

PART I

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ART AND THE MURDERER

A Case Study

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HOW IT BEGAN

On November 1, 2006, I received a telephone call from an attorney named Lisa Peters. The purpose of her call was to ask if I would consider serving as a consultant for a capital murder case, with the possibility of providing testimony should it go to trial. She offered no information about the case—only that the defendant was on trial for murder and the state district attorney was going to seek the death penalty. The defense was investigating the possible history of a mental illness, and the defendant had a long history of creating his own artwork. I was intrigued.

Lisa Peters, attorney at law, had been practicing for Jackie Chief Law Offices since she became an attorney in 2003, after she attended “law school relatively later in life.” Before attending law school, she earned a bachelor’s degree and a master’s degree in art history. After traveling quite a bit and teaching in Japan and London, she worked as a substitute teacher, teaching English while pursuing her master’s degree. After finishing her degree, she realized that there were not a lot of employment opportunities for an art historian, so she decided to attend law school. It was there that she met Jackie Chief, who suggested that when she completed her education, she join her law firm.

Although she originally intended to pursue law that would allow her to advocate for hospital patients addressing end-of-life issues, once she began “taking more criminal law classes, I realized that was my home. I never looked back.” Although opposed to the death penalty in principle before working as a defense attorney, after a few years she became “deeply opposed to it on every level: politically, economically, but most of all, I just believe that every individual has worth and value, and that no