabbed as Ward and Fontenot claimed.

Eventually Ward and Fontenot would receive new trials based on the fact that by showing the confession tapes at trial, the prosecution had biased the jury against each defendant. Fontenot would go to trial first in Pontotoc County, the same location as the first trial. Fontenot's lawyer would present evidence that Fontenot confessed out of a sense of guilt in the death of his mother. However, the jury was not swayed and found him guilty once again. Fontenot received the death sentence a second time, but sentence was overturned when it was discovered that the jury had not been given the option of giving Fontenot life without parole. Fontenot was then sentenced to life without parole. Ward was also tried a second time. Ward's trial was moved to another county and Ward himself took the stand. However, once again the confession taped seemed to dominate the evidence and Ward was found guilty a second time. Ward received a life sentence and could be eligible for parole after twenty-five years.



# Chapter 1, Disappearance

## Chapter 1, Disappearance Summary and Analysis

The Dreams of Ada by Robert Mayer is the true story of Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot. Ward was questioned for more than five hours in the disappearance of Donna Denice Haraway, finally confessing to her rape and murder. However, it was later revealed that Ward's confession was full of holes and was based on a dream he had. The police charged Ward anyway and his friend, Karl Fontenot, who also confessed to the murder. Ward and Fontenot spend more than ten months in jail before being convicted, without a body or murder weapon. Four months later, the body of Denice Haraway was found on the same day Ward and Fontenot had been scheduled to die before their stays were granted. Dreams of Ada is a book of mystery, of foolishness, and of justice gone wrong.

Just before eight-thirty on April 28, 1984, three men pulled up to McAnally's convenience store in Ada, Oklahoma. As one of the men entered the store, a young couple passed him and climbed into a pickup truck. The man continued into the store only to find the clerk missing. Soon the man looked behind the counter and found money missing from the cash register. When the police arrived, they found the clerk's purse still sitting behind the counter. When the cop showed the driver's license to the witnesses, they identified the clerk as the woman who had left the store with a man as they arrived. The police then called the manager of the store who happened to live nearby. The manager identified the driver's license as the missing clerk. The manager then cleaned up the counter, wiping away potential fingerprints, throwing away a can of soda, and tossing a cigarette that might possibly have belonged to the kidnapper. Later, the police called Donna Denice Haraway's husband, Steve, who informed them that he had not seen his wife before she went to work that day, so he could not verify what she was wearing beyond the jeans and tennis shoes she always wore to work. The police sent Steve Haraway home, as there was little he could do at that point.

The next day, police interviewed people in the area, including clerks at several other convenience stores in the area. At J.P.'s, police spoke to Karen Wise. Karen told police that two men were in her store the night of the disappearance in the hours before Denice vanished. These men made Karen nervous due to the way they were looking at her. Karen gave a description and police realized immediately Karen's description of one of the men exactly fit the description eyewitness at McAnally's had given of the man who walked out of the store with Denice. Police were excited to have the description due to the fact that this disappearance brought to mind the disappearance of another young woman in neighboring Seminole. Patty Hamilton was also working in a convenience store when she simply disappeared. Patty Hamilton was never found.

This chapter introduces the case around which the entire book revolves. Denice Haraway, a simple small town girl who was working her way through college in order to fulfill her dream of being a teacher, disappeared from a convenience store. Three



witnesses saw Denice walk out of the store, apparently of her own free will, with a man. These three men would be the last men to see Denice Haraway alive, so their testimony later in the case would prove to be vital. The fact that Denice Haraway appeared to leave of her own free would also be a vital part of the case, despite the fact that her husband and everyone who knew her would swear that she would never have simply walked away from her life without leaving some sort of word for her loved ones.

Another important fact presented in this first chapter is the fact that the manager of the store wiped away all evidence from the counter that might have proven important. The manager was not told to stop wiping off the counter, where there might be fingerprints, nor was he told not to throw away a soda can and cigarette that might have been left by the kidnapper. This evidence might have proven vital in the ensuing investigation and trial. Finally, the fact that there had been another kidnapping of this type at another convenience store in the area suggests to the reader that this might be a serial kidnapping, connected to the same people who took Patty Hamilton from a Seminole convenience store.



## Chapter 2, Of Deer and Calves

### Chapter 2, Of Deer and Calves Summary and Analysis

On Monday morning, a composite drawing was made based on the description of two men seen at J.P.'s, another convenience store not far from McAnally's, by the clerk, Karen Wise. This composite sketch was shown that night on the local television station, and was printed in the Ada News the following day. More than a hundred calls were taken the first few days the composite sketches were made public. A large number of those calls provided two names, Billy Charley and Tommy Ward. Police were able to rule out Billy Charley immediately. Tommy Ward told police he had gone fishing with a friend, Karl Fontenot, and then had gone to a party. The police attempted to interview Fontenot, but did not follow up because Fontenot did not fit the description of the two men, both of whom were said to have light hair where Fontenot had dark hair.

Police pursued many leads in the Haraway case, including suspects who came to their attention as far away as Texas. As each lead failed to turn up anything in the case, pressure mounted. The people of Ada were afraid. This was the second disappearance of a young, female convenience store clerk. Not only that, but sixteen months before a young woman had been brutally murdered in her apartment and the killer had yet to be caught. Dennis Smith, the detective captain in Ada, was determined that the Haraway case would not turn out like the Debbie Carter murder. For weeks, friends and family members of Denice Haraway would distribute flyers and search isolated areas for any clues. The police followed every lead and investigated every name that came in to the station in response to the composite sketches. However, despite several promising leads, nothing ever panned out, until the day Jeff Miller walked into the police station and insisted on talking to Dennis Smith.

The tone of the book begins to change in this chapter. The first chapter was merely informational, but the second chapter begins to look at the evidence through the eyes of someone who knows mistakes were made in the investigation. The author begins to point these mistakes out in a subtle manner, explaining to the reader how much pressure the police were under to solve this case due to the fact that people were afraid to allow their daughters to go anywhere on their own. The author also mentions the death of Debbie Carter, a young woman who was killed in her apartment in a brutal slaying and that her murderer had not been caught at this point. This case is something that Dennis Smith apparently took personally and it haunted him, causing him to be more determined than he might otherwise have been to find the men responsible for Denice's disappearance.

The author's purpose in this chapter also appears to introduce the timeline of the case and subsequent trial. The two men who would later be tried and convicted of the crime are mentioned in this chapter. As the result of a composite sketch drawn based on information from an eyewitness, Tommy Ward was brought into the police station. Tommy had been fingered many times by people who had seen the sketches, making





him a suspect. Part of Tommy's alibi was a fishing date with Karl Fontenot, the other man eventually charged with the crime. Police went to speak to Fontenot but did not follow up when he failed to show up for an interview. The police clearly did not consider these men suspects at the time due to their short haircuts and the color of Fontenot's hair.

The composite sketches based on Karen Wise's memory of the men in J.P.'s prove to be the only evidence that the police have to find suspects in the Haraway case. The sketches brought in a huge response from the people of Ada, with Tommy Ward being mentioned over twenty times. Ward's resemblance to the sketch will come up again later in the book and prove to be a key factor in the events that will take place in later chapters. Despite the author's tone of injustice, the reader sees this response from the people of Ada and wonders why Tommy's name would come up if he was innocent. The author seems to promise to explain this in later chapters, foreshadowing the development of the story.



# Chapter 3, Suspects

## Chapter 3, Suspects Summary and Analysis

Jeff Miller, a member of Ada's underclass of high school dropouts and drug addicts, went to the police with a story. Miller said a friend had told him that on April 28, 1984, Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot attended a party. During the party, Ward and Fontenot left to get more beer. When Ward and Fontenot returned several hours later, they claimed to have kidnapped and killed a convenience store clerk. Based on this story, police decided to contact Jeannette Roberts, the woman whose truck Ward and Fontenot supposedly used the night of Haraway's disappearance. Roberts, a felon who had been trying to go straight, told police she had let Ward and Fontenot use her truck on occasion, but was sure she had not let them borrow it on April 28. Roberts then told police that Ward and Fontenot had lived with her for a time and that Ward still lived with her. Ward worked with Roberts' husband putting siding on people's homes.

That night, Ward went voluntarily to the Norman police station to speak to Detectives Smith and Baskin. On video tape, Ward told detectives that the night Denice Haraway disappeared, he installed plumbing in his mother's house and then went to a party at a neighbor of Jeannette Roberts. This story was different from the one Ward had told before, making the detectives suspicious. The detectives questioned Ward for nearly two hours. Later, the detectives arranged for Ward to come back for a lie detector test. At first, Ward was optimistic because he knew the lie detector test would clear him of suspicion in the Haraway case. However, after Ward had a dream about Denice Haraway, he became agitated and nervous.

The test was administered and Ward was told he had failed. For six hours, detectives interviewed Ward, asking him about Denice Haraway and the night of April 28. When the interrogation was over, Ward made a confession on video tape. Ward was then taken into custody while officers in Ada searched several areas west of town, hoping to find the body of Denice Haraway. They did not find anything. The following day, Karl Fontenot was arrested near Tulsa. After two hours of questioning, Fontenot made a confession. The two confessions claimed a man named Odell Titsworth was the ringleader, but the tapes did not agree on the order of events. Fontenot also claimed that the body had been burned in an abandoned house while Ward claimed the body had been thrown into a bunker. Titsworth was also arrested that night.

The timeline of the case continues in this chapter. The author tells the reader how the police heard a story that Ward and Fontenot confessed to murder on the night of April 28 at a party. The man telling the story, Jeff Miller, was a member of the underclass of people in Ada, people who were high school dropouts and drug addicts, people who spent a great deal of time in and out of jail. These people were mostly poor, forgotten individuals who were considered losers and on the top of every suspect list. Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot were also a part of this underclass of people, which the author seems to suggest made them more likely to be accused of a crime.



The police, based on the story told by Miller, go looking for Tommy Ward, question him, and discover that his alibi has changed. This made the police suspicious. Ward was questioned again and arrested after making a confession. Karl Fontenot confessed as well. However, Ward insisted to his sister that his confession was only a dream that he told the police in order to get them to stop questioning him. The author is clearly making the point that the police, who questioned Tommy Ward for more than six hours, intimidated Ward so much that he was willing to confess to murder in order to get the police to leave him alone. Instead, Ward was arrested and could face the death penalty should he be convicted.



# Chapter 4, The Pecan Tree

## Chapter 4, The Pecan Tree Summary and Analysis

Ward and Fontenot were not formally charged for several weeks after their arrest because the police wanted to investigate his confession a little more and they were hoping to find Denice Haraway's body. However, when police went to the abandoned house where Fontenot claimed they had burned Denice's body, the owner told them he had burned down the house ten months before the disappearance. Also complicating the investigation, Detective Baskin recalled that Odell Titsworth's arm was broken two days before the Haraway disappearance. It was physically impossible for Titsworth to have been involved in the crime. Not only that, but police asked Fontenot to pick Titsworth out of a photo lineup and he could not. At the same time, the police learned that Jeff Miller's story was not true when they interviewed the girls who supposedly told Miller the story and they denied any knowledge of the confession.

Many who knew Tommy Ward could not imagine how anyone who knew him could believe he would commit such a crime. Tommy was in solitary confinement, giving him plenty of time to think about his situation. In an essay he would write later for his lawyer, Tommy talked about how the cop who administered the lie detector test told him he failed the test and that he must feel incredible guilt for his actions. The cop kept trying to get Tommy to unburden himself. Finally Tommy told the police about a dream he had. Tommy then embellished the dream, believing the lies would be so obvious that the police would have to let him go. Tommy insisted that he told the police repeatedly that his confession was only a dream, but they did not believe him. Police were so sure Tommy was guilty, Detectives Smith and Baskin took a skull from the university and told him it was Denice Haraway. Tommy simply stated it was not her and he did not know where she was.

The author continues the timeline of the case and continues to point out certain elements that suggest the police were obsessed with the case, a theme of the book, and due to this obsession were overeager to find suspects. In this chapter, the author does this by pointing out that the story that led the police to Ward and Fontenot was untrue. The author also points out that elements of the confessions were also untrue. Fontenot swore that he, Titsworth, and Ward burned Haraway's body in an abandoned house, but it was later revealed that the house had been burned more than ten months before. Also, the police discovered that Titsworth, the ringleader of the crime, could not have possibly committed the crime because the police had broken his arm two days before the crime took place. These inconsistencies were glaring and seemed to be valid reasons to assume everything about the confessions were untrue. However, the police were not ready to concede that fact.

Tommy swore to his sister and in a written essay that his confession was simply a dream he had had that he embellished with lies, hoping the police would recognize the lies and let him go. However, the police did not do that. Police continued to believe



Tommy killed Denice Haraway, proving this by arriving at the jail with a skull borrowed from the university to try to get Tommy to tell them where her body was. Tommy insisted the skull was not Denice's. The author does not explain how Tommy knew this, but is quick to point out that Tommy swore he did not know where the body was. The author's purpose appears to be an attempt to show how the police continuously ignored the inconsistencies in Tommy's confession because of their obsession with solving the case.



# Chapter 5, Murder in the First Degree

## Chapter 5, Murder in the First Degree Summary and Analysis

The Ward family began looking for a lawyer for Tommy. Unfortunately, most of the lawyers in town did not want the case because of the huge amount of public sentiment against Ward and Fontenot. Eventually Bud and Tricia Wolf contacted Don Wyatt, a local lawyer who had made his reputation on civil cases as well as the occasional criminal case. Don Wyatt had an extension office in Oklahoma City from where he got a large number of his clients; therefore, he was not concerned with losing his client base in Ada. Another reason Wyatt wanted to take the case was because his housekeeper, Marie Titsworth, was left stranded at his house one afternoon when the police impounded her daughter's truck under the suspicion that Ward and Fontenot had used it to kidnap Denice Haraway. When the police finally returned the truck to Mrs. Titsworth, it was covered in fingerprint dust. Wyatt was outraged by this behavior.

Immediately upon taking the case, Wyatt filed a writ of habeas corpus, forcing the D.A. to file charges against Ward and Fontenot or release them. Nearly a month after they were arrested, Ward and Fontenot were charged with aggravated robbery, kidnapping, rape, and murder in the first degree. The following day, Ward pleaded not guilty. Fontenot, who did not have a lawyer yet, did not plead. Fontenot had no family and few friends; therefore, he had no one to visit him or to find him a lawyer, unlike Ward who was visited every Sunday by all the local members of his family. Eventually the court appointed a lawyer for Fontenot, George Butner, who was from Seminole County. While Wyatt and Butner were becoming familiar with the case, the Ada News received a request for articles on the case from a man in Washington. Over Thanksgiving, the Ward family discussed the night of April 28. Tricia and Miz Ward discussed how Joice, another Ward sibling, recalled Tommy and her husband fixing a pipe under the house in the middle of the night.

The author opens this chapter by showing the reader how difficult it was for the Wards to find Tommy a lawyer, expressing the opinions of the people in Ada. The fact that the people of Ada were publicly voicing their opinions against Ward and Fontenot in such a way that lawyers were afraid to take the case suggests to the reader that finding an impartial jury later in the development of the case would be impossible. In contrast to this trouble is Fontenot's lack of any family to help him find a lawyer. Instead, the courts are forced to find a lawyer for him, having to go to another county to find one willing to take on the case.

At the same time, the author takes the time once again to show how devoted Tommy's family is to him in contrast to Fontenot's lack of family. The implication seems to be that a man who has such a close family could not have committed such a crime. This leaves the reader wondering why Tommy would confess if he was not guilty. The author also leaves the reader with the impression that because Fontenot has no family, he has less

to lose. Finally, important to this case, is the ever changing alibi for Tommy's whereabouts the night in question. The Ward family discussed Tommy's latest alibi over Thanksgiving dinner, suggesting that Tommy was at the Ward family home the night in question, not at a party as he told the police.



# Chapter 6, Ghosts

## Chapter 6, Ghosts Summary and Analysis

A case called *Nettie V. Brown versus the State of Oklahoma* set a precedent in which a trial can be held against a defendant in a murder case even if there is no body. Thanks to this ruling, District Attorney Bill Peterson could go forward with his case against Ward and Fontenot even though the body of Denice Haraway still had not been found. All Peterson had to do was present enough evidence that a murder had taken place without the use of the confession tapes. However, the missing body and the reluctance of Ward and Fontenot to tell police where the body was continued to haunt both the district attorney and the police. Both continued to search for the body despite a discouraging lack of evidence.

The author presents the story of Nettie Brown at the beginning of this chapter in order to explain to the reader how the district attorney could go forward with a trial against Ward and Fontenot despite having not found the body of Denice Haraway. The prosecutor does not have to have a body in order to prove a murder took place. All Bill Peterson had to do in the Ward Fontenot case was to prove that a murder more than likely took place. However, Peterson had to prove the *corpus delicti*, or body of the crime, before presenting the confession tapes in court. The author does not tell the reader at this point how Peterson planned to do that, keeping the reader interested in the development of the story.

At the same time, the town of Ada was preparing for the preliminary hearing where the prosecutor would present his case to a judge and the judge would decide if there was enough evidence to continue to trial. Clearly the town of Ada expected the prosecution to present evidence that was not public knowledge at that time, and they expected the evidence to be overwhelming. No one in Ada doubted that Ward and Fontenot were guilty at that point, except perhaps the Ward family. The reader also anticipates learning more about the case as the book continues to develop toward the trial, especially knowing Tommy Ward continued to claim his innocence. The author also gives the reader some information about Tricia Ward in this chapter that had nothing to do with the case. The author's purpose is clearly to show the innocent goodness of this woman, suggesting a man related to such a sainted woman could not possibly commit such a heinous crime.





# Chapter 7, Testimony

## Chapter 7, Testimony Summary and Analysis

The preliminary hearing in the case against Ward and Fontenot began on January 7, 1985. Present throughout the hearing was a cowboy with his name on the back of his belt. At one point, this stranger spoke to Miz Ward and assured her that Tommy had nothing to do with Denice Haraway's disappearance. At another point, Karen Wise became frightened at the sight of the man, sure that he was the second person she had seen at J.P.'s that April night with Tommy Ward. Karen even called the police at one point during the preliminary hearing because she believed she saw the cowboy outside her apartment, staring up at her windows.

The district attorney began the preliminary hearing by presenting witnesses who had seen Tommy Ward ride in a grey pickup like the one seen at McAnally's the night of the disappearance and could testify that Tommy had long hair the night in question. Peterson then called Denice's sister to the stand, who claimed that she had searched Denice's clothes and came to the conclusion that Denice was wearing a faded lavender blouse with purple flowers the night she disappeared. Then Karen Wise took the stand and testified that she had seen Tommy Ward and another man in her store the night in question. Karen said the men made her uncomfortable because of the way they were looking at her. Karen also said the men left in a grey primer truck shortly before Denice Haraway would go missing. The following day, the prosecution continued their case by presenting the three witnesses who were at McAnally's and witnessed Denice Haraway leave the store with a man they identified as Tommy Ward. On Wednesday morning, Peterson was prepared to offer dozens of witnesses to testify to the fact that Denice Haraway would not have simply walked away from her life without saying something to someone. Instead, the defense agreed to having the depositions of these witnesses read into the record to save time.

When the judge granted a continuance until the following Monday, Tommy Ward informed the court that he wanted to make a statement, against his lawyer's advice. Tommy had been talking to a trustee in the county jail who told him he could save his life if he confessed to a minor part in the crime. Tommy made a statement saying that he had gone to J.P.'s and McAnally's with Marty Ashley. Tommy claimed that Ashley told Haraway that if she was his woman she would not have to work. Haraway liked that idea and agreed to run away with Ashley. Tommy then walked Haraway out to Ashley's truck, drove away with them and was dropped off at his house moments later. Tommy claimed he did not know what happened after that, except that Ashley was planning to drive to Tulsa to visit a friend, Jay Dicus, the nephew of a prominent merchant in Ada. The police quickly set about verifying Ward's statement and later decided it was another set of lies.

On Monday the defense made several motions claiming that the prosecution had not proven corpus delicti. The judge found that the prosecution had proven their case and



allowed Peterson to go ahead with showing the confession tapes. The tapes were shown in the entirety and then court was dismissed for the day. The defense attorneys spoke about the inconsistencies in each confession to the media while privately worrying about the clear description of Denice Haraway's blouse on both tapes. The following day, the prosecutor called Odell Titsworth to the stand. Titsworth testified to why he could not have participated in the crime and to the fact that he had not confessed despite undergoing intense police interrogation while jailed in connection to the case. Titsworth's girlfriend and her mother also testified to Titsworth's whereabouts the night in question.

The preliminary hearing was continued until February, due to scheduling conflicts. In the meantime, Wyatt tried to convince the Ward family that he believed Tommy was hiding something and that he needed to tell the truth in order to help his defense. Tommy continued to claim he was innocent and was not hiding anything despite this lack of faith from his own lawyer. During this time, Tricia was visited by a woman who claimed that Karen Wise, the prosecution's star witness, was not completely confident in her identification of Tommy Ward. Karen denied this, however. When the hearing resumed, Dennis Smith testified, admitting that Fontenot claimed to have lied on his confession tape. The defense called Karen Wise, who testified that a man resembling the man who had accompanied Tommy Ward to J.P.'s the night in question had appeared outside her bedroom window a few nights before. The hearing ended and the judge made his ruling immediately. The judge remanded both Ward and Fontenot for trial on all charges except the rape charge.

This chapter covers the preliminary hearing that took place in January and February of 1985. At the hearing, the author notes, there was a strange man that is not named at this point. The man was identified by two of the eyewitnesses as one of the men who was at J.P.'s April 28, 1984 with Tommy Ward. By the author making note of this man, the reader assumes he will reappear later in the book and might take on an important role in the development of the case against Ward and Fontenot.

The hearing presented a great deal of evidence against Ward and Fontenot, including eyewitnesses putting Ward at the scene of the crime and nearby at J.P.'s, but not Fontenot. The evidence was mostly circumstantial, but the judge ruled it was enough to convince the court that a murder did take place, allowing the prosecution to use the confession tapes against the defendants. The tapes were clearly convincing because the judge later decided there was enough evidence to charge Ward and Fontenot with robbery, kidnap, and murder, but not rape. No one was more surprised by all this than the Ward family, but their reaction would be expected under the circumstances. The theme of justice is touched upon in this chapter as the family of Denice Haraway found it would have a trial against the men police believed to be responsible for Denice's disappearance and murder.



# Chapter 8, Anniversary

## Chapter 8, Anniversary Summary and Analysis

Tommy Ward was arraigned and returned to jail where he focused on the past and the girl he once loved. At the same time, his sister was struggling with a new pregnancy, attempting to take it easy to avoid a second miscarriage. On March 21, a pretrial hearing was held in order for the defense to present their motions. Among the motions were a request for a change of venue due to the fact that a fair jury could not be found in Ada, as well as motions regarding the way in which the jury would be interviewed. The lawyers also asked for the defendants to be sent to a mental hospital in order to have them evaluated regarding their ability to stand trial. The judge agreed to the latter, but did not rule on the former. Later, Wyatt had a meeting with the Wards and suggested that all members of the family who were to testify in court get together with Wyatt to go over their testimony. The meeting was a disaster, with only a few of the Wards proving to be strong witnesses. At the same time, Wyatt realized that he needed to hire an investigator but was becoming concerned with the Ward family's inability to pay him. On June 9, the judge decided to honor one of the defense motions and take himself off the case. The judge did not cite any conflict with the case, only that he did not want to take on the case. A new judge was appointed to the case; a retired judge from Lincoln county, Donald Powers, was assigned the case.

The author continues with the time line of the case, showing how Tommy Ward was arraigned for murder and returned to the county jail where he had already been for more than five months. The author also focused on Tricia Wolf and her troubled pregnancy as she struggled to keep her brother's spirits up while fighting for him with the help of his lawyer, Don Wyatt. Wyatt, at the same time, continued to bring motions in front of the judge at pretrial hearings while the judge removed himself from the case and a new judge was appointed. Finally, Wyatt decided to hire an investigator despite the family's difficulty paying expenses on the case. Again the theme of justice is touched on in this chapter, despite of the author's tone of injustice in the form of mistakes that put an innocent man in jail.



# Chapter 9, Investigator

## Chapter 9, Investigator Summary and Analysis

Wyatt hired investigator, Richard Kerner. The first thing Kerner did was to look up all newspaper articles on disappearances of convenience store clerks. Kerner then went to the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety and got copies of the driving records of other suspects Tommy Ward mentioned to see if moving violations put them in Ada on or around April 28. This also gave Kerner a description of vehicles belonging to these suspects. However, no suspicious trucks appeared at this point. In Ada, the defense attorneys got their first look at Judge Powers when he called them into court to discuss their motions. A few days later, Kerner was in Seminole talking with the detective in charge of the Hamilton case. While the detective agreed there might be a connection between the two cases, he had no leads in the Hamilton case that might be useful in the Haraway case. The next day, Kerner went to the Brooks mobile home park where a resident told Maxine, Tricia's mother-in-law, that she had seen Denice Haraway two days after the disappearance. While speaking with the park's manager about the tenants around that time period, Kerner learned that the manager and three other people in town had felt the composite sketch released shortly after the disappearance resembled a man named Randy Rogers and his friend, Bob Sparcino. Kerner was excited by this identification and quickly had all four witnesses make this identification on audio tape. Kerner then spoke with the witness who claimed to have seen Denice Haraway, only to have her back down from her identification, claiming it had been before the disappearance rather than after. Kerner researched Rogers and Sparcino and discovered both had records, but could not prove either one had access to a truck or was in town at the time of the disappearance. During this time, more pretrial rulings were made, including the decision not to separate the case into two trials and to keep the trial in Ada. The judge also wanted to set the trial date, originally picking a date in June. However, the lawyers insisted they needed more time to prepare, so the trial date was set for September 9, 1985.

This chapter introduces the investigator who worked endless hours trying to find evidence the defense could use in court to prove Tommy Ward's innocence, and perhaps by default Karl Fontenot's innocence as well. The investigator seemed to start out strong, immediately finding eyewitnesses who identified two different men as being the men in the composite sketches. However, the reader recalls that more than thirty people identified Tommy Ward where only four picked out these two new suspects. Important to the case, though, is the fact that the composite sketches resembled a great number of people, these new suspects included. Unfortunately, Kerner could not prove these men were in Ada on April 28, but could prove at least one of them was not. Kerner's entrance into the book at this point changes the tone from one of injustice and uselessness to one of excitement and possibility. The reader feels that it is possible Kerner might find something that will prove Tommy Ward innocent once and for all. The author, too, seems optimistic about Kerner's work in the excited way he expands on Kerner's search for new suspects. The themes of justice and of obsession are touched

on here as well, as the author shows the reader how justice works and how a determined mind can find evidence in order to make sure the truth comes out in the end. However, the reader is still not clear on how the case will progress for Tommy Ward and looks to the next few chapters to find out.



# Chapter 10, The Second Summer

## Chapter 10, The Second Summer Summary and Analysis

Kerner continued his investigation that summer, finally speaking to Willie Barnett, a possible alibi witness for Ward. Although Barnett admitted to being at Tommy Ward's house the night in question, he appeared unwilling to say so in court. At the same time, Kerner tracked down all the people Tommy Ward mentioned to Wyatt as possible suspects. One of these seemed nervous when Kerner talked to him, making Kerner suspicious. Kerner also spoke to Marty Ashley, and even took a picture of his truck, but discovered Ashley had a believable alibi for the night in question. Kerner also found a truck belonging to Larry Jett, one of the suspects named by Tommy Ward; however, one of the eyewitnesses, Jack Paschall, refused to pick either truck as being the one he'd seen that night.

The prosecutor and the defense attorneys were working furiously preparing their cases. Bill Peterson was preparing his witnesses while the defense strategized over the best way to prove their clients' innocence. Wyatt was concerned he would have to put Ward on the stand, giving Peterson the opportunity to impugn Ward's character by pointing out his many lies. It seemed like that would be a worse case scenario, to be avoided at all costs. In jail, Tommy Ward was becoming nervous over the possibility of receiving the death penalty. Tommy was also concerned because he had heard Karl saying crazy things, like how he knew they would get caught. Tommy was afraid Karl would plead guilty just to end the whole ordeal.

This chapter continues where the last left off. The trial date was looming and Kerner was trying hard to find someone he could offer Wyatt as a strong suspect in the case. While Kerner had several suspects in mind, he could not offer concrete evidence that either had the means or the motive to commit the crime. Tommy Ward himself was no help, offering a large number of names, but giving Kerner little else to work with. At the same time, Karl Fontenot was making sounds that made Tommy worry he might plead guilty just to get the whole thing over with. Tension enters the book at this point, putting the reader on edge, just as the players in this case must have felt at the time.



# Chapter 11, Scenarios

## Chapter 11, Scenarios Summary and Analysis

Kerner was able to prove that Jett's alibi was untrue, leading Kerner to believe Jett was a strong suspect in the Haraway case. Kerner also believed Rogers and Sparcino were suspects despite being unable to prove they had access to a pickup or were even in Ada at the time of the disappearance. There was also Ashley and Dicus, but Kerner believed Ashley's alibi and did not think they were involved. On August 19, a woman and her two small children were kidnapped from a mall parking lot in Oklahoma City. Due to the similarities of this case with the Haraway case, Kerner wondered if the suspects, Dexter Davis and Dale Shelton, might not have been involved in the Haraway case as well. At the same time, Kerner spoke to Jim Moyer, an eyewitness at McAnally's on April 28, 1984. Moyer told Kerner about the mystery cowboy at the preliminary hearing who had looked like the man with Tommy Ward the night in question. The man had a name on his belt, Lurch. Moyer also told Kerner that Karen Wise had also felt the cowboy was in J.P.'s that night. These suspects gave Wyatt several scenarios to work into his defense.

This chapter shows the continuation of Kerner's investigation. Kerner learned little new, except about the cowboy who attended every day of the preliminary hearing. One of the witnesses from J.P.'s told Kerner that the cowboy looked like the man who was with Tommy Ward that night. The reader will also recall how this same cowboy told Miz Ward that Tommy was innocent and then was seen by Karen Wise outside her bedroom window. These things added together make the cowboy a clear suspect in the case. Kerner clearly believed this was so. Kerner now had four sets of suspects for Wyatt to present in court. However, Kerner still had to investigate Lurch, his newest suspect. Not only that, but Kerner had no concrete evidence against any of the suspects, except the eyewitness testimony. The author presents this information as though it is enough to offer reasonable doubt, but the reader is still waiting for something more concrete to come out. After all, the reader cannot forget that the prosecution has two confessions to present in court against Ward and Fontenot. Despite the inconsistencies in the confessions, it is hard for any jury to overlook a confession.



# Chapter 12, Trial by Jury

## Chapter 12, Trial by Jury Summary and Analysis

Jury selection began September 9. The selection lasted two days, less time than both sides suspected it would take. On the third day, testimony was to begin. The entire Ward family, except for Marvin, were forced to leave since they were to be called as witnesses and could not be present in the courtroom until they had given their testimony. The prosecution began his case by calling an insurance man who testified that Joel Ward, Tommy's brother, owned a truck like the one used in the disappearance of Denice Haraway. The next was a neighbor of the Wards who testified to having seen Tommy in a grey pickup on several occasions. The prosecution also called character witnesses for Denice Haraway in order to establish that Denice Haraway was not the type to run away. Denice Haraway's sister took the stand, once again testifying to the blouse Denice was more than likely wearing the night of her disappearance, the same blouse that both Ward and Fontenot describe in their confessions. As court proceeded, Kerner was in Norman talking to Jeanette Roberts. Jeanette recalled that Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot both had short hair on April 28. To prove it, Jeanette produced dated Polaroid's from Easter, the Sunday before the disappearance, which showed Ward and Fontenot with short hair. After court, Wyatt and Butner were in the middle of a strategy meeting when Kerner showed up with the photographs. For the first time, it seemed the defense had a real chance of winning.

The next day, the prosecutor continued his case by presenting members of Denice Haraway's family, including her mother and father. Peterson also called to the stand a police officer who recalled seeing the blouse Denice Haraway was wearing the night she disappeared. Peterson then called Karen Wise, who once more testified to seeing Tommy Ward in J.P.'s shortly before Denice Haraway was seen leaving McAnally's. Moyer testified to seeing Tommy Ward at McAnally's. On cross examination, Moyer admitted to discussing with Kerner the cowboy he had seen at the preliminary hearing. Gene Welchel and the Timmons brothers, the three men who had seen Denice Haraway leave McAnally's with a man, testified next. Finally, Detective Baskin was called to the stand.

Throughout the testimony, the defense made several motions. First, they wanted the tape of Tommy Ward made on October 12, showing him denying any involvement in the Haraway disappearance, to be admitted into evidence. Second, Wyatt's partner, Leo Austin, presented a motion requesting that the case be thrown out due to the fact that the prosecution had not proven corpus delicti. The judge overruled Austin's motion immediately. Baskin returned to the stand where he testified that Ward had not been threatened or coerced in any way before making his confession.

This chapter chronicles the beginning of the trial, including the long and tedious jury selection. The author claims in this chapter that both sides were happy with the jury, to the point at which they had control over its selection. The author then goes on to





present the case, telling the reader who each of the witnesses were and what their testimony covered. The prosecution was made almost completely out of what is called circumstantial evidence. Nothing was concrete, but made the implication that the defendants were guilty. The prosecution had eyewitnesses who saw Tommy Ward at both McAnally's and J.P.'s the night of the disappearance, but none of these witnesses could place Karl Fontenot at either convenience store. The prosecution also presented many witnesses who felt Denice Haraway was not the type of person who would run away without contacting her family. This testimony proved to be enough for the judge to decide the prosecution had proven that Denice Haraway had been murdered.

The defense, on the other hand, was able to establish not only that Karl Fontenot was not seen at the scene of the crime, but that Tommy Ward more than likely had cut his hair before the night in question. The defense also was able to get admitted into evidence a video tape on which Tommy Ward continuously insisted that he had not kidnapped, raped, or murdered Denice Haraway. Outside of the trial, Kerner also managed to find some photographs of Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot that seemed to prove they had short hair the weekend before the disappearance. The theme of justice is once more explored in this chapter as it seems Kerner might finally have found some concrete evidence to help prove Ward and Fontenot had been falsely accused of murder.



# Chapter 13, 'Mystery Man'

## Chapter 13, 'Mystery Man' Summary and Analysis

First thing Monday morning, the prosecution presented the October 12 interview tape of Tommy Ward denying any involvement in the Haraway case. Afterward, the prosecution continued questioning Detective Baskin, learning that the interrogation methods used with Tommy Ward were accepted techniques used by most police officers. After a break, the defense questioned Baskin. Wyatt took a skull and bones from a bag he had kept on his table since the beginning of the trial and asked Baskin about taking the bones to Tommy Ward to frighten him into telling where Denice Haraway's body was. Wyatt had hoped to shock the jury, but it appeared most of the jury was not impressed by the maneuver. Butner asked Baskin if he had known what blouse Denice Haraway was wearing before he interviewed Tommy Ward and was told he did not, despite the fact that a cop had informed the investigating officers of this fact in the days after the disappearance.

After Baskin, a jail trustee was put on the stand to testify that Tommy Ward had confessed to the crime while they served their time together. Dennis Smith took the stand and testified about the confessions. The tape of Tommy Ward's statement at the preliminary hearing was played for the jury, ending with the statement from Tommy that he had never told Karl Fontenot about his dream. At the same time, Kerner went looking for Jason Lurch. Kerner found him in a remote village south of Ada. Lurch agreed to meet with Don Wyatt that night. During that meeting, Lurch admitted to being a regular at J.P.'s. Lurch also admitted that he had a nephew with a pickup similar to the one the witnesses had seen the night of the disappearance. Wyatt thought that perhaps the two men at J.P.'s and the man at McAnally's were two separate groups of people and that perhaps the eyewitnesses had really seen Lurch and his nephew at J.P.'s that night. Wyatt asked Lurch to testify and he promised he would.

The following day, Marty Ashley was called to the stand after Smith, testifying that everything Tommy Ward had said about him was untrue. Gordon Calhoun was called to the stand and testified that a party Ward claimed he had attended at Calhoun's the night of April 28 had not taken place. Calhoun was also shown the pictures of Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot with short hair. Calhoun testified that the dates on the pictures were incorrect because the outfit he was wearing in the pictures he had only worn on Memorial Day, a month after the disappearance. Calhoun would later tell Wyatt he was mistaken, but would not take the stand to correct his testimony. Rusty Featherstone, the cop who administered the lie detector test testified that he had administered the test and interrogated Ward for a time before Smith and OSBI agent Rogers took over, began his testimony. At this point, the jury was sent out of the room while the defense argued against the use of the confession tapes. Powers overruled them.

In this chapter, the prosecution continued to present their case. The tape of Tommy Ward's interrogation on October 12 was shown, giving the defense some hope that



Ward's repeated declaration of innocence would work in their favor. However, the prosecution spent a great deal of time presenting witnesses who testified to Tommy Ward's habit of telling lies, including the lies he told at the preliminary hearing during his statement pointing a finger at Marty Ashley. These witnesses served only to show that Tommy lied often. Also during this point of the case the defense attorney, Don Wyatt, attempted to shock the jury by pulling out a skull and bones that the police had used to attempt to get Tommy to tell them where Denice Haraway's body could be found. However, the jury did not appear to be shocked.

The defense did find some hope during this part of the trial. Kerner located Jason Lurch, the mystery man who had attended the preliminary hearing and was identified by two witnesses as the man with Tommy Ward the night in question. Wyatt got Lurch to agree to testify to the fact that he was a regular at J.P.'s and might have been there the night in question with his nephew, who owned a truck like the one Karen Wise saw. This seems like optimistic testimony until the reader recalls that Moyer saw the same man at McAnally's that night.

The prosecution continued proving Tommy Ward's lies by putting on the stand Marty Ashley, Odell Titsworth's girlfriend, and a doctor who said Odell could not have committed the crime in question. All of this testimony cumulates to make Tommy appear untrustworthy, suggesting that if he lied all these other times, he could have lied when he said his confession was only a dream he had had. Finally, the chapter ended with the introduction of the confession tapes. In the following chapters, the reader finally gets to hear what Tommy and Karl had to say in their confessions. The reader anticipates this since it seems the whole trial has been leading up to this moment. Perhaps now the reader will see why the author seems to think both Tommy and Karl are innocent.



# Chapters 14-15, The Tapes—Tommy and The Tapes—Karl

## Chapters 14-15, The Tapes—Tommy and The Tapes—Karl Summary and Analysis

At the beginning of Tommy's confession tape, Rusty Featherstone can be clearly heard reading Tommy Ward his rights and establishing that Tommy had not been treated poorly in any way. Tommy then begins his story by telling the police how he was at a party and was approached by Odell Titsworth and Karl Fontenot. Titsworth and Fontenot wanted to go get high. Tommy agreed and the three went to a church parking lot where they drank beer and got high. The men then discussed robbing a convenience store. Tommy then said that he and Titsworth went into the store where they began throwing things around. Tommy said that Titsworth insisted they had to take the clerk with them so she could not identify them. Tommy said he forced Denice Haraway out to the truck himself. The four, Haraway, Titsworth, Fontenot, and Ward drove out to a power plant on the west side of town where Titsworth raped Haraway. Ward testified that he was unable to rape her himself, but that Fontenot raped her. Ward then said he walked home when Titsworth began to cut Haraway. However, Ward began to worry that Titsworth might leave the body near the power plant, so he returned to encourage Titsworth and Fontenot to put the body somewhere further away from Ward's house. Ward said that he instructed Titsworth to put Haraway's body in a bunker near the power plant.

Karl Fontenot's tape was presented next. On the tape, Karl was also read his rights and assured the detectives that he did not feel as though he had been treated badly during his interrogation. Karl also claimed to have gone drinking and drugging with Titsworth and Ward. Karl then said they decided to rob McAnally's. Karl claimed that he and Ward stayed at the truck while Titsworth went inside, robbing the store and kidnapping Denice Haraway. Then the three men drove Haraway out by the power plant. Titsworth raped Haraway first, then Ward, then Fontenot. Karl claimed that Titsworth had a knife and that he cut Haraway while he, Karl, was raping her. Afterward, the three men took Denice Haraway to an abandoned house where Titsworth put her in a hole in the floor and killed her with his knife. Karl, Ward, and Titsworth then poured gasoline on Haraway and burned her and the house down.

After the tapes were played, the defense cross examined Rogers. In their cross examination, the defense was able to point out a few inconsistencies in the tapes, including the disposal of the body and the fact that Fontenot pinpointed the time of day incorrectly. Finally the prosecution presented an expert witness who testified that Tommy Ward's confession was too clear to have been a dream. After that witness, the prosecution rested.

These chapters present full transcripts of the confession tapes that Ward and Fontenot made prior to their arrests. Through the horrific details the two men gave, the reader

finds several of the inconsistencies the author continuously notes in his narration. First, the two confessions differ on several key points. Ward claims that he and Titsworth both went into the store, but Fontenot claims only Titsworth went into the store. Ward claims he was unable to rape Haraway, but Fontenot claims he did. Ward states that the body was thrown into a bunker after Titsworth killed Haraway, but Fontenot claims the body was burned in a house the reader already knows was burned months before the night in question. Finally, both men claim Titsworth was not only a participant in the crime, but was the ringleader when the reader knows that Titsworth had a broken arm and could not have done any of the things he was said to have done.

However, along with the glaring inconsistencies, there are a few things that stick out to the reader as consistent within both confessions. First of these is the description of the blouse. Both Ward and Fontenot described Haraway's blouse as being lavender or white with blue flowers, just as Denice Haraway's sister claimed to be the blouse she was wearing that night. Ward and Fontenot's confessions both also agree on where Haraway was taken that night and on the method of death. Finally, Ward and Fontenot both agree that Haraway was brutally raped.

Unfortunately, without the body, nothing from the confessions can be proven or disproven. Both the inconsistencies and the similarities in these confessions illustrate the theme of questionable interrogation techniques. Although the police on the video tapes have Fontenot and Ward say on tape that they were not tortured in anyway, and read them their rights, the reader cannot help but wonder what happened before the camera was turned on. The author seems to imply that both men were intimidated by the police and fed information so that their confessions would have some similar elements. No one but the police and Ward and Fontenot will ever know if this is true or not, leaving the reader somewhat confused.



# Chapter 16, Defense

## Chapter 16, Defense Summary and Analysis

The defense began by calling a biology professor from East Central University who testified to allowing the detectives to borrow bones from his department, believing they were using them to compare some bones they had found, not to interrogate the defendants. Joel Ward then testified to the fact that he had never owned a grey-primer truck. Kay Garrett, Tommy Ward's sister, testified that she cut Tommy's hair on April 20. Bud Wolf testified that he remembered seeing Tommy with short hair on April 21. A physics professor from East Central was called to testify that the sun had gone down before 7 p.m. on April 28, proving Karl's claim that the sun was still up when they kidnapped Denice Haraway was untrue. Due to an illness on Butner's part, court was adjourned for the day. At the same time, Kerner continued to investigate the case, but was finding dead-ends and uncooperative witnesses were hampering his progress. Kerner had a conversation with Lurch in which he changed his testimony, swearing instead that he had not been in Ada in April. Kerner checked out Lurch's story. Although Kerner discovered proof that Lurch had not moved to Ada until July, he still believed that Lurch was the prime suspect in the case. Kerner drove Lurch to Ada in order to await his testimony in court and tried to get him on tape stating that he was at J.P.'s the night of April 28, but could not.

The case continued with Jeannette Roberts on the stand. Jeannette testified to taking the pictures of Karl and Tommy with short hair, claiming she put the dates on the photos herself. Nancy Howell, Jimmy Ward's girlfriend, testified that she and Jimmy had gone to Miz Ward's house the night of April 28 and Tommy and Jimmy had fought over some money Jimmy though Tommy owed him. Jimmy testified to the same thing. Joice, another Ward sister, testified that Tommy had been home all night with her because he was not feeling well. Joice also testified that Tommy and her husband, Robert, had fixed a plumbing leak under the house late that same night. Kerner testified to all he had discovered during his investigation, including the possibility of other suspects. Kerner leaned heavily on the possibility that Jason Lurch had kidnapped Denice Haraway, based on his admission of being a regular at J.P.'s, his access to a truck like the one seen that night, and the fact that he lived at the mobile home park where Denice Haraway had been seen two days after her disappearance. The following Monday, Wyatt put a social worker on the stand who placed Jason Lurch living at the Brook Trailer Park in April of 1984. At that point, the defense chose to rest despite the fact that they had not called Jason Lurch to the stand. Wyatt was hoping Bill Peterson would call Lurch. The prosecution called several rebuttal witnesses, including a nurse who claimed Joice Cavins, Tommy Ward's alibi witness, was attending a class the night in question and would not have known if Tommy had left the house. Bill Peterson never called Jason Lurch to the stand.

This chapter covers the case the defense presented. While showing that Tommy Ward had an alibi for the night in question and that Fontenot had lied about the time in which



the kidnapping took place, the defense failed to show proof that another person could have committed the crime. Don Wyatt failed to call Jason Lurch to the stand, nor did he present any testimony that called into question Ward and Fontenot's role in the disappearance of Denice Haraway. In fact, Tommy Ward's main alibi witness was shown to have been mistaken, proving that Joice Cavins was not home all day as she stated and that if she lied about that, she could have lied about the rest of the evening as well.

Throughout a large majority of the chapters, the author has presented the investigation being done by Kerner. This investigation changed the tone of the book, injecting hope into its pages. However, the final day of the defense showed Don Wyatt ignoring all of Kerner's work and not putting Lurch on the stand. This was clearly a tactical move by Wyatt, but it backfired, changing the tone from one of optimism to desperation. The reader wonders if perhaps Wyatt's choice could not have been a fatal move for his client.



# Chapter 17, Verdict

## Chapter 17, Verdict Summary and Analysis

The closing arguments began with the prosecution. Bill Peterson hit all the important dates in the case, especially the days in which Ward was interrogated by police and changed his story. Peterson also attacked Kerner's testimony, claiming he had wasted his time taking pictures of people and trucks that had nothing to do with the case. After the dinner break, Butner made his closing arguments, underscoring the fact that none of the eyewitnesses had ever placed Fontenot at J.P.'s or McAnally's. Don Wyatt made his statements, emphasizing the inconsistencies in the confession tapes and the long hours before the confession during which the police interrogated Ward. Wyatt outright accused the police of pressure tactics. Finally Chris Ross, an assistant D.A., made the prosecution's rebuttal closing arguments. Ross focused on the pictures Jannette Roberts had provided, claiming that she was a felon who could not be trusted and that her daughter in the photos was too small for the pictures to have been taken that year. Ross also attacked Kerner, claiming his investigation had resulted in nothing concrete. Finally Ross claimed that every time Ward mentioned Titsworth in his confession, he was really talking about things he himself had done, simply using Titsworth as a buffer to protect himself from conviction. The jury was instructed and sent to pick a foreman. The court was then adjourned until the following day. As the jury deliberated, tensions ran high for all the players. Ross suggested a plea deal if Ward and Fontenot would tell them where the body was, but Wyatt would not consider it. The following morning, the jury came back with guilty verdicts on all counts for both Ward and Fontenot.

The penalty phase of the trial began. Peterson called to the stand Joanne Price, a woman who claimed that both Ward and Fontenot had tried to run her off the road in a gray-primer pickup truck. No charges had ever been filed in Mrs. Price's case. The defense called Miz Ward, who testified that she did not believe her son was guilty and that she did not want to see him receive the death penalty. Final remarks were made and the jury returned to the jury room to deliberate. By early evening the jury returned with their verdict. The jury recommended the death penalty for both Ward and Fontenot.

This chapter begins with the closing arguments. Both sides underscored what they saw was important about the case. Peterson mentioned the confessions, the timeline, and the fact that Denice Haraway was not the type to run away. Butner pointed out that Fontenot had never been seen at either convenience store the night in question. Wyatt pointed out the inconsistencies in the confessions and the fact that the police had clearly intimidated the two defendants and fed them information. Finally, Chris Ross suggested that Jannette Roberts lied about when the pictures were taken, that Kerner never found anything concrete because there was nothing to find, and that Ward had lied about Titsworth being a part of the crime to try to cover up his part in the crime.

Illustrating the theme of justice, the jury deliberated after all the evidence was presented and found both defendants guilty. The jury then recommended the death penalty



because of the heinous nature of the crime. The author's tone suggests that he believes this to be a travesty of justice, that neither man was guilty and therefore should not have been found guilty. However, the reader has seen all the evidence and is left to make their own decision.



# Chapter 18, Fall Partners

## Chapter 18, Fall Partners Summary and Analysis

On October 25, Judge Powers formally sentenced Ward and Fontenot to death, setting their date of execution for January 21, 1986. Days later, the judge signed off on the paperwork, not noticing that Don Wyatt had failed to file the proper paperwork to be taken off the case and to secure Ward a stay of execution until his appeals were exhausted. Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot were moved to the maximum-security prison in McAlester, where they were put in separate cells in the crowded death row. A few months later, both men were moved to the new death row where Fontenot had begun to believe it was Tommy Ward's fault he was in jail. Fontenot told several inmates that Ward was a snitch, causing the inmates to threaten Tommy's life. Tommy was then moved into solitary. Late in December, Tommy Ward learned that he had not been granted a stay of execution and that he was to be put to death on January 21. Tommy contacted his family who contacted Wyatt. Wyatt talked to the judge and arranged for the paperwork to be done to get his stay. Wyatt was then assigned to be Tommy's court appointed lawyer through the first steps of the appeal process.

This chapter talks about the aftermath of the trial. The town of Ada quickly forgot, but the Ward family and the two defendants were forced to live with the verdicts. Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot were moved to the maximum-security prison where they would be put on death row to await their execution. To make a scary situation more difficult, Tommy Ward soon learned that a paperwork snafu on the part of his lawyer had him scheduled to die in January, four months after his conviction. The snafu was fixed, but Tommy lived in fear for those few weeks that it took to straighten it out. The tone of the book at this point is clearly one of sympathy for Tommy Ward. The theme of justice is also touched on here, though it is up to the reader whether it is a theme of justice done or of a failure of the justice system.



# Chapter 19, Gerty and Afterward, Second Chances

## Chapter 19, Gerty and Afterward, Second Chances Summary and Analysis

In the tiny village of Gerty, a local hunter was setting traps in a field when he found a skeleton. The man called police and the following day, January 21, the sheriff of Hughes County arrived on the scene and had crime scene investigators remove the skeleton. Word traveled quickly and the detectives from Ada were able to quickly supply the coroner with dental records. The skeleton was identified as Denice Haraway. It was determined that marks on the bones were made by animals and not stab wounds. However, it was clear the skull had suffered a bullet wound. Hope was injected into the appeals process for both Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot. However, it was ruled by the appeals court that the bullet wound could have occurred after death; therefore, the wound itself did not constitute new evidence. Several searches took place in the field where the skeleton was found, but no new evidence was ever found, including discovery of the blouse that was such an integral part of the evidence against Ward and Fontenot.

The appeals process continued into late 1987. Eventually, both Ward and Fontenot were given new trials based on the fact that the confession tapes were shown in court, possibly prejudicing the jury against each defendant based on the other's tape. Fontenot was tried in Pontotoc County again. A psychiatrist testified that Fontenot confessed to murder out of guilt for having seen his mother die when he was sixteen. However, Fontenot was once again found guilty. Fontenot was originally given the death penalty again, but that was overturned when it was shown that the judge should have instructed the jury that they had the option of life without the possibility of parole. Fontenot was then sentenced to life without the possibility of parole.

The discovery of Denice Haraway's body is chronicled in this chapter. Two things are significant about the find. First is the fact that Denice Haraway had a bullet in her skull. The second is that Denice Haraway was found east of Ada rather than west as Ward and Fontenot said she would be. These seem like significant finds, but the appeals court ruled they were not. There was nothing about Denice Haraway's body that could prove the confession tapes were inaccurate, proving that the confessions would continue to be the biggest obstacle for the defense to overcome.

Ward was also given a new trial. Ward's trial was moved out of Pontotoc County to a neighboring county. This time Ward took the stand and testified in his own defense. However, Ward was once again found guilty. Ward was given a life sentence and could possibly be eligible for parole in 2010.

The tone of the afterward is informational. Justice, a theme of the book, was once again explored as Ward and Fontenot were granted new trials. Unfortunately, the confession tapes remained the main evidence against both defendants and they were both convicted a second time. However, neither will suffer the death penalty, but will spend the rest of their natural lives in prison, except for Ward who could possibly receive parole after more than twenty years in prison.



# Characters

## Tommy Ward

Tommy Ward was born and raised in Ada, Oklahoma, a small industrial town southeast of Oklahoma City. Tommy, one of eight children born to Susie and Jesse Ward, dropped out of high school shortly after his father died and went to work at one of the many manufacturing plants located in or around Ada. However, Tommy had begun drinking and smoking marijuana to help him cope with the grief of losing his father, and this behavior caused him to lose his job. Tommy became a part of a group of social misfits in Ada, the dark underground made up of high school dropouts and party-goers who were well known to the Ada police department.

Shortly after the disappearance of Donna Denice Haraway, the police released a composite sketch of the two suspects based on eyewitness reports. Many calls were received by the police department from people who believe they recognized the men in the sketches. More than twenty of these callers pointed a finger at Tommy Ward. Tommy was brought into the police department, where he gave the police an alibi for the night in question. Five months passed. The police again received information pointing them in Tommy Ward's direction. When the police called Tommy in this second time, he changed his alibi. The police became suspicious and set up a lie detector test for Tommy a few days later. After Tommy learned he had failed the lie detector test, he was subjected to five hours of questioning. Afterward, Tommy offered a confession on video tape. This confession would be the biggest piece of evidence against Tommy when he eventually went to trial despite the fact that it contained many inconsistencies.

Tommy was immediately arrested, but not charged for more than two weeks. After Tommy was charged, his family arranged for a private attorney despite their lack of money, believing Tommy would not get a fair trial otherwise. Tommy spent ten months in the county jail while awaiting trial. When the trial finally took place, it appeared Tommy would be exonerated because there was no body and no proof a crime took place. However, the judge ruled there was enough evidence of a crime to continue the trial. The prosecution presented witness who testified to having seen Tommy at McAnally's and another convenience store the night in question, despite testimony for the defense that Tommy was home with a sister and her husband. The prosecution also showed the confession tapes. Tommy was convicted, along with his co-defendant, Karl Fontenot, of theft, kidnapping, and murder. Tommy received the death sentence.

## Karl Fontenot

Karl Fontenot was born and raised in Ada, Oklahoma. Karl was one of five children born to an alcoholic and his battered wife. During most of Karl's childhood he suffered abuse and neglect at the hands of his parents. At sixteen, Karl witnessed the death of his mother when she was hit by a car after leaving her own vehicle to check for damage



after a minor car accident. After this, Karl was pretty much abandoned by his brothers and sisters, left to fend for himself. Karl was an odd child and an odder adult. Karl would often attach himself to people, following them around until they finally forced him to leave. Karl attached himself to Tommy a few years before Denice Haraway's disappearance, hanging out with him while he worked in a garage. Tommy was kindhearted and did not discourage Karl, instead making friends with him.

After Tommy Ward gave the police a confession in the Denice Haraway case, Karl Fontenot was brought in to the police station. Karl was informed that Tommy had fingered him as one of his accomplices in the disappearance. After only two hours of interrogation, Karl Fontenot offered a confession that was similar to Tommy Ward's, but also contained several inconsistencies. One of these inconsistencies was Karl's insistence that he, Tommy, and Odell Titsworth burned Denice Haraway's body in an abandoned house near the power plant. However, the police quickly learn that the house was burned ten months before Denice Haraway disappeared. Despite these inconsistencies and the fact that no body was ever found, Karl Fontenot was tried and convicted of the theft, kidnapping, and murder of Denice Haraway.

## **Tricia Ward Wolf**

Latricia Ward was the second child of Susie and Jesse Ward. Tricia, as she preferred to be called, took a great deal of the responsibility of raising her younger brother Tommy as a teen due to the fact that her mother suffered pregnancy complications with her final pregnancy and was overwhelmed with the responsibilities of raising eight children. Due to this fact, Tricia felt close to Tommy and was quick to rise to his defense when Tommy was accused of murder, believing him incapable of the murder for which he was accused.

Tricia grew up to marry her high school sweetheart, Bud Wolf. Tricia and Bud both wanted a large family, so in addition to their own three children, they became foster parents. During the time in which Tommy was fighting for his life, Bud and Tricia took in two different sets of siblings at different times. Tricia was born to be a mother; despite her family's financial trouble, she chose to have a fourth child during the time in which Tommy was in the county jail. Tricia was eight months pregnant when her brother was convicted of murder and sentenced to death. Tricia would later give birth to a healthy baby girl who Tommy would only see in pictures.

## **Donna Denice Haraway**

Donna Denice Haraway was a college student who hoped to one day be a teacher. Denice moved to Ada in order to attend East Central University. Denice lived for a time with her sister in an apartment above a local dentist office. Also living in the building was the son of the dentist, Steve Haraway. Denice and Steve hit it off and eventually married, moving into Denice's apartment while her sister moved to another town. Steve was also a student at the university. Both Denice and Steve were working at



convenience stores to help pay their tuition and were both expecting to graduate later that spring. At the time of her disappearance, Denice was working as a student teacher at a local Ada elementary school.

On April 28, 1984, Denice went to work at McAnally's convenience store before her husband, Steve, returned from his own job at another convenience store. Early in the evening, Denice spoke to Steve and told him everything was quiet and that she was hoping to be able to study as the night wore on. Denice also spoke to her sister and made plans for a shopping spree. Around 8:30, three men stopped at McAnally's to get change before a poker game. One of the men moved to enter the store and had to step out of the way to allow a young couple to leave. It was later determined that the woman was Denice Haraway. It was assumed the man with Denice was her abductor. The customers quickly found the store empty and called the police, putting into motion the investigation that would eventually lead to the arrest and conviction of Fontenot and Ward. Four months after the conclusion of the trial, Denice Haraway's body would be found in a tiny town called Gerty. It would appear that Denice had been shot in the head.

## **District Attorney Bill Peterson**

District Attorney Bill Peterson would be the prosecutor in the Ward and Fontenot case. Peterson would have liked for the police to find Denice's body before the opening of the trial, but had legal precedent that would allow him to try the case without it. Peterson also had the confession tapes and eyewitnesses who placed Tommy Ward not only at McAnally's, but also at another convenience store in the area the night Denice Haraway disappeared. To Peterson, the Ward-Fontenot case appeared to be a solid case. However, in order to try the case without a body or a murder weapon, the prosecutor had to prove that Denice Haraway had not simply gone off with a boyfriend. In order to do this, Peterson put many of Denice's family members on the stand, including her husband, along with a police department information specialist who had been keeping track of any use of Denice Haraway's credit or bank accounts. Based on this testimony, the judge decided that Peterson had offered enough evidence to prove Denice was dead, allowing Peterson to present the confession tapes to the jury.

## **Detective Captain Dennis Smith**

Detective Captain Dennis Smith was born and raised in Ada, Oklahoma. Smith was at home in bed the night Denice Haraway disappeared, preparing to get up early the next morning in order to deliver newspapers to his neighbors. Smith received a phone call from one of his detectives, informing him of the disappearance and asking advice. Rather than go to the scene, Smith told his detective to treat the store like a crime scene and then he went back to sleep. The importance of the case would not fully hit Smith until the next day when he began to see the comparison between Haraway's disappearance and the disappearance of another young girl from a convenience store in a neighboring town. Smith also began to feel pressure to solve the Haraway case as



time went by and no suspects were quickly revealed. Smith was also working on another case, the murder of a young girl two years before that had remained unsolved. Smith did not want the Haraway case to turn into another unsolved case.

Smith released composite sketches of the two suspects in the Haraway case and noticed a trend in the responses toward two specific individuals. One was a young man Smith was able to quickly clear. The second was Tommy Ward. Ward had an alibi for the night of the Haraway disappearance. Smith turned his attention to other leads. Five months later, a witness came forward and claimed to have heard that Tommy Ward and another man had killed Denice Haraway. Based on this information, which was later proven to be untrue, Smith tracked down Tommy Ward and interviewed him again. Tommy changed his alibi for the night in question and acted in a way that made Smith and his fellow detective suspicious. Smith arranged for Tommy to take a lie detector test, after which Tommy gave a confession. Smith arrested Tommy who was eventually charged and convicted of the crime.

## Don Wyatt

Don Wyatt was a lawyer who had found a great deal of success in Ada. Wyatt was not the first lawyer the Ward family contacted when they realized they needed a lawyer, but was the first to consider taking the highly volatile case. Wyatt went to visit Tommy Ward in jail and decided it might be a case worth his expertise. Wyatt agreed to take the case, but told Tommy's family they would have to agree to pay him more than twenty thousand dollars. The family could not afford this fee, so they offered to turn over the deed on the family home to Wyatt. Wyatt agreed. Wyatt began the case by filing several motions to have the case dismissed against Tommy due to the fact that a body had never been found and therefore a crime could not be proven. The judge refused the motion.

Later, Wyatt attended the preliminary hearing in Tommy's defense, attempting to prove that there was not enough evidence to go to trial. However, during the hearing, Tommy decided to make a statement against his lawyer's advice. Tommy admitted to having been at both convenience stores where the eyewitnesses saw him, and that he was with a friend who took Denice Haraway from McAnally's. However, Tommy claimed that he was dropped off at his house within an hour of Denice's disappearance from McAnally's. The prosecutor and the police were eventually able to prove most of Tommy's claims were untrue, but the statement further showed Tommy's inability to tell the truth and it established that he was the man eyewitnesses claimed to have seen the night of the crime.

Wyatt continued to work Tommy's case, hiring a private investigator to attempt to find evidence Wyatt could use in court for Tommy's defense. The investigator found several things, including another suspect who was possibly seen with Denice Haraway two days after her disappearance. However, Wyatt chose not to put this suspect on the stand, hoping the prosecution would do it instead. The prosecution did not; therefore, the jury never heard from this other suspect. After Tommy was put on death row, Wyatt found





himself forced to continue on with the case due to a paperwork mistake. Wyatt was still Tommy's lawyer when the body of Denice Haraway was found and began the paperwork necessary to get Tommy a new trial before he was finally released from the case.

## Richard Kerner

Richard Kerner was the investigator Don Wyatt hired to find evidence that he could use in Tommy Ward's defense. From the beginning of his investigation, Kerner was able to prove that the composite sketch looked like many different people, not just Tommy Ward. Kerner found four people who pointed to another set of men who matched the pictures, suggesting to Ward that these people might be the real criminals in the case. While investigating these people, Kerner found yet another man who might be responsible. Kerner also went back and spoke to some of the eyewitnesses, trying to shake their memory, but having little result.

Kerner eventually found himself focusing on a man by the name of Jason Lurch. Lurch was a cowboy who had been in and out of jail and was currently working as a cowboy in the country. Kerner went to speak to Lurch and was immediately suspicious of his behavior. Kerner did further investigating and soon discovered that Lurch had a relative who owned a truck exactly like the one spotted at one of the convenient stores the night of the disappearance. This did not seem like a coincidence to Kerner, who quickly became convinced that Lurch committed the crime.

## Jason Lurch

Jason Lurch, not his real name, was a man who knew Tommy Ward and upset several eyewitnesses when he attended every day of the preliminary hearing. During the hearing, Lurch went up to Miz Ward and told her he knew that Tommy did not commit this crime. Later, Lurch, or someone who looked like him, appeared outside the window of one of the eyewitnesses, causing her to call the police. The eyewitness was frightened because she believed Lurch might be the other man who was with Tommy Ward the night of April 28, 1984. Later, when Wyatt's investigator began checking out the information he had gathered, he came across Lurch. When the investigator learned that Lurch had access to a truck like the one identified by the eyewitnesses, he began to believe that Lurch might have been the real criminal.

## Odell Titsworth

Odell Titsworth was a man who lived in Ada at the time of Haraway's disappearance. Titsworth was a mean drunk and would often have confrontations with the police while drunk. However, when he was sober, Titsworth was a quiet, gentle man. Two days before Denice disappeared, Titsworth was drunk and fighting with his girlfriend at his mother's home. Titsworth's mother called the police. During the ensuing struggle, Titsworth broke his arm. This would prove important six months later when both Tommy

Ward and Karl Fontenot would claim that Titsworth was with them when they kidnapped, raped, and murdered Denice Haraway. Titsworth was arrested, but was later cleared due to this broken arm and the fact that he would have been physically unable to rape and murder anyone.



# Objects/Places

## Composite Sketches

Witnesses from McAnally's and another convenience store, J.P.'s, gave the police descriptions of two men seen at both stores the night Denice Haraway disappeared. Tommy Ward was questioned because he resembled one of the men in the composite sketches and was later identified by the witnesses at trial.

## Confession Tapes

Both Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot confessed to the murder of Denice Haraway. Despite clear inconsistencies in the confessions, these weighed heavily with the jury, resulting in their convictions at trial.

## Grey Primer Truck

Denice Haraway was seen getting into a grey primer truck on the night she disappeared. This same truck was seen at another convenience store, belonging to two men who were later identified by eyewitnesses as the two suspects in the disappearance of Denice Haraway.

## Burned House

In Karl Fontenot's confession, he claimed that he, Tommy Ward, and Odell Titsworth killed Denice Haraway and burned her body in an abandoned house. However, the police would later learn that the house had been burned down by its owner more than ten months before Denice Haraway disappeared.

## Six Inch Knife

Both Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot claimed in their confession that Odell Titsworth murdered Denice Haraway with a six inch knife. However, when the body was found, it appeared Denice Haraway was killed by a gunshot to the head.

## Death Penalty

The death penalty can be handed down in Oklahoma in cases in which a murder was especially heinous or cruel, took place to prevent the victim from identifying the perpetrators of a felony, or if the defendants represent a continuing threat to society. All three circumstances were claimed in Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot's case.



## **McAnally's**

McAnally's is the convenience store where Denice Haraway worked and from where she disappeared on April 28, 1984.

## **Miz Ward's House**

Tommy Ward's family must sign over their family home, their mother's home, to Ward's lawyer, Don Wyatt, in order to pay his fee and the expenses he encountered in defending Tommy Ward.

## **Pontotoc County Jail**

Tommy Ward was held at the Pontotoc County jail for the ten months it took for his trial to take place and be completed.

## **Pontotoc County Courthouse**

Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot's trial took place at the Pontotoc County courthouse, despite a defense request to have the trial moved due to the overwhelming amount of press and poor public opinion in Pontotoc County.

## **Ada, Oklahoma**

Ada, Oklahoma is a small industrial town southeast of Oklahoma City. Ada is the town in which Denice Haraway lived and from where she disappeared April 28, 1984.

## **Gerty**

The body of Denice Haraway was discovered in the small town of Gerty, Oklahoma four months after Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot were convicted, ironically on the day both Ward and Fontenot were originally scheduled to be executed.



# Themes

## Obsession

The author of the book introduces the theme of obsession into the book by suggesting that the police department in Ada, Oklahoma was obsessed with finding someone to blame for the disappearance and probable death of Denice Haraway. Denice Haraway's disappearance was the second of this type to happen in the area, and the second incidence of violence against a young woman to take place in Ada in two years. Already reeling from the brutal murder of a young woman two years earlier, the police detective in charge of the Haraway disappearance, Dennis Smith, is determined to find the people responsible. Not only this, but the citizens of Ada are frightened by this latest crime and place a lot of pressure on the police department to do something about the situation.

The investigation into Denice Haraway's disappearance goes quickly from a search to a death investigation. The police bring in witnesses and make a composite sketch which they quickly publish widely throughout Ada. Immediately the police begin getting phone calls, many of which suggest that one of the men in the picture looks like Tommy Ward, a local young man who has had brushes with the law in the past. A discussion with Tommy Ward leads to nothing, but when a witness comes forward five months later, the police begin to think that perhaps Tommy Ward might have had something to do with Denice Haraway's disappearance. The police interrogate Tommy Ward a second time and find that his alibi has changed. The police arrange to administer a lie detector test on Tommy Ward. It is during this third session that Tommy Ward confesses and the police take him into custody, charging him with murder seventeen days later.

When it is later revealed that Tommy Ward's confession is full of holes, many people will begin to wonder why the police went ahead and charged him with murder. The first problem with the confession is that Tommy Ward claims that a person who took part in the crime could not possibly be involved because the police broke his arm a few days before the disappearance. Other inconsistencies exist as well, but the police pushed the charges and refused to investigate any other possible suspects in the case once Tommy Ward was charged. This, the author contends, is proof that the police department was obsessed with the crime and determined to find the killers, even if the boys they eventually charged were innocent.

## Questionable Interrogation Methods

The police interviewed Tommy Ward three times. The third time Tommy Ward was interviewed, he was first told he had failed a lie detector test and then he was interrogated for more than five hours nonstop. The author of the book seems to believe that the reason Tommy Ward confessed to murder was because he was threatened by the police and wanted to get them off his back. Ward seemed to have believed that confessing to murder with lies would help him because once the police realized he was



lying, they would let him go. Therefore, Ward told the police about a dream he had in which he kidnapped Denice Haraway with two other men and that they raped and murdered her together.

The police then brought in the two other men Tommy Ward accused of assisting him in murder, Karl Fontenot and Odell Titsworth. Titsworth was later proved innocent by the simple fact that he had a broken arm received during a fight with police two days before the disappearance. Karl Fontenot was interrogated for only two hours before he confessed to murder. Critics believe Karl confessed in this short amount of time because he too was intimidated by the police and did not want to make them mad. Not only this, but critics also believe that Karl's confession was so close to Tommy Ward's confession because the police told him what was in Ward's confession and encouraged him to tell the same story. It is because of these techniques and possible inappropriate behavior on behalf of the police that makes questionable interrogation a theme of the book.

## Justice

Despite the way the author presents the story, it is a story about attempting to get justice for Denice Haraway, a young woman who disappeared while working alone in a convenience store on April 28, 1984. The author seems to purposely stay away from the grief and pain of the victim's family, focusing instead on the pain and grief of Tommy Ward's family. Tommy Ward was one of the young men accused of kidnapping, raping, and killing Denice Haraway. Ward was accused partly because he confessed to the murder. However, the confession does not hold up to close examination and causes some to believe that Ward is innocent of the crime of which he was eventually convicted.

The fact is, however, that Denice Haraway was kidnapped and murdered. Eventually Denice Haraway's body was found. Although Denice was not found where Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot claimed she would be and did not appear to have been killed by a knife as Ward and Fontenot both claimed she had been, the Haraway family still believed justice had been served with the conviction of Ward and Fontenot. The family and the town of Ada needed someone to be blamed for this violent death. The police needed to be able to say they had stopped the needless deaths of young women in the area. These things were achieved by the convictions of Ward and Fontenot, allowing people to believe justice had been served.

The author, among others, however, believes that Ward and Fontenot are innocent of the crime for which they confessed and were convicted. The author contends that Ward presented his confession not as a confession, but as the sharing of an odd dream he had after being interviewed by the police the second time. Ward only told the police of this dream because they kept insisting that he had failed a lie detector test, which they later claimed to be untrue, and urged him to purge his conscious of the terrible guilt he must be suffering. Ward believed after the police learned that his confession was full of lies, they would let him go. Instead, the police charged Ward with murder. During a



preliminary hearing, Ward told still more lies, confessing to having been the person eyewitnesses saw at McAnally's the night of the disappearance and claiming that yet another person killed Denice after dropping him off at his home that night. The author believes justice was not served in the Haraway case. These differing opinions are the reason justice is a major theme of the novel.



# Style

## Perspective

The author, Robert Mayer, is a well known writer who has written many fiction novels and has had articles appear in several major magazine markets. Mayer has also won two Mike Berger awards for writing extensively about New York City, the place where he was born and raised. Mayer is a talented writer who chose the case of Ward-Fontenot and the disappearance of Donna Denice Haraway as his first foray into book length non-fiction. Mayer does not approach the subject of this book as an expert or someone with a definitive opinion. Mayer approaches the subject as a citizen of this country who is concerned about the appearance of injustice in this case.

The perspective of the author in this book is not overwhelming clear and does not sway the reader on any issues at the beginning of the story. The book appears to simply be a true crime book until the reader gets past the opening chapters, then the book begins to focus more on Tommy Ward and his sister, Tricia. At this point, the reader begins to understand that the author believes Tommy Ward to have been wrongly accused and falsely imprisoned. However, the author never comes right out and voices his opinion, allowing the reader to see the facts and attempt to come to their own conclusions based on the facts of the case.

## Tone

The tone of this book seems that it should be considered impartial or objective. However, as the author concentrates his narration on Tommy Ward and, especially, his sister Tricia, the reader begins to realize that the tone leans more toward the subjective. The author clearly has an opinion about the case on which he is writing and an affection for the people involved, particularly Tricia Wolf. Tommy Ward confessed to killing Denice Haraway and later made a statement in court that further offered the impression that he was guilty. However, due to inconsistencies in the confession, it appears that Tommy Ward was simply a stupid, scared boy who did not realize what it was he was doing. By confessing, however, Tommy Ward placed his entire family, especially his sister Tricia, in the terrible position of having to defend him and their family name to the outraged people of Ada. The author clearly got to know Tricia well during the period between Tommy's arrest and trial, presenting his opinion of her in his book in such a way that the reader clearly can see the depth of his affection for her and his sympathy for her entire family, especially Tommy.

The tone affects the reader by giving the impression that the Ward family's pain and grief is greater than that of the family of the missing girl, Denice Haraway. The author clearly believes that Tommy Ward was pressured in to making a confession by the police, intimidated and bullied, but not harmed. The author seems to think that Tommy was too stupid to realize the impact of his confession on his own freedom and the lives





of those he loved. This impact was great, causing one of his nieces to suffer teasing at school, causing his sister to have a miscarriage and a difficult subsequent pregnancy, and causing his mother to have to give up her house. The author rarely mentions the family of the young woman kidnapped and killed, talking about them only when it seems pertinent to the Ward family. Therefore, the tone tells the reader that Tommy Ward was innocent and never should have been put on trial, influencing the opinion of the reader.

## Structure

The book is divided into nineteen chapters and an afterward. Each chapter carries a simple title that describes something that takes place or exists within the chapter. The book begins with the disappearance of Donna Denice Haraway on April 28, 1984. The following chapter gives a history of Ada, Oklahoma where the disappearance took place. This chapter also begins to show the investigation into the disappearance. The latter chapters describe how Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot became suspects, about their subsequent confessions, and the trial that led to their conviction. A final chapter describes how the body of Donna Denice Haraway was found on the day Ward and Fontenot were originally scheduled to die on death row. The body appeared to contradict the confessions Ward and Fontenot made, leaving the author to write an afterward in the original publication of the book, suggesting the boys' lawyers would attempt to get a new trial for the boys. A later publication offers an afterward that tells how the boys were granted new, separate trials, and were convicted again.

The structure is linear and offers a clear picture of how two boys came to be suspected and convicted of a crime. However, unlike other books based on true crime, this book does not focus on the crime and the family of the victim. In fact, this book rarely looks at the victim or her family members. This book focuses on Tommy Ward and his family, especially his sister Tricia Wolf. The reader comes to believe that the author had a great deal of affection and sympathy for Tricia Wolf based on the focus of his narration, telling the reader details of Tricia's life that has little to do with the overall story. By the end of the novel, the reader believes that the author thinks Tommy Ward is innocent and that Tricia Wolf is as much a victim in this situation as Donna Denice Haraway.



## Quotes

"Ada is a city of about 17,000 people, the county seat of Pontotoc County, ninety miles southeast of Oklahoma City. Well known to crossword-puzzle addicts ("city in Oklahoma, three letters"), it was named after a dark-haired girl, Ada Reed, daughter of the town's founder, back when Oklahoma was Indian Territory. In a rural area of farms, rolling hills, thick woodlands, it is a small industrial hub." Chap. 1, pp. 1-2

"In Ada, as in many rural areas, convenience stores are a part of everyday life that scarcely exists in major metropolitan centers: Al's Qwick Stop, Beep & Buy, Butler's Mini Mart, Circle K, E-Z Mart, Love's, McAnally's, Sweeney's, We-Pak-Um, others. Main Street is still a busy shopping area, but except for the movie theater it is pretty much locked up and deserted by 6 p.m."

Chap. 1, p. 10

"More than a hundred calls were taken in those first few days. More than twenty-five different names were given. The police were familiar with some of the names—young men they had arrested in the past. Others were new to them. Some of the names had been given by only one or two callers. But two stood out glaringly. The name Billy Charley had been given by more than thirty callers. They said he resembled the sketch on the right-hand side as they appeared on the flyers and in the News. The name Tommy Ward had also been given by more than thirty callers as resembling the same sketch." Chap. 2, p. 26

"Shortly after Rusty Featherstone told Tommy Ward he had flunked the lie-detector test, Gary Rogers and Dennis Smith came in and took over the questioning. The mood in the room had changed. It was no longer an interview. It was an interrogation. The manner of the interrogators was no longer gentle. For five hours this new questioning continued, interrupted only by visits to the bathroom or by the phone calls Rogers made to Ada." Chap. 3, p. 47

"The fact that the police had taped confessions from Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot had been well publicized; the fact that the two young man had repudiated the statements almost immediately had not yet been made public." Chap. 4, p. 71

"While the entire Ward family rallied around Tommy—letters of faith arriving from Melva in California, from Melvin stationed in Virginia, Miz Ward driving down from Tulsa every Sunday to visit him, three hours each way, sometimes with Joel, sometimes with Joice—such was not the case with Karl Fontenot. His family deserted him." Chap. 5, p. 85

"There is a common misconception that the phrase 'corpus delect'" in a murder case



refers to the presence of a body. It doesn't. The phrase means 'body of the crime'; it refers to the criminal act and those involved in it." Chap. 6, p. 93

"Don Wyatt still did not know what his defense of Tommy Ward would be. He felt that he would have to put Ward on the witness stand, in an attempt to refute the prosecution's taped confession. But he knew that because of the many lies that Tommy had been telling, the district attorney could easily rip apart his credibility." Chap. 8, p. 146

"Downstairs, just outside the courthouse, a KTEN reporter asked Tricia for her reaction. 'Just because the jury says he did it,' Tricia said, 'doesn't mean he did it. Only the Lord knows the truth. On Judgment Day, He will decide.'" Chap. 17, p. 341

"In the county jail, awaiting formal sentencing, Ward and Fontenot continued to insist on their innocence. Most of the other inmates believed them and had been surprised when they were convicted." Chap. 18, p. 356

"The next morning, in Oklahoma City, the state medical examiner compared the dental impression of Denice Haraway's teeth, delivered by the detectives, with the upper jaw in the skull found at Gerty. It was a perfect match. The identification was now positive. The skeleton found at Gerty was that of Donna Denice Haraway." Chap. 19, p. 379

"Richard Kerner was out of town that day. He did not hear of the discovery of the body until the TV news that night. His first thought was 'She was shot!' That, he felt, cast further doubt on the confession tapes." Chap. 19, p. 381

## Topics for Discussion

What mistakes do the police make in the first moments of the investigation into the disappearance of Donna Denice Haraway? How could the subsequent events been different if the police had not made these mistakes? Could these mistakes have changed Tommy Ward and Karl Fontenot's destiny?

Why do the police bring Tommy Ward in for questioning? What does Tommy Ward say? How does this come back to haunt Tommy Ward later? Why is Tommy Ward brought in the second time? What proves to be suspicious about Tommy Ward's statements this time? How do the police react to Tommy Ward's statements?

Why does Tommy Ward confess to murder? What does this confession have to do with a dream Tommy Ward had? How does this confession impact Tommy Ward's future? How do the police take Tommy Ward's confession? What impact does this confession have on the reader? Why does the author chose not to present the full transcript of the confession until later in the novel? Does the confession make Tommy Ward guilty?

Who is Karl Fontenot? Why is Karl Fontenot not as sympathetic a character as Tommy Ward? Is Karl Fontenot involved in the disappearance of Denice Haraway? Why does Karl Fontenot confess? How might Karl Fontenot's childhood affected his decision to confess to murder?

Who are the eyewitnesses? What did these people see? How does their testimony affect the trial? What is unusual about these eyewitnesses? Are they trustworthy? What does their testimony say about eyewitnesses in general? Do you believe you would make a good eyewitness to a crime?

Who is Tricia Wolf? Why does the author focus his narration on her? Why is her work as a foster parent important to the narration? Why is her pregnancy noteworthy? Why does the author chose to focus on Tricia Wolf rather than the family members of Denice Haraway?

Who is Denice Haraway? Who was Denice before her disappearance? Why is her disappearance significant enough for the author to accuse the police of being obsessed with it? Who is Debbie Carter? Who is Patty Hamilton? How did the deaths of these two women affect the police focus on Denice Haraway's case? Might the police have reacted different if these two other cases had not taken place? Why or why not?