

The Candy Man Killer

It is the day after the long Labor Day holiday weekend, and Chicago Police Detective Juan Garcia is reporting to his new assignment in Area 4, which comprises the neighborhoods generally referred to as the west side of Chicago. Before his transfer, he had been working homicides in Area 5, the northwest section of Chicago. However, due to a staffing shortage and a recent spike in violent crime on the west side, Garcia and five other detectives have been reassigned to assist the Homicide Unit in Area 4. Garcia's new partner will be Detective Mike Ricci, a 34-year veteran of the Chicago PD and a seasoned homicide detective of 13 years.

Area 4 is considered one of the roughest, most dangerous areas to work. It usually rivals Chicago's south side as having the highest violent crime rates. Much of the crime in these areas is driven by poverty, unemployment, and drug trafficking. Three of the most violent neighborhoods of Chicago; West Garfield Park, East Garfield Park, and North Lawndale, are in Area 4. The presence of local gangs, usually involved in the selling of drugs for Mexican drug cartels, results in an overabundance of shootings. The number of homicides in Area 4 keeps detectives much busier than they want to be.

Garcia is not particularly pleased with his reassignment, but he understands Area 4 needs assistance. On the positive side, Garcia will have a shorter commute to work. He and his family live in the lower west side of Chicago in the historic Pilsen neighborhood, which borders the Chicago River. Several years earlier, he and his wife, Rosa, had purchased a lovely three-bedroom, two-story brick home. The Pilsen neighborhood is a diverse ethnic community, primarily Hispanic, with a rich Latino culture. However, there are also many African Americans and whites who have recently moved into the area. The Garcia's like the diversity of their neighborhood, believing it will be an excellent place to raise their three children: 11-year-old Jose, 8-year-old Maria, and 6-year-old Julio.

With redevelopment, the eastern part of Pilsen now attracts artists, galleries, and boutique shops, transforming Pilsen into a desirable cultural arts center. Expansion of the nearby University

of Illinois Chicago is a draw to more middle and upper-class Latinos and whites. Younger families, like the Garcia's, are moving in, attracted by the still reasonable housing prices. The Garcia's early faith in the neighborhood is paying off, as they have seen a nice appreciation in the value of their home.

Area 4, Garcia's new assignment, is located north of the Pilsen Neighborhood and south of Area 5, the northwest section of Chicago. Unless the workload in Area 4 results in longer hours, he anticipates getting home sooner in the evening to spend more time with his family.

Juan Garcia had grown up in Chicago, not far from the Pilsen Neighborhood he now lives in. His maternal grandparents immigrated from Mexico and settled in Chicago, where his grandfather found work in the steel industry. On his paternal side, the family tree traces back to immigrants coming to America sometime in the early 1800s. Eventually, both families settled in Chicago. Garcia met his wife Rosa while attending Northern Illinois University. After graduation, Garcia applied to be a police officer with the Chicago PD, something he was always attracted to. His desire grew from watching police drama shows while growing up. His three favorites were NYPD Blues, Law and Order, and CSI: Crime Scene Investigation. Given his education and clean background, Garcia was hired on his first attempt as a 23-year-old rookie officer.

After six years in patrol, he was promoted to the rank of Detective and assigned to the robbery division in Area 5. Garcia proved to be an excellent investigator with a keen sense of people and a knack for knowing when they were lying or hiding something. He seemed to be a natural. His success as a robbery detective led to his assignment to the homicide unit only three years after being promoted to Detective. Now, with two years of homicide experience, he is being sent to one of the most challenging areas of Chicago.

Garcia wears one of his finest dark brown suits for his first day, accompanied by a white dress shirt and light brown tie. His first task is to meet with Detective Commander John Marshall, a three-year veteran of Homicide Area 4. Commander Marshall is 47 years old, barrel-chested, wavy brown hair, wire-rimmed glasses, and a look of all business. He is wearing a well-tailored grey suit with red striped tie.

"Welcome to Area 4, Juan," greets Marshall. "We've been looking forward to getting some help around here, and you come with an outstanding reputation."

"Thank you, sir," responds Garcia.

"I've got just a few rules, and if you follow 'em, you will do fine. First, don't take any shortcuts. Your cases need to be solid. We have a great conviction rate in this division, and I expect it to remain so."

Garcia nods.

"Second, no drinking on the job, got that?"

"Of course not, sir," says Garcia with a surprised look.

"Third, it's dangerous out there. You need to always have your partner's back. And carry a backup weapon; you never know when you might need it. You might want to carry a blade as well.

Finally, do what Ricci tells you to do. He's a seasoned detective and knows these neighborhoods better than anyone. Got that?"

"Yes, sir, no problem."

"VICKIE!" yells Marshall as he looks out his office door.

"Yes, sir, what do you need?" responds Vickie, the Commander's administrative assistant, as she hurries into the office.

"Take Garcia here and introduce him to his new partner."

"Will do," Vickie answers. "Juan, if you follow me, I will take you to your new desk and introduce the two of you."

Garcia follows Vickie through the maze of desks, room dividers, and filing cabinets that fill the homicide investigative office.

"Mike," says Vickie as she approaches Mike Ricci sitting at his desk reading a report. "This is Juan Garcia, your new partner."

Ricci looks up. "Thank you, Vickie. Juan, have a seat," as he motions Garcia to sit at the desk opposite of him. "Welcome to the fourth."

Detective Mike Ricci is 58 years old, and his rugged facial features look all of that. However, His physique looks more like he could be 48. Ricci keeps himself in excellent shape by regularly working out three days a week. He is also rather large at 6'3" and 220 lbs, most of which appear to be muscle. Ricci comes from an Italian family, and Garcia notices Ricci has the characteristic look of someone who is Italian. His hair is wavy black with plenty of gray mixed in. Garcia is no slouch, but at 5'10" and 180 lbs, Garcia wouldn't want to tangle with Ricci.

Ricci is dressed in beige dress pants, light blue button-down long sleeve dress shirt, unbuttoned at the top, and a dark blue patterned tie hangs loosely around his neck. A large half-consumed cup of Dunkin' Donuts coffee sits among the many papers on Ricci's desk.

"You come with quite a reputation," states Ricci with a sly grin.

"I just do the job the best I can, sir."

"Well, the first thing you can do is knock off the sir stuff. You call me Mike, and I'll call you Dickhead. How's that?"

Garcia stares back at Ricci with his mouth slightly open, not sure how to respond.

Ricci then breaks out with a big laugh, "I'm just messin' with ya! I'll call you Juan, how's that?"

Garcia laughs back, "You had me there for a minute."

"Have you been briefed at all?" asks Ricci.

"Yes, I've been told you recently had a homicide that matches a pattern of homicides from a couple of years ago. Drug dealers being stabbed to death."

"That's pretty much it."

"And what makes you think this new case is related to those from two years ago?" asks Garcia.

"The weapon. Two years ago, we had a string of drug dealers getting stabbed with a kitchen knife right through the gut, then left to bleed out. What made it unique was that each time, the perp

left the murder weapon at the scene, usually right on top of the victim. Our most recent victim was a drug dealer stabbed with the same type of knife, and the knife was left at the scene.”

“Really?” replies Garcia. “I’ve never heard of anything like that before.”

“Nope, quite unusual.”

“Haven’t you been able to get prints or DNA off the knives?” asks Garcia.

“Nothing. The knives have always come back clean. No prints, DNA, nothing.”

“Hmmm, do we have anything to go on?”

“Not really,” answers Ricci. “My guess it has something to do with the drug wars over territory. We did get a report of a suspicious person near the scene of one of the homicides two years ago, but nothing panned out. Someone saw a male wearing a dark windbreaker, dark pants, full black beard, and dark-rimmed glasses. Oh, and he was supposedly wearing a flat beret style hat and walked with a limp.”

“Well, that’s something to go on. What race?”

“In this area? Most likely black, but the witness couldn’t tell in the darkness,” says Ricci. “Besides, we have no idea whether this unknown person has anything to do with this case.”

“What about fingerprints?”

“Nope, nothing. Scene is always clean, with the exception of the murder weapon being left behind.”

“What was the brand of knife, how long, type of handle?”

“A Cardet seven-inch kitchen utility knife with black handle. I’ll tell you what, instead of all the questions, why don’t you first read the case files. Here’s a stack of all seven, the six from two years ago and the most recent. Start reading, and when you’re done, we can discuss any questions you have.”

Garcia takes the stack of seven case files from Ricci, gets as comfortable as he can in his desk chair, and opens the first file. It will take him several days to get through all the reports. He also plans to get up to speed on the drug and gang activity within Area 4.

Later that evening, Ricci is on his drive home thinking about Garcia and what he brings to the table. Ricci’s initial impression is Garcia has the potential to make a good homicide detective but still has a lot to learn about how things work in Area 4.

Ricci’s drive home is longer than Garcia’s. Ricci lives in Forest Glen, a neighborhood in northwest Chicago. It’s an upscale neighborhood of upper-middle-class, and while there is some diversity, most residents are white. Ricci’s home is a well-maintained two-story brick home with three bedrooms, three baths, and a two-car garage on a tree-lined street. He has converted half of his garage into a woodworking shop. His yard, like most in the neighborhood, is neatly trimmed and well maintained.

Ricci has lived in the home alone for the past five years following the death of his wife Ella from a brain aneurysm. He has a son, Chris, who is a 28-year-old attorney living in Naperville, a city approximately 33 miles west of Chicago. His oldest child, a daughter by the name of Lisa, died unexpectedly in Los Angeles six years ago. Ricci believes the stress of his daughter’s untimely

death contributed to his wife's aneurysm. He has struggled to recover from both his daughter's and then his wife's death. He often helps himself get to sleep by having one or two Bud Lights in the evenings.

When not working, Ricci spends most of his free time maintaining the house, working in his makeshift woodshop, and exercising to maintain his strength and fitness. One of his wood-working favorites is making beautiful birdhouses. He sells most of them at a local craft store and gives others away as gifts.

Ricci has worked at the Chicago PD for thirty-four years. His interest in law enforcement was honed while serving in the Air Force Military Police for four years after high school. Upon leaving the Air Force, Ricci worked security at a plastics fabricating plant for six months until he was hired by the Chicago Police Department. He could have retired at age 55, but after the death of Ella, Ricci couldn't see the point in retiring. What else would he do? Besides, he still had things he wanted to accomplish as a detective.

Three Days Later

It is now Friday, and Garcia believes he has garnered enough information from the case files to have a more intelligent discussion on the facts with Ricci. Garcia agrees the most recent homicide fits the circumstances of the previous six attacks from two years ago. In the latest attack, the victim was a black male just 19 years old. He had been found in an alley three doors from the home he lived in with his mom and two siblings. He had also been a known dealer of cocaine, often selling to local high school students. If this was indeed the work of the same person, this was his seventh victim.

Unfortunately, Garcia is not able to talk to Ricci today, as Ricci called in sick. Instead, Garcia decides to talk with one of the narcotics detectives, Trevon Jackson. Jackson has been assigned to coordinate any intelligence with Ricci and Garcia. Given the presence of the drug cartels in Area 4, it is not unreasonable to believe the dealer killings are related to the drug business. In fact, the unknown assailant in the serial killings of drug dealers from two years ago had been nicknamed the "Candy Man Killer." Candy Man is a name sometimes used when referring to a dealer on the street.

Trevon Jackson is only 29 years old. He started with the police department when he was 21 and quickly discovered drugs and street gangs were responsible for much of the violence in Chicago. He now believes he can put his skills to better use in Narcotics by trying to stem the drug trafficking and violence associated with it. After being selected for Narcotics, it isn't long before he becomes a valued undercover detective known for his ability to elicit information from gang members and drug dealers. As an African American, he can relate and build trust with most of the blacks living in Area 4, an essential skill in working drugs. However, Jackson has the knowledge and skill to get information from most, regardless of race. It is sometimes said he can get information from a turnip. Because of this, he has a wealth of knowledge on the drug trade in Chicago, especially in Area 4. He can speak the language and is trusted by many of his developed sources.

Jackson's last assignment had been with the Chicago High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force (HIDTA). He was part of the latest months-long operation that led to the recent arrests of 27 individuals on various narcotics and firearms violations out of the west side of Chicago. The drugs being peddled were primarily cocaine and fentanyl. It was soon after this operation when Jackson was tabbed to assist homicide detectives with the investigation of what appeared to be another attack by the "Candy Man Killer."

Jackson gives Garcia a quick lesson on the drug and gang activity in the area. Some of the neighborhoods in Area 4 are notorious for such activity. It is not unusual to find heroin, cocaine, or fentanyl being sold on the streets of Chicago. A good quantity of drugs are pipelined to Chicago from Mexico by Mexican Drug Cartels. Drugs are transported across the country using intermediaries with various methods, such as by car, airplane, trucks, and even shipped to Chicago.

After the drugs arrive in Chicago, other intermediaries distribute the drugs to local dealers, many of whom are gang members selling on the streets of Chicago. Some sell from street corners, some from businesses, and others from their homes. There are many street gangs in Chicago. Some of the better-known ones are Gangster Disciples, Black Disciples, Gaylords, Vice Lords, and Latin Kings. Some estimate there may be over 100,000 active gang members in the Chicago metropolitan area. This provides a lot of opportunity for drug distribution.

As a result of competition, sometimes turf wars break out among the gangs, which can result in violence, including killings. Given that the Candy Man Killer targets drug dealers, Jackson believes it is a real possibility there is a turf war going on. However, he does not yet have evidence of that. Jackson has worked his sources, and thus far, everyone has denied knowing about any turf wars.

"What would explain the two-year absence of any similar killings?" asks Garcia.

"Well," says Jackson, "It's quite possible that whatever was driving the killings two years ago stopped. Maybe the dispute was settled. Maybe the killer has been in jail. Maybe this recent murder has nothing to do with those from two years ago. It could be a copycat type of thing. Really hard to say right now. The strange quirk is the leaving of the knife at the scene."

"Yeah, that's interesting," agrees Garcia. "And it's a very specific knife. In this case and all six cases two years ago, the knife used was...let me check my notes. Here it is, a Cardet kitchen knife with a seven-inch blade and black handle. Uses the same knife each time."

"Yep," replies Jackson, "strangest thing I've ever heard of. And then leaving the knife lying on the victim's chest. It's almost like someone is teasing us by giving us the weapon."

"I wonder if we could track down who is making multiple purchases of this knife," questions Garcia. "I'll get Ricci's thoughts on this next week. I have no idea how common this knife is or how many places sell it. Hey, thanks for the help Trevon."

"No problem. I'll keep checking my sources and keep my ear to the ground. I'll be sure to pass along anything I find."

"Great, thanks again."

From the autopsy reports on each victim, Garcia finds that the victim was stabbed from directly in front in each of the now seven cases. The knife was thrust into the center chest cavity just below the breastbone. The knife was then pushed up into the area behind the breastbone toward the heart and probably twisted as well. This action caused severe damage to one or more of the thoracic aorta or vena cava veins. The thoracic aorta carries blood from the heart, while the vena cava vein carries blood to the heart. In a few cases, the blade of the knife was shoved far enough into the chest cavity that the heart itself was cut. Victims with such damage bleed out and die quickly. Based on this, Garcia does not believe a female would have the strength to overcome each victim and cause such damage. *The attacker is a male*, thinks Garcia.

Garcia discovers all the cases occurred in the early morning hours, sometime between 2:00 and 4:00 am, a time when not many people would be out and about. Every victim has been a young black male involved in drug dealing. Each victim either lived alone or had been alone at the time of the attack. Two years ago, three of the victims had been killed just inside their residence, while three others were killed in the back alley in the rear of their home or apartment building.

In the most recent case from two weeks ago, the attack occurred in the West Garfield neighborhood. The victim lived in the bottom flat of a two-story, brownstone multi-unit house. The victim, a 19-year-old black male, was found lying approximately 10 feet inside the front door. There was no sign of forced entry, so it appeared as though the assailant was allowed entry into the residence. This was similar to the other three previous cases in which the victim was found inside his home.

On Monday, Garcia is at work early, as he has been going over the facts in his head all weekend and wants to discuss the cases with Ricci. Ricci walks into the office at 8:05 am with his usual large cup of Dunkin' Donuts coffee.

"How are you feeling today?" asks Garcia.

"Oh, I'm fine, just a touch of nausea last Friday," replies Ricci. "How is the review going?"

"I think I'm up to speed on everything. I would like to discuss your thoughts on a couple things."

"Sure, what's on your mind?"

"Are you aware of any other serial killers who used different weapons each time and then left the weapon at the scene?"

"Not that I can ever recall."

"Why do you think someone, assuming it is the same person, uses a different knife each time and then leaves it behind?" asks Garcia.

"Because he's smart," answers Ricci. "What's the one thing you don't want to have in your possession after killing someone?"

"Bloody knife," nods Garcia.

"Damn right. We've got our work cut out for us with this guy. He is incredibly careful about leaving any trace behind."

"I've checked on places that sell this Cardet kitchen utility knife, and wouldn't you know it, you can buy it most places, including Amazon," sighs Garcia.

“Yeah, this guy knows what he’s doing.”

“Have we captured anything on security cameras?” inquires Garcia.

“No. Remember where these attacks occur. Not many people in the Garfield Park neighborhoods or Lawndale have security cameras.”

Garcia then suggests they re-interview the person who reported the suspicious male in dark clothing who walked with a limp.

“We can, but do you really think there’s some handicapped dude carrying out these attacks?”

“Probably not, but it can’t hurt. I like to be thorough,” reasons Garcia.

“You’re right. Go ahead and set it up.”

By Wednesday afternoon, Garcia had set up an appointment to visit 64-year-old Mrs. Elaine Henderson, the woman who reported seeing a suspicious person in the neighborhood the night of the third attack by the Candy Man Killer. Garcia and Ricci knock on her door at 2:00 in the afternoon. Mrs. Henderson invites both detectives in and offers them some sweet, iced tea. Both politely decline.

“Mrs. Henderson, I would like to review your statement from two years ago about the suspicious person you observed in the neighborhood,” advises Garcia. “Can you please tell us what you thought was suspicious about him?”

“Well, it’s been some time ago now, but I remember I couldn’t sleep because of the heat that night. I got up and went to sit a bit on my front porch to get some, you know, fresh air and cool off.”

“Sure, go ahead,” encourages Garcia.

“As I was sitting there, I see this man come walking from around the corner, right down that way,” as she points east. “He then crosses the street and walks west to the corner of Edison, then heads north and out of sight.”

“What was suspicious about that?”

“It was just a feeling, really. It was early morning, and not many people were out at that time of day. He was dressed in dark clothing and just seemed a bit out of place.”

“Two years ago, you said he walked with a limp.”

“Yes, yes he did. If I remember correctly, it appeared as though he was favoring his right leg.”

“And you said he had a beard?”

“Yes, it was a full beard, and he had a dark beret-type hat on.”

“Could you tell what race he was?”

“No. It was dark, and with his beard and hat, I couldn’t tell. He never looked my way.”

“Okay, thank you, Mrs. Henderson,” replies Garcia. “Do you also remember him wearing glasses?”

“Oh yes, it looked to me like dark-rimmed glasses, but I could not be sure. Again, it was very dark.”

“Anything else you can remember about him?”

“Only that he was a tall man, probably over six feet tall.”

“Do you remember what time it was?”

“I knew two years ago. I think it was sometime between two and three in the morning. Like I said, he just didn’t seem to belong in the neighborhood.”

“Mrs. Henderson, we appreciate your time,” thanks Garcia. “Here is my card. Please don’t hesitate to call if you remember anything else.”

As they are heading back to the station, Ricci asks Garcia if he learned anything from the interview.

“Sure, after two years of thinking about this, she still finds his presence suspicious. I’m not saying he is a suspect, but he was only three blocks from the scene at about the time we believe the attack occurred. You can’t just dismiss it.”

“Nope, you can’t dismiss it,” agrees Ricci.

For the next several days, Ricci and Garcia continue to review the case files while also assisting with other homicide investigations. Being assigned a case did not relieve detectives from simultaneously working on other cases or in helping other detectives with interviews and follow-ups. It has been a busy week, with the Area 4 Division experiencing two more homicides. One, a domestic argument over an alleged affair by the husband led to the wife shooting him dead with a 9mm Smith and Wesson semi-automatic handgun. The second one being a shooting between two gang members, resulting in the death of a 17-year-old African American male over a theft of “happy dust,” a slang term for cocaine.

On the following Friday, Detective Jackson advises Ricci he has some information from the street. According to Jackson, there is a new fear among street dealers that the Candy Man Killer may be back. Dealers are more cautious over who they sell to. Some members of the Black Disciples are concerned someone is trying to start a new drug war, and if the police can’t handle the issue, they will take matters into their own hands. After Garcia returns from assisting with some interviews in the investigation of the gang shooting, Ricci fills him in on the new information.

“This can’t be good,” says Garcia.

“Oh, I don’t know Juan, there could be some value there,” muses Ricci.

“Like what?”

“Drug wars, so long as they are only killing each other, help us clean up the neighborhood a bit, don’t you think?”

Garcia pauses. “I suppose you could see it that way, but we really don’t want people shooting each other on our streets. Innocents will get killed as well.”

“I said only if they are killing each other. I don’t want anyone innocent getting hurt. But think about it, fewer drug dealers would mean fewer crackheads, fewer addictions, fewer drug overdoses. You know these assholes prey on innocent people, right?”

“Sure I do. I grew up in this town. Drug dealers need to be taken off our streets, but not murdered,” challenges Garcia.

“Their drug pushing harms a lot of young people. A few less wouldn’t be a bad thing. That’s all I’m saying. I see too many young kids’ lives ruined by hard drugs.”

Garcia lets it go, realizing Ricci has been dealing with the fallout of the drug trade much longer than he has. He knows Ricci has worked hundreds of drug overdoses, violent assaults, and homicides over the course of his long career. He surmises that Ricci probably has good reason to be jaded.

Eighth Attack

The following Saturday, it happens again; another apparent victim of the Candy Man Killer is found in a West Garfield Park neighborhood alley by a 13-year-old boy. Both Garcia and Ricci are called at 11:45 am to respond to the scene. Garcia arrives on the scene first and meets with Detective Sergeant Gloria Pennington. Patrol officers have already secured the scene, and crime scene technicians are on their way to collect any evidence.

“Thanks for coming out, Juan,” greets Sgt. Pennington. “It looks like the same M.O. as the last one.”

She leads Garcia past the crime scene tape to where the body is found lying behind some trash containers. Garcia has read the reports describing the previous crime scenes, but the sight of a young man gutted in an alley is still shocking. The victim appears to be a young black male, probably early to mid-twenties, wearing black pants and a white short-sleeve button-down shirt that is now saturated with blood. The victim is on his left side in a fetal position, with a clear gash in the midsection of his chest. A large pool of blood has formed under and around his body. Lying next to the victim’s body is a bloody kitchen knife.

“What do we know about him?” inquires Garcia.

“His name is Jimmy Johnson, but goes by JJ,” replies Pennington. “He lived in the house right here and worked at the fast-food chicken joint three blocks from here. According to the manager there, our victim worked last night until closing. They stay open late on Fridays and Saturdays, closing at two am. He apparently walks to work, so our guess is he was attacked as he was returning home, sometime after two am.”

About that time, Ricci arrives on the scene. “Hi Juan, hi Gloria.”

“Hi Mike, thanks for coming,” says Sgt. Pennington.

“Of course, what do we have?”

Pennington and Garcia fill Ricci in with what they know so far. Sgt. Pennington turns the scene over to Ricci and Garcia, then turns her attention to coordinating officers to conduct a neighborhood canvass looking for any possible witnesses.

Ricci crouches down close to the body and studies it for several minutes. He is careful not to step on any blood. He then stands up. “Do we know whether he was a drug dealer?”

“Not sure yet,” answers Garcia. “I’ve got a call into Trevon to see if he knows this guy.”

Ricci nods, “I’m going to start taking some photos of the scene and surrounding area while you try to find out if he was a dealer. We also need to look for anything that might be evidence within fifty feet.”

Crime scene technicians arrive on the scene and begin their process of documenting and collecting any potential evidence, including the murder weapon.

Approximately 30 minutes later, Garcia receives the phone call he has been waiting for from Detective Trevon Jackson. As suspected, Jimmy Johnson, 24 years old, is known as a dealer who primarily sells heroin, referred to as brown sugar on the street, as well as Fentanyl, a powerful synthetic drug often called china girl. In the past, Johnson has been linked to an intermediary associated with the Beltran-Leyva Cartel out of Mexico. Johnson has a record of several drug arrests. Garcia then relays this information to Ricci.

“I would say we officially have a serial killer on our hands,” says Ricci. “And it’s probably the same perp from two years ago.”

“I agree,” concurs Garcia.

The following Monday, Ricci, Garcia, Jackson, Sgt. Pennington, and Commander Marshall meet to review the case.

“Alright, tell me what we know,” directs Commander Marshall.

Ricci leads the discussion, explaining that Johnson, known by the street name JJ, had been a drug dealer. The M.O., in this case, is virtually the same as in the previous seven homicides. The weapon of choice is a kitchen knife. In each case, the knife is specifically a Cardet kitchen utility knife with a seven-inch blade. All victims have been stabbed just below the breastplate. In each case, the murder weapon is left at the scene, usually resting on the chest of the victim. In this latest case, the knife was found lying on the ground next to the victim. Thus far, no forensic evidence of value has been found at any of the scenes.

In the recent attack, detectives believe the victim was stalked as he walked home from work and attacked in the alley as he arrived home, or the killer was waiting for him in the alley. Either way, this suggests the killer had some knowledge of the victim and his habits.

“What about witnesses?” asks Commander Marshall.

“None,” replies Sgt. Pennington. “We conducted a thorough canvass of the neighborhood and most likely route home and could not locate anyone who heard or saw anything. If they did, they are not willing to share.”

“People are pretty frightened right now,” interjects Jackson. “These killings are putting some real fear into the neighborhood, especially for those in the drug business. The only thing I have of value is that JJ may have been involved in some sort of dispute with another dealer a couple weeks ago by the name of Nathan Smith, nicknamed Snowman.”

“At least that gives us a starting point,” states Commander Marshall. “Mike, Juan, I’d like you to run this down as soon as possible. Get Snowman in here. We can’t have another string of six homicides in this community. What about forensics?”

“Nothing yet,” responds Ricci, “and I don’t believe there will be. The lab will find nothing on that knife other than the victim’s blood and DNA.”

“We collected the usual trash, cigarette butts, and such from the alley,” adds Sgt. Pennington. “But I doubt any of it will be of any use. Whoever the killer is, he is very cautious.”

Commander Marshall then concludes the meeting. "Alright then, we've got work to do. Let's get on it. I'm tired of this crap happening in our Area."

Back at their desks, Garcia asks Ricci why there hasn't been more media attention brought to the case.

"Because no one outside this slum gives a rat's ass about low-level asshole drug dealers," insists Ricci. "And how can you blame them?"

"You don't mean that, Mike. All murders are bad."

"Well, some not as bad as others. If this were a string of Northwestern coeds in Evanston, it would draw national media attention. All of Evanston and Chicago would be in fear. But drug dealers in bad neighborhoods, no big deal. You don't have to like it, but that's the way it is."

Garcia knows he has a point. "Maybe, but the people of these neighborhoods are concerned and frightened. We owe it to them to stop this."

"Yes, and that's what we're trying to do," insists Ricci. "But whoever this perp is, he is very selective and careful. It's not like someone is randomly shooting up the neighborhood. I just like to keep things in perspective."

On Wednesday, Ricci leaves work early, telling Garcia he has some personal business to take care of. On his way home, he stops at the Paganelli Oncology Center in northwest Chicago. Unbeknownst to his co-workers, Ricci's pancreatic cancer from two years ago has returned and is now in his liver.

During his first bout with cancer, Ricci had surgery, then took chemo and radiation treatments to knock down the cancer. The treatments, as well as the stress of the drug dealer killings, took their toll. He started to lose weight and strength. Shortly after the first string of killings stopped, Ricci was forced to take a five-month leave of absence to complete his treatments and recover.

Two months ago, during his regular cancer screening, he was told the cancer was back and was now in his liver. The prognosis was not good. With surgery, chemo, and radiation, doctors gave him only a 20% chance of beating the cancer. If the treatment did not work, doctors gave him twelve to eighteen months to live. With aggressive treatment, he was told he would probably be too weak and sick to continue working. After considering his options, Ricci chose only to undergo radiation treatment. He did not want to go through the sickness that comes with both radiation and chemo like he had two years ago, finally forcing him to take the leave of absence. He just wanted to feel as good as possible for as long as possible and would continue working for as long as he could. There was no sense sitting in that big house by himself, just waiting to die.

Ricci has noticed in recent weeks that he has lost some weight again and is not as strong as he used to be. His thrice-weekly workouts have become more difficult, and he's getting nauseous more often. But Ricci is at peace with his decision. The Candy Man Killer is back. No time to quit now.