

**The Adventures of Jewel**  
**“An Experiment in Expression”**

**PROLOGUE**

His mask was creating a level of discomfort for him that was driving him crazy, making his skin crawl, yet he was too disciplined to make such a stupid mistake as taking it off. The likelihood of him being caught and seen was slim, but this wasn't a game to take chances at. No, he wasn't so stupid. He was almost done, and he could soon rip the itchy thing off and burn it. That was the general routine here and that mask was always going to end in flames, but this time he would take extra pleasure in that step.

He stood there on the edge of the living room and kitchen tall and muscular. He wore no shoes. *Socks were better, shoes track all sorts of evidence with them.* His body was devoid of any hair except for his eyebrows, which were covered in tape underneath his mask. *Hair found at a crime scene is one of the most common ways someone gets caught.* The clothes he wore were bought today and never came into contact with anything in his World. He then wore a plastic covering over his entire outfit. Everything would be burned after and there would be no fibers to link him to this crime; to this murder.

He took a deep breath, held it for a four count and then released it slowly. As he exhaled he let go of his thoughts of the irritating mask covering his face and studied the scene before him. The living room was dark with the only light coming from a wall-mounted

flat screen TV. Flashes of light from each changing scene on the TV illuminated the living room like a series of camera flashes and his mind flashed through the last minute step by step in a similar way ensuring he made no mistakes.

Flash. Him quietly and expertly picking the lock of the backdoor. Flash. Taking the 8 steps, which he measured before hand, from the door, through the kitchen, to the edge of the living room. Flash. Raising his gun, pointed to the unsuspecting, unknowing, sleeping man on the couch. Flash. Waiting a brief moment for the light from the TV to provide him a better view. Flash. Pulling the trigger and seeing the man on the couch jerk with the impact of the bullet and then returning right back to the same position. Appearing like he was still sleeping.

*If that's not mercy, I don't know what is*, he thought after finishing his instant replay in his mind satisfied he left no stone unturned. As usual, it all went perfectly. This was not a crime of passion, it was an act of precision and expertise to him. The scene on the TV changed to a bright and sunny scene which acted like a spotlight upon the lifeless body on the couch.

He raised his arm to check the time on his watch. That watch went with him everywhere he went and with it came the reminder, and the reason for everything he was doing. In this moment especially, with yet another dead body before him, the reminder was a comfort. *Right on schedule*, he thought as he studied the watch face, and he turned away from the living room and walked towards the back door, passing through the messy

kitchen along the way. He opened the door with his gloved hand, took one last glance back, feeling resolved and hopeful. *This time for sure*, he thought, and began to walk across the snowy backyard and into the backyard of the house behind it. *If not, there's always the next time.* . . he thought.

## CHAPTER 1

Thomas was shuffling through the crowd in the College bar making his way back to his friend, excusing himself with almost every step. Each bump and contact with someone gave him anxiety and he wondered why on Earth he let her convince him to come along on another one of her “experiments.” *Foolish to call them experiments if you ask me*, he thought while bumping into yet another person. This time, the bump sent cold beer splashing into his face and the sound of glass shattering on the floor. Before he could look up to see who he bumped into or who bumped into him, he found himself being slammed in the chest. In a blink of the eye Thomas was hitting the ground, landing on his back. His head followed and hit the ground making him dizzy. Shards of glass cut his hands as he tried to find the strength to sit himself up and make sense of the scene and what just happened.

“You’re gunna pay for that!”

The angry threat came from some guy before him and Thomas’s fight or flight response kicked in, correcting his dizziness. He was now acutely aware of the situation, but everything moved so fast that Thomas didn’t have time to respond before the man jumped on top of him fist raised. Thomas threw his hands over his face and closed his eyes instinctively. Then, nothing. Thomas opened his eyes back up slowly, expecting the punch to land at any moment, and then saw why it hadn’t. His friend, Jewel, had the

man's arm trapped between the crook in her leg and an arm around his neck in a choke hold. Thomas stared at her in shock and Jewel smiled and winked.

"I think now would be a good time to slide out of the way, Thomas," she said with a smirk and Thomas needed no further instructions. Glass or no glass he shimmied out from underneath the college-guy-who-lost-his-beer, and out of the way.

Jewel let the guy go and stepped back with her hands in the air between him and Thomas.

"Who do you think you are?" He said angrily while still catching his breath from her choke hold. Rubbing and shaking out his arm, he took a step towards Jewel. "Get out of the way or I'll go through you," he said. Jewel didn't move. She stood calmly, but spoke with intensity.

"If my first action didn't give away my intention here, then I'll state it clearly — walk away from my friend here or I'll break that arm of yours." Thomas watched the moment unfold, wet with beer, cut with glass, and his anxiety grew from the conflict rather than dissipated by her act of protection. *Why can't we just run away or something?* But he knew Jewel would never walk away from what Thomas assumed was an injustice in her mind. He wasn't sure how he ended up being friends with someone who seemed to chase conflict when he hated it so much.

With absolute predictability, the guy in front of Jewel didn't listen to her threat and ran at her attempting to push her to the ground like he did to Thomas.

In a blink of an eye, Jewel grabbed hold of one arm, threw her hip into his groin, and her other arm around his waist, flipping him straight over her slight frame. He landed onto his back where Thomas had been just moments before. The guy was clearly dazed and Jewel left him there with his arm unbroken, grabbed their coats, and walked with Thomas out of the bar while everyone else just stared at his friend, Jewel, with shock and in awe.

## CHAPTER 2

“... Sometimes, Jewel, you need to ask yourself who you’re helping when you’re satisfying that curiosity of yours, and perhaps, who you might be hurting...”

Jewel was recalling one of the lessons provided to her by her hometown Librarian, Abe, certain that she’d done it again. Certain that she’d pushed her curiosity too far leading to another friend about to become another non-friend.

She walked beside Thomas on their way back to Booth Hall, to their dorm rooms. The cold Syracuse air filled her lungs with each breath. They’d walked in silence since they left the bar, and she knew that she couldn’t push him any further, so she let the silence remain.

It seemed every time she satisfied her curiosity around her friends and peers it always ended with her pushing the boundaries too far. By the time she graduated High School she only had Abe to call a friend. The Librarian was in his 70’s and a former Psychology Professor spending his retirement surrounded by books and curious minds. When Jewel moved to the small Oregon town, to live with her Grandparents after her parents died, she almost instantly found herself spending all of her free time at The Library. She was only 8 years old at the time and living with her Grandparents wasn’t the stimulating environment she had when living at home. They were just too depressed and couldn’t move beyond the death of their daughter. So, the Library became her place of escape.

Her place to move on with life, and not become overwhelmed with how much she missed her parents.

Where her peers came to fear her curiosity, or get annoyed by it, Abe stoked it. Even now, almost 3,000 miles away from Oregon and Abe's Library, his lessons were still there helping her hold on to her one new friend at Syracuse University.

Thomas and Jewel crossed the last road leading away from the still open dining hall, and towards Booth Hall's entry. Salt crunched under her boots as they crossed the road, and then crunched again on the ice and snow as they stepped onto the side walk again. Jewel was beginning to wonder if Thomas would ever talk to her again, when he finally spoke up, breaking the silence abruptly, startling Jewel in the process.

"Well, that was some experiment," Thomas said with heavy sarcasm in his voice.

"It was definitely illuminating, although things did take quite the turn there at the end," Jewel said.

"What on Earth could've been illuminating about that?" Thomas said.

"Well, what I was experimenting with tonight is micro-expressions, or the really small, extremely quick expressions our faces make almost involuntarily even when we're trying to hide our emotions." Jewel said happy to be talking to Thomas again.



“And what did you need me for?” He said.

“Well, I needed your face,” Jewel said reluctantly, bracing for what was sure to be a backlash of anger.

“My face? So, I was your experiment?” Thomas said with a little anger in his voice.

“Well, no, you weren’t the experiment, you were the control,” Jewel spoke quickly to avoid Thomas interrupting her. “You see, neither of us wanted to be there, but I couldn’t study my own face, right? So, your face would give me blatant expressions of discomfort, and I could use those expressions to see if I could recognize flashes of that discomfort on other people in the bar who were trying to hide that they didn’t want to be there.” Jewel finished and took a breath, the cold air a shock to her lungs. Thomas paused in thought before responding a few seconds later.

“And if you told me, then I would be thinking about my face the whole time,” he said looking down at the ground and Jewel could see him understanding what she did even if it was reluctantly understanding.

“Well, obviously I couldn’t have predicted what happened at the end there, and I am sorry about that, can I help clean up your hands? I have tweezers and a first aid kit upstairs.” Jewel said

“Of course you do,” Thomas said laughing, and Jewel joined in, the tension between them suddenly dissipated.

Just then, police sirens filled the air and Jewel immediately stopped laughing. Jewel’s eyes widened and like a dog looking for the source of another’s bark, she cocked her head from one side to the other in search of where they were going. The sirens got louder as the three squad cars came up the hill and right past them. Jewel stood transfixed and then looked to Thomas with raised eyebrows and expectation. Thomas stared at her, and muttered under his breath, “Oh, no.”

## CHAPTER 3

Officer Clayton Jones was the first on the scene, but the eerie, tense quiet that once was, was now an absolute circus. Six patrol cars and two ambulances, with all the personal they carried lit the snow covered lawn and house in red and blue lights. Neighbors and non-neighbors alike also watched from windows, porches, and bundled just outside the police tape searching for a glimpse of what happened inside of **#24 Washington Avenue.**

The two detectives on the scene, Bennet and Allya, were barking orders to other police officers including Officer Jones and he followed suit without question.

“Hey, Christmas,” shouted Detective Bennet. Since Clayton was in the Police Academy he was given the nickname, Christmas, simply because he was born on Christmas. It just stuck. Officer Jones turned from what he was doing, watching that no neighbors got too curious and crossed into their crime scene, and made his way over at a light jog to where the Detectives were standing.

“Hey guys, what can I do?” Officer Jones said standing before Detective Bennet. They were both tall. Clayton was clearly muscular in his fitted uniform, and you couldn’t tell with Detective Bennet as his clothes were always baggy and didn’t seem to fit. Clayton’s bald head was by choice, and Detective Bennet’s was from age.

“Well, you were first on the scene, Christmas, so anything we should know?” Detective Bennet waved his hands around while he spoke one hand holding his notepad and the other a pen. He was one of the kinder detectives to the other officers.

“Umm, well, I received the call over dispatch, like all of us, of a crime in progress, and I came straight over,” Clayton said.

“And you went inside without backup?” Detective Allya spoke condescendingly. She was not one of the nicer detectives and always seemed to find a problem with what he or other officers did. Clayton didn’t get thrown off by her attitude anymore, so he just answered the question calmly.

“Well, if the crime was in progress, I thought I could at least scare the perp away if anything, but I was too late anyway.”

“Alright, lay it out from when you arrived,” Bennet said, and Allya still looked at Clayton shaking her head.

“I knocked on the front door, announcing I was Police, and the house seemed silent except for a TV running... so I tried the back door, which was unlocked. I stepped inside, again announcing I was Police, now I had my gun drawn and I was only about two steps inside when I saw the body on the couch, clear bullet wound through the forehead.”

“Did you inspect the body, move anything, touch anything else?” Bennet asked.

“No, it was clear the kid was dead so I came outside and ya’ll arrived maybe less than a minute later.” Clayton spoke very casually in spite of all the lies he was telling.

“Alright, well, good work,” Detective Bennet said, and Allya rolled her eyes and walked away from them. “Just one thing for the future, Christmas, wait for backup next time.”

“Sure thing,” Clayton responded and then turned to head back to his post on the Police tape when the detective called back to him.

“Still no partner, Christmas?” Detective Bennet said.

“No, not yet,” Clayton responded.

“That’s like 6 months,” he said with genuine surprise in his voice and then continued, “Well, more reason to wait for backup next time. Nice work,” he said.

“You got it, and thanks,” Clayton turned and made his way to his spot on the police tape watching the crowd of people awake and alert at 2am. *Nothing like a murder to make people into concerned citizens*, he thought, and impulsively placed his right hand

on his back pocket ensuring his notepad was still in its place, and then his left hand into his front pocket ensuring both pairs of rubber gloves were still there.

## CHAPTER 4

“Criminology - The Art of Detection” was the name of the class and her Professor was the head of the Criminology department, Dr. Eugene Letzger. It was rare for a Professor in his status to be teaching a Freshman class, but that was his way. He wanted to encourage and sometimes discourage students when it came to taking the plunge into the potential future of being an investigator. He wanted to be an active part in molding future detectives. Jewel was sitting in the front row staring at the board which still had the riddle he gave the class on day one as a part of his first lesson. On that first day he leaned back on his desk and began talking with his arms folded. No introductions, just straight into the class.

“Some people solve crimes because it’s a job and they want to do a job that’s meaningful... others do it because they’re obsessed with the puzzle, because there’s no other choice. And I believe that you have to be obsessed if you’re to be a good detective. If you’re not obsessed, you’ll never stick through it. For instance... if I give you a riddle to solve, how many of you will look up the answer within one minute? Five minutes? What if the puzzle, the riddle was so hard that it took months? Would you stick with it? Well, that’s what we’re going to find out.”

From there, the Professor wrote a riddle on the board in the top left corner of his own making that couldn’t be simply googled, and 6 months later the riddle remained on the board, unsolved by any of the 175 students in the class. Jewel stared at the riddle

reading it over in her mind wanting to desperately find the answer. *I show age upon my face, but it's not mine. I'm tagged with a name, but it's not mine.* Jewel repeated it in her head, not really needing to read it anymore as she had it memorized after the first class. Professor Letzger walked into the classroom breaking Jewel's trance and everyone immediately became silent as he started speaking to the class before even making it fully into the room.

“Ok, so, to repeat myself from last week, this Semester is about having a taste in the practical, so I want to see if any of you have picked any cases from the list my good friend, and our local Police Captain, was so kind to offer us?”

One girl in the back of the classroom raised her hand and decided on a case of potential insurance fraud. Then, the guy sitting next to Jewel told Professor Letzger he was going after the string of robberies that have been happening in nearby neighborhoods. That was initially what Jewel was going to choose as well, until last night. Until those sirens filled the air.

After the Police cars raced passed her and Thomas, she went racing to the elevators with Thomas in tow. Soon arriving to the 7th floor, she ran down the hall and into her room, #12. Thomas kept pace with her, but was panting by the time they made it to her room, where Jewel was already turning on her police scanner listening to try and figure out what was going on. Reports of a 10-31 filled the room and Thomas looked to Jewel for explanation.



“That’s a crime in progress,” she translated. Next the dispatch coded a 10-35, and calls for detectives to report to the scene. “10-35... that’s a major crime alert, which is usually only one thing.”

The next morning brought the news of a possible gang related murder. Although it wasn’t on the list provided to the class by the Police Captain, this was the case she wanted to be a part of solving.

Jewel raised her hand in the lecture and explained the situation to Professor Letzger and the class. The Professor listened intently leaning on his desk, and when she was done he stood up straight and walked towards Jewel.

“Well, well, that obsession is very good, wanting on a case before a case is even an option. I don’t see why not, others have worked on murder cases in this class in the past. I’ll talk to Captain Alvarez and make the arrangements to get you case files.” Suddenly, about 10 more hands shot up into the air and shouts desiring to be on the case as well.

“Ok, ok,” Professor Letzger said gesturing with his hands for everyone to calm down. “This will be open to anyone to be involved on just like the other cases, but a word of warning. Something I said last semester that I think is pertinent to repeat here and now. As a detective you must assume that you are both the hunter and the hunted. You must assume your criminal does not want to get caught and will go to almost any length to

prevent it. So, don't take on any of these cases lightly, especially a murder case. Being a detective is to put yourself in harms way, and the greater the crime, the greater the risk, so think that over before you get all excited like this is your favorite crime drama on TV.”

When he finished speaking, and for the rest of the lecture, the students in the class were silent contemplating his words. Jewel was too excited of the possibility of working on a real case that she couldn't focus on his lecture, so she just stared at the Riddle in the top left corner of the board. Saying it over in her mind, *I show age upon my face, but it's not mine. I'm tagged with a name, but it's not mine.*

## **CHAPTER 5**

Hours after her lecture with Professor Letzger Jewel received an email, along with the few other interested classmates, that they would be able to get access to the case file for the murder investigation when class met again in two days. From there, all communication about the case would go through an Officer Clayton Jones who was sort of the bridge between the detectives and the students.

Jewel couldn't wait two days so she took an Uber to the Police Station that afternoon and asked to see Officer Jones. He was out on patrol, but she waited there for two hours until he came back to the station so she could hopefully get access right away. When she was escorted to his desk he looked at her with tired and disinterested eyes. Leaning back in his chair clearly not in a patient mood.

"I heard you were asking for me specifically, how can I help you?" He said. Jewel sat down, sitting up straight, and cut right to the chase.

"I'm one of the students in Professor Letzger's class who will be helping with the current murder investigation and I wanted to see if I could get access to the file now rather than wait two days for my Professor to give it to us?" Jewel spoke without hesitation in her voice.

“Oh,” he said rolling his eyes and twisting in his chair back and forth slightly. Seeing she’d have to make more of an initiative she carried on.

“Look, I can see you’re very tired, but if you can help me out I’ll be out of your hair in no time,” Officer Jones raised his eyebrows, waking up a little, and then pushed back his chair to stand up.

“Give me a few minutes,” he said with a sigh and walked away.

That night Jewel was back at her dorm room, sitting on the floor with her legs crossed, and the contents of the file displayed before her in a large semi-circle. She read through the pages in the file, highlighting details she thought important. The first thing she noted and highlighted was *First on the scene - Officer Clayton Jones*. The facts from there were slim to none. There was really no other useful evidence found at the scene. She highlighted everything listed anyway: *backdoor lock picked, 9mm gun-shot-wound, 9mm pistol with silencer left at the scene, no prints on the weapon, serial number shaved off of the weapon, numerous footprints in the snow (impossible to isolate one set), time of death 24 hrs earlier than 911 call of “crime in progress.”*

*Interesting*, she thought. *The call into 911 must have come from the killer, wanting us to identify the body... why not just wait until the body is found?* She made a note on the page to think more on this later.

Jewel then read some of the notes written by the Detectives on the case, Bennet and Allya. They were investigating this as an act of gang violence according to the file. The victim was a 24 year old man with known affiliation to a local gang and they found numerous amounts of drugs stashed throughout the house. According to the detectives notes, they were assuming that the lack of witnesses was out of fear of a gang.

Reading all of this, and the evidence, Jewel's mind was seeing too many holes in that argument. *Gang's always do something big and obvious, not something so precise and so flat of emotion*, she thought. *There was nothing to suggest passion or rage*, she thought. Jewel started to write notes in the margins adding to the list of evidence. *Nothing stolen, extreme lack of evidence, professional*. She lifted her head staring at the ceiling in thought and her mind went to another lesson from Professor Letzger.

"No matter how well someone covers their tracks, the act of covering their tracks leaves tracks themselves. Leaves traces. A lack of evidence, is still evidence, it still tells a story. The lack of prints means, the person wiped things down, or wore gloves, and that tells us something. Yes, we always want DNA and fingerprints, but no one is going to leave you that. A lack of one clue, means an abundance of others. You have to look between the lines sometimes, not just at what the light illuminates, but at what the darkness is outlining."

*Whoever it was knew how to leave almost no trace, so they have a knowledge of forensics*, Jewel thought returning her gaze to the pages before her on the ground. She

looked back at her recent notes. *Professional*, she read what she wrote out loud and continued to do her reasoning out loud to no one but herself. *This can't be gang related, it would be at least a little sloppy. Picked locks, weapons left at the scene wiped clean and no serial number, it just would make more sense if it were a cop than a gang shooting.* She stopped speaking, stunned by her own thought. She put the page in front of her down and picked up the very first page she looked at when opening the file. She went to the first thing she highlighted, *First on the scene - Officer Clayton Jones.* She thought aloud, *He could've committed the crime the night before, and then arrived early on the scene to double check he didn't leave any evidence behind. Putting the call in of a crime in progress aloud him to be at the scene again without any suspicion.* Her mind was spinning with the theory and another lesson from Professor Letzger played out in her head.

“...as a detective, it is your job to be overly suspicious of everyone. It's your job to assume everyone is guilty, and only to let go of that assumption when you've proven their innocence. I know it's backwards to how things work in court, but it's because of how things work in court that we must think this way. If everyone is guilty until proven innocent, you'll never forget to interrogate the true criminal who could be staring you right in the face.”

It was clear that she needed to see this thought through. The next morning was a Friday and she got up early to send Professor Letzger an email seeing if she could pull on his connection to Captain Alvarez, a little further. She wrote in the email that she just

wanted to get to know as much as she could about who she was working with, and requested files on Officer Jones and also included Detective's Bennet and Allya in her request. She didn't want them to think she was investigating a Police Officer. *That might not go so well*, she reasoned to herself while typing out the email.

It actually worked and she was able to pick up files on the Detectives and on Officer Jones later that afternoon. *I wonder what the Professor's connection with the Captain is that we can get access to all this information?* She wondered and made a mental note to satisfy that bit of curiosity on a later date.

File in hand, having skipped two classes that day already she resigned herself to skip the rest and go straight back to her dorm room to see if there was any information of use on Officer Jones. She displayed the contents of his file on the floor like she did with the case file the previous night, and sat with her legs crossed reading about Officer Jones. There was basic background information, test scores at the academy, and what his assignments were and currently are at the moment. After several minutes, she sat up with a lightning bolt realization. Jewel shot over to her desk and scooped up her laptop bringing it to the floor. She brought up google maps, looked back at Officer Jones' patrol area, and to the scene of the crime. It took only a minute to outline everything and then her mental alarm system was firing. *It's him*, she said out loud in a whisper. It was an obvious detail that for whatever reason no one was looking at as far as she could tell. Officer Clayton Jones should not have been the first on the scene.

## CHAPTER 6

Her thinking was that maybe it's all a coincidence. *Sure, pieces fit together*, she thought, *but there isn't proof of anything, just a theory. He could've been off his patrol to visit his grandma or something*, she thought, giving him the benefit of the doubt whether she believed it or not. For that reason, she found herself alone with Officer Jones driving in his squad car, potentially alone with a killer.

“So, you said in your text that you had some information, but for whatever reason you needed to tell me in person. So, per my liaison duties here, I had to drive 20 minutes out of my way to come pick you up while I continue my patrol. You know none of your other classmates have been as,” he paused, and looked towards her, “annoying as you. What’s on your mind, kid?” Officer Jones finished his little tirade, and Jewel knew he was about to get more annoyed and potentially more violent.

“Well, I believe the detectives are looking in the wrong direction Officer Jones. I don’t think this is gang related at all.” She decided to maybe try and get to the information she needed from Officer Jones not so directly, trying to find a way to tease the information out of him if possible. He looked over, raised his eyebrows and made a face that said, “pleasantly surprised” which was confirmed by his next words.



“Impressive, but yet again, anyone worth their salt can make better deductions from evidence than those two morons. The question is, is that it? Is that what I drove out here for?”

“No, that’s not it,” she began, trying to control her desire to blurt everything out. “I think it’s actually someone in law enforcement,” she said calmly not sure how he would react. His demeanor changed and his relaxed annoyance and playful teasing turned to stoic and serious.

“What makes you say that,” he said, his voice now stern and cold.

“I have my reasons, but the real reason I wanted to talk to you Officer Jones is to ask you about being first on the scene.”

“What about it?” He said, his voice sharp and defensive. She abandoned her idea of trying to tease the information out and just asked directly.

“How were you the first on the scene?” Her heart was racing with the tension filling the vehicle and thinking of the possible answers. Officer Jones looked over to her, back to appearing more surprised, then confused, and then he started laughing.

“I see,” he said still laughing, “you know it’s a clever theory, I’ll give you that, but you’ve got it all wrong, kid,” he said and Jewel was now the one with the surprised look

on her face. He looked over to her smiling and calmly pulled his car over to the side of the street putting the car in park. “You think it’s me, right?” He said turning to Jewel, and she hesitantly nodded her head. He laughed and put his hands up as if turning himself in. “That’s why I pulled over, if you feel I’m gunna kill you or something you can just hop out alright, and if I was the killer, pretty bold or pretty stupid to get in my car here alone.” He looked at Jewel and Jewel looked back trying to study his face searching for micro-expressions. Jewel wasn’t sure what to make of it all, but his face didn’t have any secret about it. Then her brain chimed in, *He still could be the killer, and playing it off as comical trying to get me to relax*, so she did the opposite. Hand on the door handle, eyes wide in focus, she just said one word.

“Explain,” and he did.

“First off, I do appreciate you coming to me in private as I don’t like lying to my superiors at the precinct, but this is something that requires a little cloak and dagger. I was first on the scene because I was out of my patrol area with some...” he paused searching for the right words, “...informants of mine when the call came through. I jumped on the chance hoping to be first on the scene for a number of reasons, but so far it hasn’t done me any good.”

“What do you mean you were ‘hoping’ to be the first on the scene?” She asked.

“Ok, listen, I’m going to trust you kid because, well you’re too damn smart to lie to apparently and frankly I’m shocked no one else has questioned me about this. They’re so myopic about their gang shooting theory they can’t see the obvious. Here’s the deal, kid. I believe this is another murder by a serial killer that I’ve been secretly investigating for the last 3 years. I’ve been doing it in secret because, as you determined in one day,” he laughed and shook his head in amazement, “there’s a good chance the killer is in the police force and I don’t know who to trust.” Officer Jones let the car’s silence stay that way, and Jewel’s eyes were now looking through and beyond Officer Jones in deep thought taking in all the information. *Guilty until proven innocent*, she thought and looked back into Officer Jones’ eyes.

“Prove it,” she said.

## CHAPTER 7

Clayton wasn't sure why he was going through all this trouble to prove his innocence to this college freshman who was, in his mind, way out of her league trying to investigate a murder, let alone what he knew to be a near decade long serial case. Part of him was telling himself that it was in the vein of self preservation, to avoid any serious inquiries from the Detectives or the Captain. He was telling himself that it was so he could protect the secrecy of his investigation from other law enforcement personnel, which Jewel would no doubt turn to if he didn't give her proof. Then, in a flash, all those thoughts would get shunned to the side for the simple reason that he was tired of being alone on this, and something about Jewel gave him a hope that he wouldn't be anymore, and hope that after 3 years on this case she might be the missing link to help him tie this off.

They arrived to his source of proof, to a home just a 5 minute drive away, and only a few streets over from their current crime scene. The house was tall and narrow. Three stories, with rickety balconies on the top two floors and a porch. The house was painted white, but was speckled everywhere with the color of pine, showing a decades worth of weathering. As soon as Clayton pulled up to the house, three men walked out of the front door and stood on the porch with their arms folded. Clayton had called ahead so they'd be expecting their arrival, but their posture and faces didn't show any signs of welcome.

"So, where are we?" Jewel said looking curious and a bit on edge.

“This is Rascal’s house... well his real name is George Waits, but he hasn’t gone by that name since we were in Middle School,” Clayton said, trying to get to the answers one step at a time. He thought that throwing all the details on Jewel at once would be a little too much to handle.

“and why are we at ‘Rascal’s house?’” She said with a little playful attitude in her voice.

“Rascal and I were friends since Elementary school, but by the time High School rolled around we were more enemies than friends unfortunately. He got into selling drugs and started hanging out with these guys who were basically recruiting him to join their gang... the Anarchy Group is what they call themselves. Sort of an anarchist group hating on all things government and laws and really just a chumped up excuse to rationalize whatever level of crime they want to commit. There’s enough debatable logic in there that they’re able to sell a lot of these kids the rest of the b.s. Anyway, don’t talk about any of that with them. They’re real serious dudes and frankly I’m only bringing you here because you insisted on proof and Rascal’s the one who’s got it, or at least he’s the start of it.” Clayton finished talking, speaking in a calm tone the whole time glancing up at the three men on the porch every so often and then back to Jewel.

“From everything you just described, it sounds like you are definitely the enemy in their eyes, so how on earth are you able to just walk in there?” She asked sounding a little skeptical.

“Well, that’s sort of what I’m going to have Rascal explain, but the beginning is just that 3 years ago Rascal reached out to me, and we sort of made a partnership until this whole thing is unraveled.” Jewel nodded her head in approval to his explanation.

“Ok, anarchists, drug dealers, and criminals of who knows what else... what are we waiting for?” She said, seemingly non-plussed by the whole story Clayton just gave.

Clayton shrugged his shoulders, gave a short laugh and said, “Alright, here we go.”

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“The enemy of my enemy has arrived,” said the man sitting by the fire place in a dark-red wing-back chair. Jewel thought that he’d look a Bond villain if he wasn’t dressed in a track suit and sneakers. The three other men that were standing on the porch now ushered them into the living room and now clearly had their guns on display. One outright holding his in his hand, and the other two just pulled their sweatshirts up a little letting the gun tucked into their pants be seen.

“Rascal,” said Officer Jones and Jewel was just taking everything in, imagining how she’d get out of here alive if something went south.

“So, are you here bringing me an acolyte to join our ranks?” Rascal said a smug little smile on his face and the three men that surrounded the living room laughed along.

“No, that’s not why I’m here,” Officer Jones replied and took a step closer towards Rascal, “I’m here for you to tell her what you told me three years ago.

“What is she supposed to catch a killer? She’s so tiny and frail lookin’ I don’t think she could push my boy here out of the way if she needed to get out of a burning building,” he said pointing to one of the men standing next to Jewel and they all laughed along. Not one to shy away from a challenge, Jewel turned to face the man next to her who did the same, still laughing. Then, before the man could even react, she threw her arm over his neck and her hip to his groin. As she twisted her head around, and brought his head forward, his whole body flipped over her and onto his back right in front of Rascal.

Guns were drawn and pointing at Jewel and Officer Jones had his pointing at Rascal. Rascal stood up, gestured his men to put down their weapons, and he just shook his head laughing and staring at Jewel.

“Well, well, excuse me for what I said, you just might be the right girl for the job,” he said and then kicked the foot of the man Jewel tossed, “get up already, you’re embarrassing yourself.” Everyone else was silent, tension still filling the room. “Alright, why don’t we just sit down and I’ll tell you what Christmas over here wants me to tell you.” Rascal sat back into his wing-back chair and Officer Jones took a spot on the couch nearest Rascal.

“I’ll stand,” said Jewel not wanting to get herself into a position where she’d be vulnerable.

“Suit yourself,” said Rascal, then leaned forward in his chair and slapped his hands together, “Where do I begin?”



## CHAPTER 8

“So, this is a legit serial case,” Jewel said to Officer Jones upon getting back into his squad car and leaving Rascal’s house.

“Yea it is,” he said and turned to the back seat pulling a messenger bag into his lap. “...and like I said, that’s jus the start... here,” he handed her a bunch of files that he had just pulled out of the bag and Jewel looked on in surprise.

“But, Rascal said this had only been going on for five years, two years before he called you, there must be ten case files here?” She said looking to Officer Jones for answers.

“Yea, well, once he called me three years ago, after the third murder of someone in their group that he was sure wasn’t gang related or a drug deal gone wrong or something, I went digging a little further. Unsolved murders all in the same relative area here, all known or possible connections to any gang or drug dealing and this is what I found. One every year for the last 10 years. No more, than one a year, always around this time... beginning of January or sometimes late December. It’s not a coincidence, but for whatever reason, they keep getting swept under the rug as a gang shooting or something even though the M.O. is so similar. You can take all those home to look at, but I’ll summarize for you. All of them had a gun left at the scene, no prints, no serial number. All left no forensic evidence at all, and no witnesses at all.”

“So, how has no one put this together before? Especially since it’s all happening in the same area? It’s not like these are spread out all over the State or something.” Jewel’s mind was racing, excited, a little nervous now understanding the scope of it all.

“Well, for the same theory we’ve both had, it’s gotta be someone in law enforcement covering it up. It’s either that or just dumb detectives, which leads me to the first major breakthrough I had. Look at the first page of each file and who worked the cases.” Jewel started opening up one file, then another, then another and after about five she stopped and looked to Officer Jones.

“Are they all the same?” She said.

“Yea, every case was headed by Detectives Bennet and Allya,” he said.

“So, one of them could be covering things up, erasing evidence, or not submitting evidence, or...” Clayton stepped in to finish her thought.

“...or just spinning the direction of the investigation away from them and towards gang violence which more or less kills the investigation all together. With no forensics to tie things to anyone, there’s nothing they can really do, and when it comes to gang violence it’s more or less the approach of most police officers to stay out of the way. As long as they’re not hurting anyone else, they don’t want our involvement as it is,” he said

and the car became quiet as Jewel went deep into her head thinking it all over. The new development here and the connection to The Detectives was startling. Officer Jones just sat there letting her absorb. She spoke still looking at the files.

“No witnesses,” she said and then looked up to Officer Jones, “never?”

“yea, that’s the other thing that’s bugged me this whole time, how on earth could there be no witnesses in 10 years? Even when these things happen in the middle of the night someone is always around, and in 10 years someone was bound to be up and see something, hear something, but never.” He looked frustrated trying to understand.

“So, this guy is a pro, it’s definitely not some random gang shooting. Especially if we know now that the lack of witnesses isn’t out of fear of one of these gangs, it has to be just because this killer is that good.” She was thinking out loud not looking at Officer Jones anymore just staring off into the distance. “Can we go to the crime scene? It’s only a few blocks over, and I just need to see it.”

He shrugged his shoulders again and said, “Sure, let’s go,” and he put the car in drive and slowly pulled away from Rascal’s house.

## CHAPTER 9

Jewel was running all over the place and Clayton just watched from the squad car parked outside of #24 Washington Avenue. He watched her scan the block in front and run around to the back of the house and disappear for a few minutes before running back around to the front. *She's really trying to solve this thing*, he thought to himself, *more than just a curious girl for sure*. Jewel made her way back to where Clayton was and she was out of breath from whatever it was she was doing.

"You look like a dog playing in a yard," he said laughing.

"I just," she began panting as she talked, "needed... to see... all the different ways... the killer could've approached the house."

"Interesting, and your thoughts?" He said.

"Did you canvas the houses on the block behind the house? He could've come from that direction instead of from around the front." She said her breath returning.

"Yea, standard procedure, we interviewed houses two blocks on either side of the house in all directions, and still no witnesses. No one heard anything or saw anything. Nothing suspicious either."

“Ok, and do you know if similar work was done on those former unsolved cases going back ten years?” She asked and the sunlight in the sky was fading fast, darkness and cold slowly growing.

“Yep, it was standard even back then,” he said, “why what are you thinking?” Clayton was feeling like she was on the verge of a breakthrough and was getting excited to hear what she’d come up with.

“I think you’re right, I think that’s almost impossible. I mean, even if he was really careful, he’s bound to get unlucky here and there over 10 years, and even if he kind of stalked the victim and the neighborhood before hand to avoid detection on the night of the murder, there was bound to be someone who saw a suspicious vehicle or person lurking around in the weeks prior, unless...” her voice trailed off and Clayton stared at her his eyes wide.

“Unless, what?” He said anxious to hear what she just thought of.

“I need to go see a friend,” she said, “I think I might know how this killer is able to avoid being seen.”

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At the same time, in a dimly lit room, a man with no hair on his body sat in front of a large desk with 7 different computer monitors all displaying various live video feeds. One displayed a dark living room with an empty couch, two displayed different views of a street and another two of another street, but the man was leaning forward eyes fixated on just one screen. A view of a house with a Police car out front, and a Police Officer discussing something with a petite girl. He'd been watching this girl running around this house for the past several minutes jumping from monitor to monitor as she raced from the front yard to the backyard, through to the opposite street, and back. He wished he had audio for this moment now to hear what they were discussing. He watched them get into the police car and drive off. He leaned back in his chair and placed his hands on his smooth head.

"Very exciting," he said to no one, "Finally someone who might be worthy." He felt a flush of relief wash over him, and then it vanished almost instantly, replaced by the near constant despair and hopelessness from his years of disappointment. He stood up from his chair and turned to leave his computer room. His hand reached for the light switch, and he paused, eyes focused on his watch. It was his reminder and his reason. And with that reason he pushed a bit of hope back into his mind, "We'll just have to wait and see," he said still staring at his watch, and then turned off the lights leaving the seven monitors to give the room it's own distinct glow as he walked away down the hallway of his home.

## CHAPTER 10

It wasn't until the next morning that she was able to get in touch with Thomas. After Officer Jones dropped her back off at Booth Hall he was off to finish his patrol for the night while she promised to track down Thomas so they could figure out if her theory was correct. There was probably someone in the Police Department who could help, but they needed to keep things under the radar as best as possible and she was confident Thomas could help.

Jewel was sitting on Thomas's bed in his dorm room looking up at the ceiling while Thomas was sitting at his desk typing away on his laptop while he spoke about her request. He was talking through the science and technical aspects of everything she was asking him to do when she interrupted him mid sentence.

"Thomas," she said waiting for Thomas to stop typing and look her way, "can you do it?" She didn't really care about all the details as long as he could do what she needed.

"Oh, sorry, yea I can do it, I just need my laptop, if there's surveillance cameras anywhere I'll be able to locate them," he said and Jewel hopped off the bed in excitement.

"Awesome, can we do it today?"

“Umm, I kind of have some more homework to do...”

“We’re going today,” Jewel demanded and Thomas just went silent. “Listen, I’m not trying to be a jerk here, but today’s a Sunday, and we have no classes. If we don’t go today it won’t be until next weekend. We have to get out there today or we’re giving this killer more time to cover their tracks or plan the next attack.” She said and Thomas looked down at the floor thinking.

“Alright, screw it, this sounds more exciting anyway, when do we leave?” He said.

Jewel was immediately texting Officer Jones and within 20 minutes he picked the two of them up outside of their dorm. Driving in the car on the way to #24 Washington Avenue, Jewel remembered one of her lessons from Professor Letzger.

“With the modern World brings the modern criminal. As such, you must become a modern detective. You must possess all the technical skills that today’s criminals have. Computer skills, phones, and so on. That’s why I’m a teacher and not a detective. I’m not going to be tracking down a thief who can hack a security alarm with my flip phone here. I can do email, but that’s about it. You need to do more.”

Jewel was thinking that maybe he’s right and maybe he’s wrong a little. *I have some basic computer skills, but I don’t have to be able to do everything. I found a shortcut. I can have friends that can do what I can’t*, she thought. Soon, they were



pulling up to the house and Jewel was anxious to see what Thomas could do. Officer Jones let them into the house, which had already been processed by forensics and Thomas set himself on the couch in the living room and he started typing away.

“Thomas,” Jewel said.

“Yea, Jewel,” he replied.

“I should probably mention that you’re sitting right where the guy was killed,” she said and Thomas looked up at her stunned and then shot off the couch and walked towards the kitchen. Jewel and Officer Jones started laughing.

“So, how is this going to work exactly?” Officer Jones asked and Thomas explained.

“Well, if Jewel’s theory is right, and this guy is placing wireless surveillance cameras around your victim’s houses then they have to be transmitting data. What I can do is simply use my connection with my broadband card and set up a sort of net to detect areas that are doing this. If I can narrow the search area enough you guys can find any cameras that might be around.”

“Pretty impressive kid, so what’s the range on this? How close do we need to be to get a hit or whatever?” Officer Jones asked.

“Oh, well, not sure, but I’m thinking if I’m within 10 or 20 feet I should get a ping... oh, that’s a better analogy... it’s like sonar. There will be big pings and little pings, but I’ll be able to code out some obvious things like phone signals.” Thomas said looking proud of his sonar analogy. “Ok, we’re all set, we can start our s...”

“PING!” Thomas was interrupted by the loud sound from his computer and the three of them looked at each other in amazement that it worked and worked so fast. Thomas pickup up his laptop and walked around the room listening as the pings got faster and faster in succession like a metal detector zeroing in on the source.

“It’s coming from somewhere over here, from around the TV,” Thomas said and Officer Jones and her started their search. After 20 minutes they found nothing and were looking at each other discouraged, and Jewel was wondering if maybe Thomas’s program didn’t work, when Officer Jones spoke up.

“Here’s a thought, Jewel, if this guy has been using surveillance cameras to avoid being seen and avoiding any witnesses to his killings, then he probably doesn’t go back to pick them up after the crime, right?” He said.

“yea, so?” Jewel replied.

“Well, if that’s the case would we be able to find one of these cameras by pushing aside some dvds?” He said and Jewel’s eyes went wide.

“Yea, that makes perfect sense, so where could it be then, it could be in the TV,” she said and the two of them looked at each other and Jewel knew he was thinking the same thing. Officer Jones pulled out a knife from his belt and opened it up as they started examining the TV.

They soon had the entire back of the TV off and they were examining the contents inside in search of a video camera of some kind.

“Got it!” Jewel exclaimed and she stood up with the tiny camera in her hands and Officer Jones stared at it in amazement.

“Three years I’ve been working this case and finally a damn break, amazing idea Jewel, amazing,” he said and the two of them just stared and studied the camera.

“Umm, I am still here you know and there might be more of those cameras around,” Thomas said and the Jewel and Officer Jones spun around to where Thomas was sitting in the Kitchen.

“Let’s go camera hunting,” Jewel said.

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He walked into his computer room with all his monitors, not because he needed to, but out of curiosity and habit. It was sort of his routine in the weeks after his kill. Whenever he had some free time he would simply watch his screens and see if anything developed. He walked into the room and what he saw on the monitors stunned him and filled him with anger.

“What?!” He shouted aloud walking over to his monitors in a huff. Three of the monitors were displaying nothing but black, which he knew was impossible unless someone tampered with them. He went to his laptop and sought the archived footage of his cameras, stored only for 24 hrs. Just enough to study his targets since he couldn’t sit there and watch all day. He rewound the footage until the three black screens were all playing again. On the camera he had inside the TV he saw them up close like they were looking right into his eyes.

“Well, well, back again... Officer Clayton Jones,” he said, “and Jewel **Princket**...” He sat down in his chair and watched the playback of the two of them working to uncover the TV’s hidden camera until it went black. He stopped the footage from playing any further and leaned back in his chair staring at the ceiling. He twisted the chair from side to side, hands rubbing his slick bald head thinking aloud. “What to do now...?”

## CHAPTER 11

Monday was for some research and grunt work which Officer Jones said he'd take care of so Jewel and Thomas could attend their classes for the day and not feel like any part of the investigation was being pushed aside. Jewel definitely needed the break since she missed all her Friday classes and had to play catch up in between her lectures as well. It was hard for her to focus on anything but the case though and she had to repeatedly force her brain to ignore ideas of tracking down where the surveillance cameras were purchased, and hopefully, who they were purchased by. She pushed it all out to hear lectures on criminal law, and forensics, and psychology. In the moments when she couldn't force her brain to focus on the lecture before her, she put her mind to work on another problem. The riddle her Professor gave the class. She wasn't going to be able to do anything productive on the murder investigation from her lecture hall, so might as well try to figure that riddle out which was starting to drive her nuts that she hadn't done so already. She repeated it in her head, and wrote it down on the notebook in front of her several times throughout the day. *I show age upon my face; but it's not mine. I'm tagged with a name; but it's not mine.*

She wasn't able to begin making her way back to her dorm until after dinner, which she ate alone at the dining hall, Kimmel Hall. From Kimmel Hall she'd cross Comstock Avenue, pass by the parking garage and then she was there. When she left Kimmel Hall, she pulled her jacket closed around her instead of zipping it up and walked with her head tilted downward, braced against the windy night. The air was cold and the wind

made it freezing bringing the temperature down to negative digits. Nothing she hadn't experienced before growing up in Oregon, so she would never complain about the cold in Syracuse. Jewel just pushed forward.

When she reached the side of the parking garage the wind was blocked a bit and she could lift her head a little more for the next 20 yards. As she approached the end of that shield she again bowed her head a bit in anticipation of the wind. The wind hit into her and then from the opposite direction she heard the approaching foot steps, and pure instinct brought her arms up in defense just enough to soften the blow that came. She was still hit hard in the head causing her to fall down dazed, only instinct saving herself from slamming her face into the concrete.

She was then picked up like a rag doll and thrown and landing on the icy snow. The lighted path was gone and she was under the darkened lawn where trees blocked both street light and moon light. In the two seconds she had for the attacker to reach the spot he threw her, she was able to regain some of her whits and some of her strength. When footsteps crunched in the snow she rolled out of the way and at the same time removed her bulky jacket, get to her feet, and holding the jacket like she was holding a towel stretched out before her. Then, came the next attack which was a straight football tackle.

The man was huge compared to her and he easily lifted her into the air on slammed her into the snow on her back. She tried to use the arms of the jacket to wrap it around his neck before he lifted her, but when she hit the ground she lost her grip. Now,

her own jacket was being pushed over her face, smothering her, making it impossible to breath, impossible to hear, impossible to see. Panic set in, and she knew in that moment she had mere seconds to either turn this around or find herself discovering once and for all if there was life after death. She let go for a second. She let her panic fade. Then, she attacked. The thing about Ju Jutsu is there is no position from which one is not in the best position.

Jewel got her feet dug into his waste. She pushed up on his chin forcing him to lift his body and remove some pressure from his arms giving her a breath. She then pushed at his hip and thigh with her left leg so she could swing her right leg up and around his left arm and across his neck replacing her hand. Still pushing with her left leg, and pulling with her right leg wrapped around his neck she spun him to the side and off from being on top of her. As soon as there was space she rolled backwards and away from him, throwing her jacket and running back towards the lighted path and hopefully towards some more students.

The attacker followed suit and this time she was ready for his brute strength. As he ran after her she stepped to the side. Jewel wasn't going to find herself on the ground with this guy again. Her mind was clear, she was poised, despite her racing heart. Jewel had her hands up and her feet staggered, ready. He now approached her like a boxer and started throwing powerful punches at her which she redirected with ease. After a right hook was deflected, she stepped to the side and delivered a low kick to his knee dropping him to the floor for a brief second before he turned with another powerful

swing, this time from his left. Jewel again redirected the punch. She wanted to try a throw, but his strength was dangerous so instead she stayed defensive, keeping the fight in the light of the path waiting for a chance to either simply run or for a group of her peers to see what was happening. And, that's what happened.

"Hey!" Jewel heard the yell from someone coming up the path and so did her attacker. He grunted and turned, running off and away from Jewel. He ran to the side of Booth Hall, and Jewel knew he'd then disappear into the park which had no lights inside.

Exhaustion finally filled her body as her mind knew the threat had passed. The attack must have lasted only two minutes, but she was completely spent from the effort and the adrenaline. Jewel felt her legs weaken and she dropped to her knees like she was back in her Martial Arts dojo, hands on her thighs taking deep breaths to calm her heart. Her saviors were a group of guys returning from dinner and when they reached Jewel she was starting to feel dizzy.

"Hey, are you ok?" Said the same voice who shouted and Jewel's head was beginning to throb. "Hey, listen, you're bleeding a lot, my buddy already called 911, they'll be here in a moment. Jewel looked at the man, unable to take in many details of his face, and just nodded along, continuing her deep breathing, trying to control the pain that was pulsating from where she was first struck by the attacker.



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“Jewel?!” Clayton said, storming into the Hospital room, and then paused when he saw her, shocked. She was out in her regular clothes, sitting on the edge of the bed with a large white bandage wrapped around the top of her head. “What are you doing? The Doctor’s said they wanted to keep you overnight?” He didn’t know why he was feeling so protective, but a sort of big brother instinct washed over him when he got the call and as he raced to the Hospital.

“I’m fine, just a few stitches, thankfully they didn’t have to shave my head for that,” she said, speaking softly, looking at Clayton and his big brother instinct came forward.

“No way, you’re not leaving, I know you think you’re fine, but you could have a concussion and there’s no harm in spending the night here,” he said walking further into the room until he was standing right before her and then sat down in a chair positioned by the bed. Jewel just rolled her eyes and started to get up off the bed and Clayton grabbed her wrist trying to keep her still. She looked at him threateningly and he realized that might not be the best approach given the recent incident. He let go and put his hands up in the air, “sorry,” he said, “but, Jewel, listen to me.” she paused and sat back down on the bed.

“Fine,” she said sounding exhausted.

“I think it’s pretty obvious to the both of us, that some how, this killer is onto us and onto you and tried to stop you tonight and put an end to you being on this case,” he said.

“yea, obviously,” she said sounding distant.

“And, I’m not going to try talking you out staying on this,” he said and Jewel looked at him surprised clearly expecting him to say the opposite. “In fact, I want to talk you into staying on with me.”

“What?” She said and Clayton smiled.

“Hey, I haven’t had a partner on the force for over 6 months, I’m not about to lose the one I just got,” he said and Jewel laughed.

“Now, that is some good manipulation right there Officer Jones,” she said.

“Well, a little manipulation to get you to stay,” he laughed, “but seriously, I know you’re not going to give up anyway, and I just wish I was there tonight,” he said, his tone getting more serious, bowing his head. “My last partner died on the job,” he said and looked up into Jewel’s eyes a well of emotions started rushing in. He hadn’t talked about it with anyone since it happened. “I was on Holiday when he got a call for a robbery in progress, and instead of waiting for backup he ran in to try to stop it,” Clayton paused

and took a deep breath. “That’s just who he was. He had about 20 years on the force over me and I learned everything from that man. Bravery isn’t always the right thing, or the safe thing, but sometimes it’s just the thing you have to do.”

“I’m so sorry,” Jewel said and silence filled the room for a moment before Clayton continued.

“The point is, Jewel, that I almost wasn’t there again tonight, and I don’t want you to take your injuries lightly. There’s no work to do on the case and I promise I’ll catch you up to speed with everything I did today on it if you just spend the night and let the Doctor’s do their job.” He said hoping she’d understand and just rest. “You can rest, Jewel, you don’t have to worry about anything, I’ve got you covered.” He waited to hear what she would say and she just gave him a smirk, rolled her eyes, and pushed herself onto the bed saying nothing. She hit the remote on the bed to bring the mattress up so she could sit up and then leaned over to Clayton.

“Expert manipulation,” she said and they both laughed.

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When he got home, he ripped his mask off and threw it into the fire-pit outside along with the rest of his clothes and shoes which were spotted with Jewel’s blood and hairs without a doubt. The freezing air clawed at his body, but he didn’t flinch or shutter.

He squeezed lighter fluid into the pit and over his clothes and then struck a match throwing it into the pit. The flames burst into life before him and the smell of burning rubber from his shoes began to fill the air. He then walked over to the outdoor shower by the pool and turned the water on. He let the freezing cold water wash any evidence from his body. The cold water and the cold air ached his body, but he didn't moan, he didn't flinch. After, he walked back over to the fire pit and squirted more lighter fluid onto his clothes raging the fire upwards even more. The warmth and heat drying his body. His mind went over the night's event and as his clothes burned he started to laugh. He laughed in excitement, in a release of some of his despair; he laughed as hope replaced it. His right hand caressed the watch on his left wrist and he laughed deeper as a tear fell to his cheek.





## **THE ADVENTURES OF JEWEL**

**“an experiment in ...”**

**Year 2**

“Mam, there was an accident.”

Just a few words. A few words that blew her World apart. That sent her away from her childhood home in New Jersey to her Grandparent’s small mountain town in Oregon. Just a few simple words. The night her parents died was a sore subject for Jewel and one she never really spoke of to anyone. Yet, now, she had someone who she could speak to about it. Christmas. Officer Clayton Jones, who everyone called “Christmas” due to his birthday being on Christmas day. He looked at the file Jewel never thought to look at, or just never wanted to look at. He saw what she