

CHAPTER 1

“MOTHER’S INTUITION”

God has blessed all mothers with two special gifts: the privilege of bringing a new life into the world, and the gift that we often call “mother’s intuition” or “woman’s intuition.” They can pick their child’s cry out of a crowded room and know whether they are hungry, angry or hurt. Or without even turning around, they know that their child is up to something. Doubtless, any mother will tell you that sometimes they get it wrong. But they share a special bond with their children that men sometimes can not comprehend. Aside from observing the miracle of this gift at work in my wife with our three children, I have never witnessed a more obvious testament to a mother’s intuition than the tragic case of Kali Ann Poulton. Kali was a beautiful, blond four-year-old, full of life and promise before she was kidnapped and brutally murdered by someone that Kali and her mother knew. I share this story with the utmost respect for the woman who lost her beloved child to an undetected child predator.

On the warm spring night of May 23, 1994, Kali begged her mom, Judy Gifford, to allow her to go outside

to play on her Big Wheel tricycle. The apartment complex, a quaint and well-kept cluster of two-story buildings nestled in a forest of large maple and oak trees, was teeming with activity thanks to the beautiful weather. Judy was preparing magazines that she was to deliver that evening. The small amount of money that this single mother made from her second job was to pay for a family trip to Disney World the following summer. As Judy put the flyers together, Kali became more and more anxious to go outside. She was looking forward to going to McDonald's after the deliveries were completed. Her mom had promised her a snack and time to play in its outdoor children's play area.

Spring fever was getting the best of both of them, so Judy finally relented and allowed little Kali to go outside and sit on her Big Wheel. She instructed Kali to stay right in front of their apartment door so that she could keep a watchful eye on her as she hastily finished her task. Within minutes, Judy was ready to load up the car and begin her deliveries. When she called out to Kali, there was no response. Judy found no sign of her daughter when she checked outside their apartment. The panic-stricken mother immediately began calling out her daughter's name and scanning the apartment complex grounds. Concerned neighbors began to assist with the frantic search, but still there was no sign of the young child or her tricycle.

About twenty minutes into the search, Judy spotted her neighbor Mark, who had moved into the complex approximately six weeks earlier with his girlfriend and their eighteen-month-old son. Mark was carrying his son to the playground area. Judy noticed that his high-top sneakers were untied. She asked him if he had seen Kali. Mark responded "no,"

and continued walking. Soon the police were called, and the first of two nightmares that every parent fears crystallized: a beloved child was missing, and no one had any clue where she was.

Patrol deputies and command officers coordinated a physical search throughout the night for the missing girl, while detectives from the Monroe County Sheriff Zone A Substation interviewed the girl’s parents, their friends, and family members for additional information. At 4:00 AM the incident was re-classified from a missing person investigation to a kidnapping investigation. This triggered an escalation to the Monroe County Sheriff’s Major Crimes Unit, which consisted of three investigators: Investigator Thomas Passmore, me and our supervisor, Investigator Sergeant Gary Caiola. I remember Sergeant Caiola’s words from his phone call that morning. “A four-year-old girl has been missing all night,” he said. “And it doesn’t look good.”

Shortly after our arrival, Investigator Passmore and I interviewed Kali’s mother. I asked Judy who she thought we should consider as a potential suspect, but she couldn’t think of anyone. Then I asked her if anyone had recently moved into the apartment complex who had shown an open affection for Kali. She responded, “There’s this guy named Mark who just moved in about six weeks ago. He gives me the creeps.” She shared that she and Kali had first met Mark and his son at the apartment complex playground several weeks before. On two or three different occasions, Mark had complimented her on how beautiful Kali was. During one of those encounters, Mark asked Judy if she thought that Kali would tell her if someone tried to touch her in an inappropriate way. Judy

responded, “Yes,” and felt very unsettled by his odd question. Within the next few days, Investigator Passmore and I made contact with Mark. Mark Christie had a criminal record, but nothing related to crimes against children. He grew up in the village of Hilton, New York. As a youth, he was considered to be a bit of a punk who walked around with a chip on his shoulder. Based upon our initial contact with him, that chip was still firmly in place. We interviewed Mark with the assistance of another colleague, Investigator Bill Connell, for several long hours one evening, but he maintained his innocence, denying any involvement with Kali’s disappearance. All three of us felt that he was lying, but we didn’t want to spook him into seeking an attorney, which would make us lose the opportunity for a second interview. A second interview would be critical if Mark had kidnapped or murdered Kali, but a defense attorney would never allow his client to help the police locate a victim’s body unless the prosecution granted very serious concessions or total immunity. It was excruciatingly painful to let him go.

Mark maintained his silence for approximately two and one-half years. Except for Investigator Passmore and me, nearly everyone discounted Mark as a viable suspect because Judy had seen him near the play area with his son so shortly after her daughter went missing. Thousands of calls, none of which I ever considered a workable lead, were investigated by an army-sized task force of detectives and federal agents. Many potential suspects were interviewed. Many were interrogated in vain. Not one witness or lead was ever produced. I never lost hope, believing relentlessly that every case is just one phone call away from being solved, no matter how bleak

the circumstances. We knew that we just had to be patient and prepared to recognize and act on a pertinent phone call if it ever came. Investigator Passmore and I maintained a low-key, casual relationship with Mark. Mark knew that he was our suspect, because we told him that we were ready to talk about getting Kali back to her parents whenever he was ready.

Mark and his family eventually moved from that apartment complex to one located in Wayne County, which borders Monroe County on the east. On August 9th, 1996, our break came: we learned that during an argument with his wife the night before, Mark had blurted out that he killed Kali. This admission sprung from a desperate attempt to gain sympathy from his wife, who had decided to leave him due to his strange behavior. Thanks be to God, Mark's wife immediately left with their son and drove to her father's house, where she promptly called 911. As promising as this lead was, it did not guarantee a conviction at trial that would send Mark to prison. Mark had not given his wife specific details of what had occurred. Her testimony would be challenged in a pretrial hearing, because in New York State, such an admission to one's spouse is considered protected and privileged. It was critical to interview him before an attorney became involved and closed the door on us.

On that particular day, I was working alone. After I learned that Mark might still be at his residence, I immediately drove across half the county to speak with him. Upon my arrival I was met at Mark's front door by his mother. She was infuriated by my presence, shouting that Mark was going to see his attorney, not going with me. Mark appeared dejected, as if he was already resolved to his fate. In spite of

his mother's objections, Mark agreed to get a cup of coffee with me, provided that I transport him to his attorney's office afterward. Mark sat in the front seat of my unmarked police car beside me, un-handcuffed. He said that he would tell me everything I wanted to know after he spoke with his attorney. I replied that any lawyer worth their salt would not allow him to speak with me about what happened with Kali, and that meant that her parents would never find out exactly what happened to their baby, or if she had suffered.

"She didn't suffer." Mark responded.

"I hope not." I said.

As we drove back towards Rochester, I suggested that we get some lunch. Mark liked that idea, saying that he was "starving." We settled on an Italian restaurant on Lyell Avenue in the city named Roncone's. Once seated, Mark ordered Chicken Parmesan with spaghetti, while I ordered linguini in red sauce with sausage. As we waited for our food to arrive, Mark and I sipped our Cokes and ate freshly-baked Italian bread. There is something about the casual, comfortable atmosphere of a family-style Italian restaurant that puts people at ease. The smell of a good pasta sauce and the sharing of fresh bread can make would-be adversaries become friends.

Mark stated that he felt bad for what he had done to Kali. He said that he had been living a nightmare ever since, haunted by Kali's face on missing child posters all over the country. Over the two and one-half years that Kali had been missing, the case had featured prominently on local and national news and talk shows, including *America's Most Wanted* and *The Oprah Winfrey Show*. Knowing Mark to be a person who liked to feel in control, I attempted to appeal to

his pride. I told him that he had beaten the police, fair and square. Mark opened up to this praise just as I had hoped: he said that he didn’t want to sound like he was bragging, but thought that the way he eluded us by getting rid of the Big Wheel was “pretty ingenious.” I feigned agreement and told him that I thought it was an amazing feat. A short time later, he asked me if I wanted to know how he “pulled it off.” His ego was getting the best of him. Keeping a sober tone and a casual expression, I responded, “Sure.”

Mark warned me that he would only discuss the Big Wheel, not what happened to Kali. I reassured him that he didn’t have to tell me anything that he wasn’t comfortable discussing. Mark informed me that the Big Wheel was in his apartment for three days after he killed Kali, and the police had missed it when they searched his apartment. I asked him how that was possible. He explained that he had cut the Big Wheel into tiny pieces and hid it in various places that he knew the police would not have legal grounds to search for such small items. Because time was of the essence to locate the missing little girl, Mark knew that the police were attempting to search every apartment under the “exigent circumstances exception” without a search warrant. The exception allowed the police to look for a missing child to preserve their life, but not for evidence of a crime. The search of each apartment thus had to be limited to spaces that a child’s body could be concealed in, but nothing smaller. This equated to searching rooms, closets, underneath beds, storage bins and crawl spaces. Most of the apartment searches were completed with the occupant’s consent. If the occupant was unavailable, the search teams were accompanied by an apartment complex manager.

Mark said that he hid the pieces of Kali's Big Wheel in articles of clothing which were stored in drawers and cabinets, concealing them so well that even his wife never found a single piece. Remarkably, Mark accomplished this before his wife returned home from work the very same night that he murdered Kali. When he needed to sneak the Big Wheel through the police roadblock at the apartment complex entrance, Mark placed the tiny pieces in several small duffel bags and put them in the passenger compartment of his vehicle. Mark said that seven New York State Troopers were at the roadblock when he passed through with Kali's Big Wheel. He thought that his heart was going to jump out of his chest when he handed the keys over to one of the troopers, thinking that they were going to search his entire vehicle and everything in it. However, they never asked to see what was inside the duffel bags. Once through the roadblock, Mark drove to each of the four corners of the county and got rid of the pieces.

Our food was delivered to us, and Mark and I continued to talk as we ate our lunch. It was surreal. Here we were, sitting among sixty other patrons eating their lunch, talking about one of the most brutal crimes anyone could ever commit—the rape and murder of a young child.

Mark told me that he had read a “big book” on police interrogation and was impressed with Investigator Passmore and me after he read it, since we did everything that the book said that we should do when we interviewed him the first time. I asked Mark if he was close to confessing to us that first night. He said no, because he had too much to lose with his wife and young son. I noted that we could see his obvious

affection for Kali, and were surprised that he was so open about it at the time. Mark explained that he "owed Kali that much."

"What a warped sense of logic," I thought to myself. Mark acknowledged that he felt bad for making the police work so hard over the past few years. Playing along with his attempt to display his sense of honor, I thanked him for having the courage to come forward and relieve us of this enormous burden. I sensed that he was in an emotionally vulnerable moment, so I asked him if I could tell him what I thought happened with Kali. He knew that my partner and I always suspected him, but lacked proof. Mark welcomed my theory, so I began:

"Mark, I believe that Kali ended up riding her Big Wheel up to your apartment, probably hoping to play with your son. You must have been outside and happily invited her inside your apartment. While she was inside, something must have happened that wasn't supposed to happen. So, you grabbed your son and ran outside to collect your thoughts and figure out what to do. While you were in the play area with your son, Judy Gifford found you while she was searching for Kali. The encounter with Judy provided you with a solid alibi. You returned to your apartment and retrieved Kali's body, placing it in some type of bag or suitcase. You then quietly carried her to your car and drove out of the complex with your son at your side before the first sheriff's deputy was even on the scene."

Mark looked across the table at me and smiled slightly as we sat in silence for a moment. "You're very close," he acquiesced. I assured Mark that Judy and David, Kali's father, would be very grateful if he could share at least some

details about Kali's death. I asked him if there was any other person who could provide us with those details, but he said no, he was the only one.

I remarked that I was baffled that no one observed him leaving his apartment with such a big bag or suitcase. Mark explained that there were a lot of people around at the time, but he was insignificant to them and had thus gone unnoticed. Appealing to his pride again, I commended Mark for keeping a cool head, thinking so clearly and quickly under such pressure. He admitted that Investigator Passmore and I were very close to getting him when we had paid a visit to him that past March at the department store where he worked, but he had quickly realized that we possessed nothing new on him. He shared that he thought about Kali every day and had been trying to think of a way to retrieve her body from where he had placed it after the murder – a cooling tank in the building where he worked as a security guard at the time. Mark had feared that Kali's body would eventually be discovered and the police would be able to connect him to it.

Allowing him to stay in control, I patiently told Mark that it was his decision and his alone whether he wanted to tell me what happened. I encouraged him to consider that although he knew that he didn't mean to kill Kali, if he didn't tell his side of the story, he would be looked upon as a child-killing monster. I led Mark to believe that Kali's death wasn't his fault. Nothing could be further from the truth; it was simply a technique to make him feel more comfortable talking about his despicable deed. Minimizing a criminal's culpability is a common interrogation tool, but sometimes it can come across as patronizing and backfire.

Mark then asked me how much prison time he was looking at. There was no minimizing this aspect, and he knew it. I told him at least twenty-five years, adding that I would be surprised if he was ever released from prison. Mark protested that it was unfair that he would have to do a life sentence away from his wife and son. He had been living his own nightmare over the past few years, and he felt that it should count for something.

I countered that the general public wasn't going to care about him or his suffering, but ultimately, he had to come to terms with himself, his family and God. He offered to tell me how he killed Kali if I would arrange for him to see his wife and son. I promised to arrange it. He had finished his lunch by this time, but I was still eating.

Mark started out by saying that Kali did not suffer. I asked him how he killed her.

"I strangled her," he answered, "but I didn't do anything to her."

"You mean, you didn't have sex with her?" I asked.

"Yeah," he answered.

I knew that he was lying. All I could think about was how afraid that poor little girl must have been during her last moments on this earth. I found it absolutely astonishing that her killer was upset that he wasn't going to be given special consideration for his perceived "suffering" over the past few years. I just kept picking away at my lunch and asking what happened that night, making certain that I didn't appear too eager for his answer. Mark said that Kali rode over to his apartment on her Big Wheel and asked if she could play with his son Alex. Mark knew that her mother would not approve of

Kali going into his apartment, so he let her in and placed her Big Wheel in the kitchen so that no one would see it next to his apartment door. Mark said that Kali went upstairs with Alex to Alex's room and started playing with his toys while he went into his bedroom across the hall.

About ten minutes after Kali's arrival, Mark heard Judy calling out her name. He got nervous, fearing that he would get into trouble for having Kali in his apartment. Mark said that Kali walked across the hall into his bedroom at that time. Seeing the little girl in his bedroom, he panicked and strangled her to death. He concluded that he felt like he was dreaming during the whole event.

I personally believe that Mark was actually molesting little Kali but got spooked by her mother calling out to her. The sound of Judy's frantic voice calling out must have cut him like a knife through the open windows of his apartment. I don't believe that he panicked at all. I think that he made a cold, calculated decision to keep Kali from telling her mother what he had done to her. But I knew that I wasn't in a position to push him about the rape while we were in the restaurant. The only way that Mark would keep talking to me was if I let him stay in control of the conversation. Many child predators never admit to raping a child because it reveals just how sick and evil they really are. This murderer was attempting to rationalize his despicable actions as a panic response to what Kali's mother might do if she found her daughter in his apartment. I felt like saying, "Mark, that is an absolute lie and you know it!" Honestly, I would have said it in much more vulgar language. But I didn't. In these types of cases it is important to keep one's emotions locked away in order to achieve the real goal – legal justice.

Mark said that he carried Kali's body downstairs and placed her on the dining room floor. He then went outside with his son to collect his thoughts. While outside, he saw Judy in the playground area as she was searching for her daughter. When the panic-stricken mother asked him if he had seen Kali, he coolly replied, "No." Knowing that he now possessed an airtight alibi from the victim's own mother, Mark returned to his apartment and realized that it wasn't a dream when he observed Kali's body lying on the floor. He placed her body in a laundry basket, covered it up with a blanket, carried the basket to his vehicle, and placed it in the trunk. With his young son accompanying him, Mark drove to the Nor-Tel Company on Humboldt Street in Rochester, where he was employed as a security guard. He drove around to the back of the building and placed the laundry basket outside of the rear door to the utility room. He then drove with his son around to the front and went inside the main entrance. Mark told the two security guards on duty that he had left something at work and came back to pick it up.

While carrying his own child, Mark walked to the back of the building and retrieved Kali's body through the rear exterior door of the utility room. He then climbed to the top of an enclosed 30,000 gallon tank filled with liquid coolant, opened the hatch door and dumped Kali's body inside the tank. I asked Mark if he had cut Kali's stomach open to prevent her body from floating to the top of the tank.

"No," he replied. He explained that he had found a piece of heavy metal equipment in the utility room and tied it to Kali's body to weigh her down. I asked Mark if he had kept Kali's clothing or the blanket she had been wrapped in.

He replied that he got rid of everything, including the clothes basket. Mark added that he left Kali's earrings in her ears.

"It should have never happened. It was a waste," he offered.

"You're right, Mark." I responded. "It should never have happened."

Mark's eyes had become glassy. We sat in silence at our table for what seemed like a long time as the other patrons sat around us, oblivious to what had just occurred.

I paid the bill and Mark left a two-dollar tip. Afterwards, I drove him to my office. Mark sat in the front seat where he remained un-handcuffed. I had to maintain that he was neither in my custody, nor under my physical control until we reached my office at headquarters; otherwise, his verbal confession could be ruled inadmissible. Once we arrived in my office, I gave him the phone and he called his attorney. He was arrested that night and charged with the murder of Kali Ann Poulton. A year later, Mark Christie pled guilty to the murder and was given a sentence of twenty-five years to life in prison. He is serving out that life sentence in the custody of the New York State Department of Corrections.

If it had not been for Judy Gifford's intuition, her daughter's killer might have never been identified and brought to justice. Mark had an airtight alibi so he was not considered a viable suspect by the majority of the thirty-member investigative task force of local, state, and federal investigators. In fact, most of the other investigative teams went so far as to eliminate him as a suspect on the grounds that he did not have the means or the time to commit this crime. Had it not been for her mother's intuition, most likely Investigator Passmore and I would not have placed him in our sights.

When we hear of a disturbing crime such as this, we are shocked and fearful. We may keep a more watchful eye for a while, even though we don’t really know exactly what we are looking for. Intuition is a powerful force, but when we sense a red flag or “get the creeps” about someone, it is easy for our minds to rationalize it away as paranoia, prejudice, or the illogical product of a bad day. After all, who wants to believe that a neighbor, trusted friend, talented coach, gifted teacher, loving family member or caregiver is not what they appear to be? We quickly become ashamed of ourselves and choose to ignore our suspicions. Every parent subconsciously weighs the potential risk to their children against the benefit of a particular outing, experience, or relationship. We know that living in a constant state of paranoia and locking our children away is not the right answer.

In response to the obvious need to better equip parents and communities to protect their children from sexual and physical abuse, in February 2005, the Faith Community Alliance of African American Ministers in Rochester held a meeting with representatives from local and state law enforcement, child protective services, and school officials. Among the attendees were Monroe County Sheriff Patrick O’Flynn, Rochester Police Chief Robert Duffy, Monroe County District Attorney Michael Green, and the Superintendent of the Rochester City School District, Manuel Rivera. The twenty-five member clergy group expressed a desire to commence a dialogue and formulate a community-based plan for their mission. They made it clear that they wanted to be active participants in this program, and challenged law enforcement to assist them in designing a proactive model for the

rest of the nation to follow. According to Dr. John Walker, who chaired the meeting, nowhere else in the country have African-American ministers and local law enforcement come together for this purpose. At the request of Sheriff Patrick O'Flynn, I attended the meeting with him. Since I have spent the better part of twenty years investigating countless crimes against children, many of which are too despicable to describe outside of a courtroom, Sheriff O'Flynn assigned me the task of assisting the Men of Faith with their publicly-declared war against child abuse.

At Dr. Walker's urging, a team of people from the respective agencies was formed to speak to church and community groups. We offered basic information on how to identify, report, and prevent child abuse, and described how each of the respective agencies worked together both to investigate and prosecute offenders, and also to provide medical and emotional support to victims and their families. I spoke on the topic of seduction and sexual abuse in most of the presentations. My participation in this program has provided me with an opportunity to discover a silver lining inside the dark cloud in which most of my career has existed. God has given me an avenue to share my knowledge and experience, with the hope of preventing a new generation of children from being seduced and victimized. Another unexpected blessing has been hearing from many former victims who had always lived under a burden of guilt and confusion but were set free after studying the ways that a predator seduces a child and then uses guilt as a control mechanism. After having the common seduction tactics explained to them in an objective forum, these former victims finally realized

that the abuse that they had suffered was not their fault as the perpetrator had led them to believe. There is no doubt in my mind that God inspired and designed these meetings. He brought together His representatives from both the church and law enforcement to help free many people of these demonic spiritual chains.

When Dr. Walker first suggested that I memorialize the content of my lecture in writing to serve as a resource for the many families who were unable to attend a presentation, I never really gave it a second thought. I just didn’t feel up to the task. The daily grind of major crimes investigations didn’t allow much time, or motivation, for anything else. Just ask my lovely and patient wife. She would tell you that working in the Major Crimes Unit isn’t a career, it’s a lifestyle. Then, out of nowhere, I felt like God spoke to my heart and inspired me to put pen to paper for the purpose of educating as many parents as possible.

The purpose of this publication is to teach all parents and caregivers how to hone their God-given instincts into an effective, knowledge-based tool to protect their children from the child predators who live among us. The source of the material presented here is approximately twenty years of experience in investigating and arresting child predators. This includes hundreds of interviews of child victims and their non-offending parents as well as interrogations of the perpetrators who offended them. This resource is not based on objective research and statistical analysis. Therefore, it should not be considered a scholarly, academic view of child sexual abuse, nor should it be compared with such publications. This book’s content represents my personal perspective and

is intended to offer a practical, simple presentation of how child predators operate in today's society. It will educate any concerned parent or guardian about how to recognize when a child predator is in their midst; how to protect their child from that predator; how to recognize if their child has already been offended by a predator; and what to do if their child discloses that they have been offended by a predator. For the adult reader who was sexually molested as a child, it is my hope that this resource may assist you in making some sense out of what happened to you, and help you understand that it wasn't your fault.

This book first lays a framework to help parents understand the common tactics that predators use to gain access to seduce and maintain control of a child. We will discuss specific defensive countermeasures against these tactics. We will study a dozen specific cases that will allow you to apply the principles that you are learning to real-life scenarios that unfold every day all around you. Along the way you will hear my opinion on matters that many parents wrestle with, such as a child's right to privacy versus a parent's right to know, children's cell phone and Internet usage, whether victims should fight back against violent attackers, and how to get your teenagers to open up to you. While you may not agree with every opinion I present here, one thing is certain: when you have finished reading this book, you will be far better equipped to protect your children. If you choose to fully educate yourself on this dark and difficult topic, you will be able to have more peace of mind as your children grow and navigate through many potential dangers.