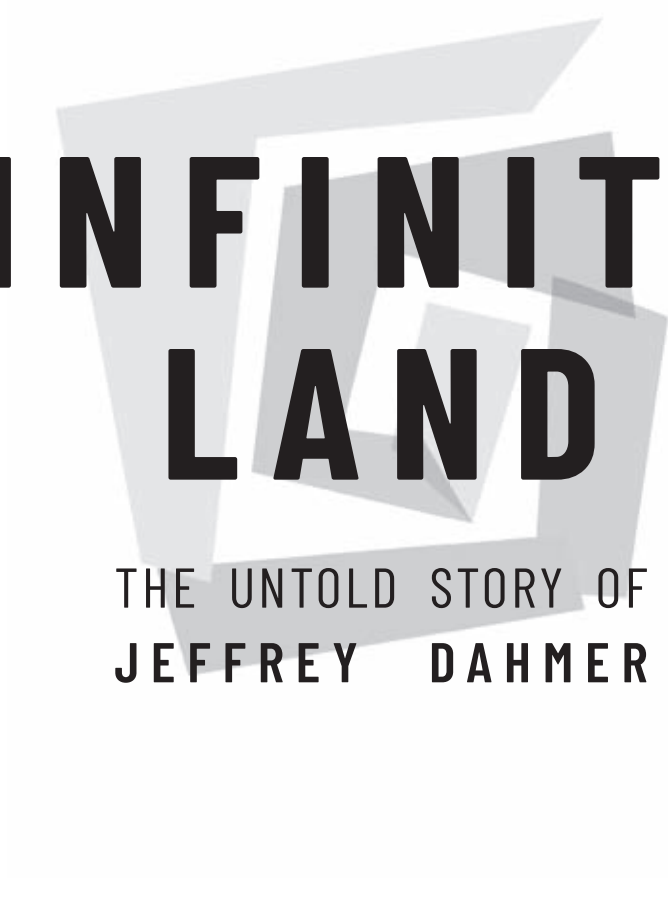




INFINITY LAND

**THE UNTOLD STORY OF
JEFFREY DAHMER**

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UNIVERSITY PRESS OF MISSISSIPPI / JACKSON



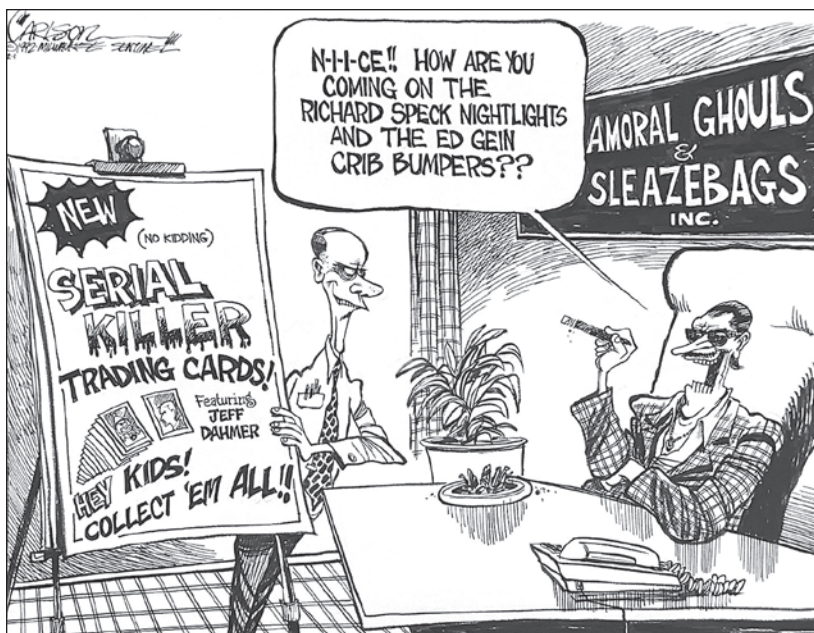
INTRODUCTION

Milwaukee's Jeffrey Dahmer appeared on the cover of *People* Magazine and was listed among its "One-Hundred Most Intriguing People of the 20th Century."¹

—JAMES ALAN FOX AND JACK LEVIN, *EXTREME KILLING*

Jeffrey Dahmer's first two known victims were white. He killed eighteen-year-old Steven Hicks in Bath, Ohio, in 1978 after picking him up on the side of the road after a concert. Hicks was the same age as Dahmer and had recently graduated from a different local high school. Dahmer later told police that he and Hicks got drunk at Dahmer's house and had sex but then fought when Hicks tried to leave. Nearly a decade later in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Dahmer picked up Steven Tuomi outside the 219 Club and invited him back to his room at the Ambassador Hotel. Steven accepted, and the two men partied well into the night. When Dahmer woke up the next day, he immediately saw that the man was dead. Dahmer had beaten Tuomi so badly that part of his chest was caved in and exposed. Dahmer was shocked when he awoke and found the man beaten to death. He did not intend to kill either Hicks or Tuomi. However, after Tuomi, Dahmer became a vicious and cannibalistic hunter who knew that he was going to kill, and his next fourteen known victims were all men of color.

White men hunting people of color has been a part of US history almost from the very beginning of colonial America. By 1705, Virginia's constitution allowed citizens to murder runaway slaves. Instead of citizens wantonly killing runaway slaves themselves, eventually slave patrols, America's first police, were organized to violently enforce American slavery through the precedent of lynch law. The most important driver in lynching was Black autonomy and, more specifically, Black male access to white women. Sex and sexuality were always a part of the lynching ritual due to the incredible myths perpetuated about uncontrollable Black sexuality.



Stuart Carlson editorial cartoons, 1983–2008. Box 9, UW-Milwaukee Libraries, Archives, February 1, 1992.

Public hangings persisted throughout the southern United States deep into the twentieth century. Many believe the lynching epoch was from 1880 to 1919, after which lynching numbers dropped. Another argument suggests that the end of the nightmare occurred in the mid-1930s, when the annual numbers of documented cases fell to fewer than ten. Some maintain that lynchings have never fully ended, that they have simply gone underground or are conducted in different ways, such as via police shootings or random acts of vigilante violence by single perpetrators. Law enforcement has consistently assisted in racialized and sexual violence throughout US history, even in Midwestern cities like Milwaukee.

The relationship between Black people and the police in Milwaukee has always had a contradictory character. African Americans have been both overpoliced and underprotected in their lives and property. While Milwaukee developed into one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States by the mid-twentieth century, early on its local government granted unheard-of power to its chief of police, instilling in the position unchecked power with virtually no oversight. Rather than embracing the burgeoning diversity of the growing city, local law enforcement, led by its all-powerful police chief, opted to terrorize Black and homosexual populations like never before. Milwaukee continued to be a hotbed for civil unrest

well into the 1970s, especially in relation to African Americans and the Milwaukee Police Department. Milwaukee's Black and gay communities continued to feel alienated from and terrorized by the MPD, rendering them vulnerable to forces of evil the city had rarely encountered since its incorporation in 1846. This is not just the story of Jeffrey Dahmer, his victims, and the city of Milwaukee. This is an American story.

The stories of Somsack and Konerak Sinthasomphone, Laotian Dahmer victims, and Meko, a thirteen-year-old Thai girl, highlight the vulnerability of immigrant and refugee populations in Milwaukee. Dahmer volunteered at a place called the Rescue Mission near Marquette University in Milwaukee as well as at a nearby halfway house and an alcohol and drug rehabilitation center, likely targeting unknown victims who frequented these institutions during his killing spree. Dahmer was a confirmed liar. He mixed truth and lies that benefited himself. There is no reason to believe his entire confession. There are likely many more victims and quite probably more people either who were involved in his murders or at least knew about them. The following pages will hopefully explain why this is likely so.



CHAPTER ONE

In fact, I got into that fact with him, that he could empathize in other ways, that if it was a girl there, and he had thoughts of killing them, lots of empathy would raise up.¹

—FRED BERLIN, PSYCHOLOGIST AND SEXOLOGIST (TESTIFYING AT DAHMER TRIAL)

Meko said it all started sometime in 2017 when she was still running her hip Milwaukee Thai bistro in which she was part owner. A stick of a girl with thick framed glasses and a University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee T-shirt came in to pick up a to-go order. She carried a shiny new book with the lurid title *The Man Who Could Not Kill Enough: The Secret Murders of Milwaukee's Jeffrey Dahmer* by Anne Schwartz.²

The book caught Meko's eye almost immediately, and she couldn't help herself. "What's that book about?" she asked the student. Meko stood barely five feet tall, but she seemed taller. Her black shoulder-length hair framed a beautiful tanned face that was all cheeks and chin. She had a twinkle in her eye that seemed to take in the world from a distance, sharp and removed at the same time.

"It's super interesting," the girl said. "I'm doing a research project about murder in the Milwaukee area." As she spoke, the girl looked to Meko's side, avoiding eye contact.

"Oh," Meko said, sizing the girl up.

"It's something I've wanted to do for a while. I'm super interested in the Jeffrey Dahmer case. I'm a criminal justice major," the girl said proudly, finally making eye contact.

"Can I see it?" Meko asked, reaching for the book.

"Sure!" the girl said enthusiastically, handing the book to Meko.

Meko looked at the image of Jeff on the front cover. He was in court. He looked exactly like he did when she knew him. She turned it over and looked at the back. She didn't read any of the words.

"All the victims were criminals," the girl said matter-of-factly. "Even the Laotian kid. He was only a teenager, but he was a male prostitute."

"Which kid?" Meko asked, handing the book back to the girl.

"Konerak. I can't pronounce his last name."



And then there was the story of Richard Morgan, the man who managed the Charles Allis Art Museum for many years. Meko hadn't thought about him for years until the fall of 2017. Maybe it was September, when one of the sinks in her restaurant clogged up, and she needed a plumber.

Later that day she made her usual Starbucks run and started looking at all the business cards tacked up on the bulletin board advertising various services, hoping she'd find one for a plumber who could come look at her clogged sink.

A smallish chubby white man in line next to her began chatting to no one in particular. He was going on and on about all the cards. He introduced himself to Meko and said his name was Steve. He seemed fascinated by everything as though he had just been born fully formed in line at Starbucks and was marveling at all the miraculous details of life. Meko mentioned that she needed a plumber. The man laughed at the coincidence and told her he was a maintenance man at a nearby apartment building. He'd be happy to look at her drain, he told her. "What a world," he said.

About an hour later, upon observing the extent of the clog, Steve informed her that she required the services of a professional plumber, a service that ultimately cost her over \$300. Steve lived and worked at the Cambridge Apartments, about a five-minute walk from the restaurant. He began stopping by the restaurant regularly. Maybe he was sweet on her. She couldn't really tell, and it didn't matter anyway.

One day, he was in for a bite, and they began talking about an enormous pile of trash sitting across the street outside another restaurant that had closed down or was rehabbing. That's when Steve said he had a whopper of a story to tell her. He had a real doozy of a story, but he hoped she wouldn't be offended by it.

Meko assured him that she would not be offended. "Just fire away," she said.

He told her that they had recently been forced to remove a man from the Cambridge apartment building. As a maintenance man, part of his job was to help clean the apartments and get them ready for the new tenants after someone moved out or was evicted. This particular apartment was challenging because the evicted man was a hoarder. He was old and apparently never threw

anything away. The old hoarder must have been an art collector or something because he had stuff everywhere—piles and piles of photographs and stacks of paintings as well as sculptures. Steve said he couldn't believe anyone could live like that. There was barely any room in the apartment to move around. They had to call the guy's family to see what they should do with all the stuff. The family said that they would take it. They said to put it aside, and they'd have it picked up. Maybe there was something valuable in all that junk.

When they began going through the guy's stuff to get it ready to be picked up, what they discovered made several Mexican laborers puke. "It takes a lot to make a Mexican laborer puke," the man joked.

"What was it?" Meko asked.

"A collage of Polaroid photos, disgusting stuff, body parts, disemboweled men, skeletons, severed penises, you name it, really gross stuff. The photos were glued to the pages of the photo album. Totally disgusting. Turns out the guy worked at the Charles Allis Museum, the restored mansion."

Meko froze for a moment. "What was the guy's name?"

"Richard Morgan," the man said. "His name was Richard Morgan. Apparently, he was also a true crime buff because he had a ton of articles about Jeffrey Dahmer cut from newspapers all over the dining-room table and floors of the apartment. We tossed most of it. This guy was a nut."



And then there was also a dream. It was a lucid dream, a nap during the day on her living-room couch—one of those dreams that seem real, where your senses are alive. Meko heard her front door open and could smell dead fish—the same smell of his apartment. Jeff was talking to someone, but she couldn't make out what he was saying or to whom he was talking. Then he smiled at her.

As far as Meko was concerned, these were all signs.

Then one day, when she took out the trash at the restaurant, a literal sign fell from the sky and hit her right on the head. It was the 1978 street marker. That was the year of Jeff's first murder. She had to get out of there. She had to close the restaurant.

But the signs kept coming anyway.



Two years after her restaurant closed, she was helping out a friend at the Taste of Kenosha food festival, working a food stall specializing in Thai food similar

to the fare she once offered at her bistro. A young, heavy-set, pimply girl with stringy hair and a double chin approached her booth and gently placed an order. She had a picture of Jeff on her shirt. It was his 1982 mugshot after he'd been arrested at the Wisconsin State Fair for exposing himself. Above the image, written in bold letters, the shirt read "TASTE OF WISCONSIN."

Meko didn't even hear the order. She was captivated by the image of Jeff splashed across the oversized T-shirt.

"Do you like my T-shirt?" the girl asked slowly and loudly as if Meko didn't understand English. "This is Jeffrey Dahmer." The girl giggled. "Do you know who that is?"

Meko didn't respond. Instead, she found herself in the year 1990. It was summertime, and she, Konerak (or Kum as she called him), Jun, and Jeff were riding their bikes near Milwaukee County Stadium. There were homeless people living in tents and other makeshift shelters, as well as huge cement and metal pipes crisscrossing all over the place, marked with graffiti. Kum liked to pretend they were Ninja Turtles. He said if he were a Ninja Turtle this is where he'd live.

Yeah, she knew Jeff Dahmer alright. This young woman had no idea.



Jeff always carried around a camera. Meko knew Jeff from the spring of 1989 until his arrest in the summer of 1991, and he always carried around a camera. In that time, he had a few different models. The only time Jeff ever became angry with her was when she began messing with his camera in the downtown Milwaukee Library. She was fascinated by it. She popped it open and discovered there was no film in it. He'd been taking pictures with no film. Jeff became quite angry. He sternly told her not to touch his things without asking. Meko never did that again, and she never forgot the flash of anger in his eyes or the sharpness of his usually very calm and soothing voice. Why would anybody take pictures with no film? Or even carry around a camera with no film?

Jeff took pictures of everything, including random strangers and young boys playing tennis. Once Jeff and Meko went to the Marquette High School tennis court to watch some boys play tennis. Meko used to get so bored watching boys play tennis with Jeff. He wasn't bored though.

He would sometimes take group pictures with Meko, Konerak, and anyone else around. He mostly took candid shots of young boys playing soccer around the Mitchell Domes. Other times he'd snap shots that were more artistic—shots of the natural world. Sometimes he'd take pictures of random

people or crowds. Meko never saw how any of them turned out. Jeff was very knowledgeable about photography. He was a photographer.

Once Meko told Jeff she wanted to see New York City, especially Central Park and the Statue of Liberty.

"We have our own Central Park here in Milwaukee," he told her. "The guy who built Central Park is the person who built Washington Park." He was referring to landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who also helped design the gardens at the Chicago World's Fair in 1893.³ Jeff told her about a guy he knew who had lots of pictures of Washington Park. He worked at the Charles Allis Museum. His name was Richard, Richard Morgan. Richard and Jeff were good friends.

Meko and Konerak began visiting the museum all the time, free of charge, with Jeff. They were both around fourteen years old. Richard was very kind to them. He always offered snacks and a beverage for them to take when they left. Sometimes they'd visit after hours and could wander around as much as they liked. It was amazing. Konerak and Jeff jokingly called Richard "Uncle Dick."

The Charles Allis Art Museum was a restored mansion built in 1911 by Charles and Sarah Allis, primarily to store their valuable artwork. Jeff told Meko the house was his dream home. He especially liked the downstairs wing with the old timey bowling alley and the strange shower in the large bathroom. Jeff was thirty years old then, and Meko thought Richard was closer to fifty. He looked like he stepped right out of the past. There was something regal about him—sophisticated, elegant. He and Jeff were very close. She could tell from their body language that they were close, very good friends.



Meko could only speculate after all these years why Richard might have had some of the Polaroids that sounded an awful lot like the ones that were found in Jeff's apartment after he was arrested, the ones he took of the men he killed before, during, and after the murders. Meko never asked Steve if they'd contacted the police about the pictures. Her guess was that they hadn't.

Meko eventually bought the book that she saw the student reading. Once she got to the part about Kum, she stopped reading. The book was just so wrong. Meko wasn't sure where the author Anne Schwartz got her information, but it was grossly inaccurate. It completely undermined the credibility of the entire book. Meko had watched a good portion of the trial and knew about some of the details of the murders, but that was about it.

The more she thought about how the victims were portrayed in that book, especially Kum and Tony, the more she felt a deep obligation to come forward. Those guys were not prostitutes. They were her friends. They were Jeff's friends, too. Maybe Schwartz would be interested in what really happened. Weren't journalists supposed to be interested in the truth?



CHAPTER TWO

I may not have made it in the military, but now that I'm getting out, things will be different. Someday you'll hear about me. You'll see me or you'll read about me, but you will hear about me again.¹

—JEFFREY DAHMER, 1981

Jeffrey Lionel Dahmer was born on May 21, 1960, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, at a hospital not far from Marquette University, where his father Lionel was an undergraduate student majoring in chemistry. Lionel was from the area, and his father, Jeff's grandfather, was a teacher at Lincoln Intermediate School in West Allis. Lionel Dahmer graduated the following year and decided to continue his studies at Marquette and work toward a master's degree in analytical chemistry, which he finished in 1962. Upon completing his MA degree, Lionel moved the family to Ames, Iowa, just outside of Des Moines, where he enrolled in the Analytical Chemistry PhD program at Iowa State.

When Jeffrey was nearly four years old, Lionel and Joyce began noticing their son touching his genitalia and crying. Young Jeffrey told them that his privates hurt. When they inspected the area, they found a small growth near his testicles. Jeffrey's parents immediately took him to the local hospital. It was not long before the doctor told Lionel and Joyce that due to a birth defect, their son was suffering from a double hernia. The doctor recommended surgery to correct the issue, and the procedure was scheduled for the following day.²

Joyce brought Jeff to the hospital and watched as doctors sedated her son. Several hours later, Jeffrey woke up in a great deal of pain. His entire groin area hurt. He quietly asked his mother whether the doctors had cut off his penis.³ He was sure that they had. His mother assured him that they had not, but Jeff was not convinced. A quarter of a century later he would sedate a man and cut off his penis. According to psychologist Dr. Judith Becker, Dahmer's double hernia surgery was one of his earliest memories.⁴

Lionel later reflected that his son's surgery marked a transition in his physical appearance as well as his mental makeup. Lionel believed that after the surgery Jeff literally darkened, and his attitude and behavior became more introspective and morose. By the time Jeff was six, he had completely changed. Instead of a fun-loving, energetic kid, he was now a brooding boy, often vacant and still.⁵

Around this time, Jeff and a young Black neighborhood boy were playing near an old building. Jeff knew there was a hornet's nest in a crevice of the building. He told the boy that ladybugs lived in the crevices and that if he stuck his hand in one of the cracks, he might be able to get one of them. The boy did and was immediately stung. Dahmer thought the story was hilarious and told his counselors after he'd been arrested that the boy ran home and told his parents he had been stung by ladybugs.⁶

After Jeff completed first grade, Lionel completed his studies at Iowa State and secured employment as a commercial chemist in Doylestown, Ohio. He relocated the family to Bath Township, a little further north. Lionel's science bent clearly influenced his son Jeff in odd and unusual ways. For example, when Jeff was still in grade school, he became fascinated with dead animals. While most kids were playing soccer or T-ball or fishing in the nearby lakes and streams, Jeff was scouring the local area for roadkill. His interest started with insects and grew from there, culminating in hunting and killing a few local dogs, one of which had viciously attacked him.⁷ Neighbors grew concerned when several local dogs went missing, and the mutilated body of one was found nailed to a tree.⁸ Jeff kept his dead animals in a tool shed in the woods behind his house. There he experimented on the carcasses by cutting them up and jarring them in various chemical solutions he stole from Lionel.

Jeff's early mistreatment of animals betrayed an ability to objectify and disregard life. This would culminate in his ability to completely dehumanize primarily nonwhite individuals, particularly Black men. The dehumanization of Black men has been a staple of white Western thought for hundreds of years. For example, in 1799 English physician Charles White believed in the existence of a racial hierarchy wherein "Europeans were the highest and Africans the lowest, approaching nearer to the brute creation than any other of human species." He likened Africans to apes and championed the African penis, admitting that he kept a Black penis in his own personal museum. White also claimed that "orangutans had been known to carry off negro-boys, girls, and even women . . . sometimes enslaving them for brutal passion."⁹ This sort of early European racialized thinking and fetishization of Black sexuality would take root and spread across America like an

out-of-control pandemic, leading to unimaginable atrocities committed against Black bodies for centuries to come by racists and killers like Dahmer.

According to psychologist Judith Becker, who interviewed Dahmer extensively when he was imprisoned, when Jeff was ten years old in the fifth grade he invented “a game with spirals and stick figures that he called infinity land. If the stick figures would get too close together, they would be annihilated.” Already at age ten, Dahmer was feeling disconnected from his peers, toxic, and dangerous, as though human connection was more likely to cause destruction than synergy or love.¹⁰

By the time Dahmer reached middle school, he was already a full-blown alcoholic. Friends and classmates recalled Dahmer as a prodigy drunkard. He was always drinking. He stashed beers in the lining of his army field jacket and guzzled them before school started at 7:30 a.m. He drank before, during, and after school. Aside from keeping a bottle of gin in his locker, he was totally nondescript. Few people remembered much else about him. No faculty member or staff ever reported or questioned him about his drinking.

According to Detective Dennis Murphy of the MPD, Dahmer told him he had at least one sexual experience at age fourteen with a neighborhood boy in a treehouse.¹¹ The boy’s parents eventually forbade the boys to play together because they did not want a homosexual relationship to develop.

Dahmer’s home life was a mess, too. Jeffrey’s mother, Joyce Dahmer, was an extremely difficult woman. In the first trimester of her pregnancy with Jeff, she took prescription medication for depression and anxiety. She was so difficult to be around that Lionel said he retreated into his chemistry work and left Joyce to raise the children, something for which she was clearly not cut out. When Lionel was home, he and Joyce fought constantly. By 1970, Joyce had become completely incapacitated. She experienced severe fits where her body would twitch uncontrollably, something that Jeff mocked to make people laugh. Joyce wound up in the hospital, spending over a month in the mental ward.

Dahmer’s tumultuous home life alone may have been enough to trigger his alcoholism, but the realization that he was gay and needed to protect himself from bullies likely sent him over the edge. The booze was a cover-up, a way to stay closeted and undetected, a way to cope. Dahmer knew that his sexual desire for boys and men was dangerous and something to hide. He also knew that his father would not approve.

Dr. Judith Becker noted that, at this point in Dahmer’s life, he had little hope of expressing his sexual desire in a meaningful and loving way. He was already considering other alternatives, such as rendering a partner unconscious in order to satisfy his sexual drive.¹² This particular brand of sexual

desire would soon develop into an eroticization of lifeless bodies and human viscera, also known as necrophilia.

Bridget Geiger, a sophomore at Revere High School, felt coerced into going to prom with Jeffrey Dahmer because he was the friend of a friend. Dahmer never even asked her to go. He had a friend ask her. He was nervous when he picked her up. At Bridget's house, he was so scared of stabbing her with the corsage needle that Bridget's mom had to pin the flower on for her. Once they arrived at the dance, Dahmer pulled out a chair for her to sit down and then left. He never talked or danced with her once. She could not find him for over two hours. Mortified, she found someone to take her home, but then Dahmer finally showed up. He told her that he had gone to McDonalds and ate four or five cheeseburgers in the parking lot. He then took her home, shook her hand, and left.¹³ More than anything, Geiger felt sorry for him. She said he was bullied mercilessly and never fought back.

Dr. George Palermo, a court-appointed psychiatrist, confirmed that Dahmer confided in him about the brutal bullying he endured as a child, often from bigger and stronger boys. Palermo speculated that the bullying resulted in lots of unexpressed hostility and rage that drove his later killings. Palermo also interviewed Jeff's brother David, who told the psychiatrist that his brother was sullen and withdrawn for most of his life and that he was prone to lying and deceiving his parents whenever the need arose.¹⁴

Dahmer and a couple of guys working on the school newspaper, including the future comic artist Derf Backderf, decided to pull a senior prank and insert Dahmer into some photos for the yearbook in which he clearly did not belong. One of the photos was of the school's National Honors Society, the academic cream of the crop. When the group met for the picture, Dahmer joined them. Ultimately, the prank failed because Dahmer was blacked out of the picture when the yearbook finally came out. He was the boy who was not there, totally invisible and rubbed out.

Derf Backderf was a friend of Dahmer's in high school and grew up near him in Bath. In 2012, Backderf published a graphic novel called *My Friend Dahmer* that was subsequently made into a film in 2017. While both the graphic novel and the film clearly take liberties with the facts and fill in narrative blanks with authorial license, they offer an interesting perspective concerning Dahmer's life during this period. At one point in the film, the Dahmers are at the dinner table eating fried chicken. As Jeff goes for a leg, his mother admonishes him to save the leg for his brother, to which Dahmer replies that he likes the "dark meat." The film also stresses the heteronormative pressures bearing down on high school kids in the 1970s, indicated by the liberal use of homophobic slurs by the young men in Dahmer's life. In the

film, on a class trip to DC, Dahmer rooms with a Black student named John Smith. One of Dahmer's white buddies, upon learning that Dahmer is rooming with Smith, tells Dahmer that he and the other guys will be just down the hall if Smith tries to rape him in the middle of the night. As Dahmer and Smith settle into their room, Smith changes into a midriff T-shirt that exposes his abdomen. Dahmer stares at the man's dark skin lustfully. Dahmer asks Smith whether it is hard being the only Black guy in the senior class, to which Smith shrugs and says, "Nah." Dahmer then innocently observes that Smith's palms are less Black and says, "I wonder whether your insides are the same as my insides."

Lionel Dahmer was aware of his son's growing alienation from the world and, in some sense, saw vestiges of himself in his awkward son. Lionel suggested bodybuilding to Jeff as a way to improve his self-image. It had worked for him, he told his son. Jeff immediately seemed interested, and Lionel bought him some bodybuilding equipment, including a Bullworker and dumbbells. Implicit in Lionel's suggestion was the idea that Dahmer needed to make himself more appealing to women.

By 1978, Dahmer's parents were in the middle of a divorce, and Jeff was left home alone. A restraining order prohibited his father from returning to the marital home after he moved out of the house to a nearby hotel. Unbeknownst to Lionel, Joyce had taken Dahmer's younger brother David to Wisconsin, leaving Jeff by himself.

On the night of June 25, 1978, Dahmer was bored and drunk. He had borrowed his father's 1972 Ford station wagon earlier that day to go to the movies, and it was still parked in the garage. Dahmer decided to go for a drive. As he was driving down one of the main thoroughfares around Bath, Cleveland-Massillon Road, he saw a bare-chested Steven Hicks hitchhiking not far from the Bath Township fire station.

Hicks had left that same morning to hitch a ride over to a rock concert in Chippewa Lake Park. Friends of his saw him thumbing on the roadside, picked him up, and gave him a lift to the concert. They agreed to pick him up later that night and head over to an abandoned airport near Lockwood Corners to party. Hicks was on his way back home from the concert when Dahmer saw him.

Hicks was the same age as Dahmer but had graduated from a different high school. They had never met but likely knew some of the same people. When Dahmer saw the good-looking shirtless Hicks thumbing on the side of the road, he pulled over and offered him a ride. Hicks accepted. Dahmer drove Hicks to Dahmer's house on West Bath Road. The two cracked open a couple cool ones, smoked a bowl, listened to some music, and talked in

Jeff's bedroom. They sat on the bed, and then Steven moved over to a chair. Dahmer later told the police that he and Hicks got drunk and had sex but then got into a fight when Hicks tried to leave. He said it was then that he hit Hicks over the head with a barbell and killed him—the same barbell that his father had bought him so that he could get in shape and make himself more attractive to girls.

Dahmer made it clear to the police in his first two statements that he and Hicks had sex, but in his later confession to detective Patrick Kennedy, he insisted that they had not. It is very likely that Hicks wasn't gay and rebuffed Dahmer. Instead of homosexual panic on the part of Hicks, a legal defense that preposterously justified violence against homosexuals, likely it was Dahmer who panicked out of fear of being outed by Hicks, or perhaps Dahmer's hostility, anger, and sexual desire had simply come to a breaking point. While Dahmer's closeted sexuality did not cause him to become a murderer, it compounded his problems and likely provided the necessary trigger to a gun that had been loaded for some time.

After he killed Hicks, Dahmer placed the body outside in a space under the house, and with a long kitchen knife, he methodically carved off Hicks's arms and legs from the torso of the body and stuffed them into plastic bags. At that point, it was shortly before 3:00 a.m., and Dahmer was nervous and still a little drunk. He wanted to get the evidence as far away as possible. He bagged the rest of the body parts, tossed them into the trunk of the station wagon, and drove off to the city dump. As he was driving, Officer Richard Munsey of the Bath Police Department spotted him and pulled him over. Munsey asked for Dahmer's license and registration and told him he was driving left of center. Dahmer told Munsey that he was taking the household trash to the dump, that his parents were divorcing, and he was trying to keep his mind off his problems. Munsey asked Dahmer to step out of the car and perform a drunk driving test, which Dahmer passed. Munsey wrote Dahmer a ticket for erratic driving, and Dahmer drove away from the scene with the mutilated body of Steven Hicks stuffed into plastic bags and sitting in the trunk.

Instead of dumping the bags, he returned to his house and stashed them in the crawl space where he had dissected the corpse. A couple days later, he tried to bury the remains in a shallow grave behind the house, but the ground was too hard. He hid the remains in a storm drain.

In the fall of 1978, Dahmer enrolled at The Ohio State University for the fall quarter. Even among college students at a party school such as Ohio State, Dahmer stood out as a severe drunk. A former high school acquaintance, who was also attending OSU at the time, once saw him completely passed

out on the ground on High Street around 8:00 a.m. as students were walking to their early morning classes. His dorm roommates said he drank all the time and smuggled bottles into class when he bothered to show up at all. When Dahmer ran out of booze money, he sold his plasma at a local blood bank, a place similar to the one at which he would someday be employed in Wisconsin and from which he would pilfer the blood bag of a Native American man to sample. Police investigated Jeff at Ohio State when several of his roommates' belongings went missing, such as a valuable watch. Dahmer did not pass one class.

Lionel refused to pay for another quarter of school just to see Jeff squander the opportunity again. Lionel had another idea. He would encourage Jeff to join the Army. To his surprise, his son agreed. Lionel drove Jeff to the Army recruiting office, and by the time they left, Jeff Dahmer was scheduled to enter basic training on January 12, 1979. When Dahmer filled out his enlistment papers, he chose the Military Police as his preferred vocation.

Before he left for the military, or perhaps when he was home on leave, Dahmer retrieved what was left of Hicks from the storm drain and took a sledgehammer to the bones, scattering them about the property. Dahmer slung the slain boy's personal effects, including a necklace, as well as the knife Dahmer used to carve Hicks up, into the Cuyahoga River. Hicks's family had reported the boy missing after he did not return home from the concert.

Dahmer's MP training at Fort McClellan, Alabama, did not go well, largely because he kept getting drunk on base and causing trouble for his entire unit. One of his fellow cadets, a big Black man, pulled him into the head and beat him so badly that Dahmer sustained a concussion and fractured eardrum. He was soon kicked out of the program and transferred to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where he started a field medic training program.¹⁵ He learned how to treat the wounded, manage injuries, and carry out basic combat surgical procedures. He also learned how to administer drugs, painkillers, and sedatives that paralyzed the nervous system.

On July 13, 1979, PFC Jeffrey Dahmer received his orders to report to the Second Battalion of the US Army's Sixty-Eighth Armored Regiment of the English Infantry Division in Baumholder, West Germany, one of the front-line military units of the Cold War that would continue for the next decade until the Berlin Wall fell in 1989.

Both Dennis Rodriguez and Michael Masters bunked with Dahmer in the enlisted men's barracks. They both remembered that he carried a briefcase that opened up into a portable bar. The briefcase itself was mere camouflage for the liquor that was not allowed in the soldier's quarters on base. The superior officers tended to look the other way at their enlisted personnel's

habits behind closed doors to a certain extent, however, because almost all the specialists on base had qualified after a selective training program and would be tough to replace. Dahmer's bar-in-a-briefcase was a cleverly designed contraption that held Martini mixers, a shaker, stirrers, glasses, and flasks. Dahmer liked to mix himself a martini after he signed off duty for the weekend, lie back on his bunk, and listen to heavy metal music through his headphones. After Dahmer had mixed up a shaker of martinis and pounded a few, he would be out, only to wake up later and drink some more.

His roommates said he never talked about his family or any girlfriends. Within a year, Dahmer's military career began to unravel. Psychiatrist Park Dietz reported that on May 10, 1980, Dahmer's possession of hard liquor in his quarters led to his rank reduction to an E-14, thereby lowering his pay. He was reportedly drunk and disorderly on that occasion, and in addition to his rank reduction, he received a fine and extra duty. Military police arrested him three months later for being drunk and disorderly. Four months later, in December 1980 Dahmer reported to duty so drunk he could not walk. Then two weeks later he did the same thing. This time he was sent back to his quarters, where he passed out.¹⁶

By the end of 1980, just a year and a half after he arrived in Germany, Dahmer's rack in the barracks was decorated with heavy-metal music posters. When he was not drinking, he was generally low-key like he was in high school, but after he started drinking, he was mean and belligerent, particularly toward Black people and homosexuals. According to several of his bunkmates, Dahmer routinely picked fights and ranted about his hatred for homosexuals and Black people.¹⁷ His racism turned from general obnoxiousness to explicit remarks directed at members of his unit. One soldier in his platoon, Preston Davis, remembered how ugly Dahmer became after he had put away a few cocktails. He said that Dahmer usually gave him trouble after he had been drinking, calling him a n----r and challenging him to fight, but when Dahmer was sober, he was totally different. He once gave Preston a birthday card. Preston said that he knew Dahmer was a potentially dangerous person and would hurt him if he had the chance. He said Dahmer would sometimes go after him like a crazy man, "like a wild nut."¹⁸ Another one of Dahmer's bunkmates, Billy Capshaw, said that once Dahmer drank a few martinis, a switch would flip, and he would transform into a violent, racist homophobe.

When Dahmer was sober, he was much more approachable. His bunkmates even teased him when they found out that he was a virgin. Two of his buddies coaxed him into visiting a Vogelway brothel called Annabella's house. But once the other men paired off, Dahmer slipped out. He later

told them the sex workers didn't interest him. One soldier said he thought Dahmer was gay because he always seemed to be hiding something.¹⁹ Court-appointed psychologist Dr. Samuel Friedman noted that in Germany Dahmer discovered gay pornography for the first time.²⁰

On March 7, 1981, Dahmer finally crossed the line when he reported for duty wearing an incorrect uniform and received an order to change. He was later found passed out in his quarters. Two days later the commander of his outfit cut his security clearance and discharged him from the military.²¹

He was out after just two years and a few months, well short of his three-year enlistment. When Dahmer left, he told a few of his fellow soldiers, "I may not have made it in the military, but now that I'm getting out, things will be different. Someday you'll hear about me. You'll see me or you'll read about me, but you will hear about me again."²² Decades later, both Preston Davis and Billy Capshaw would come forward and allege that, in addition to the verbal abuse and intimidation that they experienced from Dahmer, the Cream City Cannibal had also raped and beat both of them, Capshaw repeatedly.²³

By the time he was twenty-one, Dahmer had failed out or been kicked out of the two most notorious drinking institutions in American culture—college and the military—for excessive drinking. He was clearly a heavy-weight, big-league drunk.

As part of his discharge, the Army provided him a one-way plane ticket anywhere in the United States. Dahmer chose Miami, Florida, and arrived by the end of March 1981. Within one month, he was completely broke and sleeping on the beach. He was not yet twenty-one years old and found himself foraging for food in dumpsters behind restaurants by the beach on Collins Avenue. One such establishment was Sunshine Subs, run by a man named Ken Hauptert. Hauptert noticed Dahmer searching for discarded pizza crusts in the dumpster behind the shop one day and offered him a job bussing tables.²⁴

The dumpster was located behind the shop in a meter room, which also featured light and running water. A few days after Dahmer was hired, he casually told Hauptert that there was a dead man in the back of the restaurant lying face-down near the dumpster. To Hauptert's shock, he found the corpse just as Dahmer said. The body appeared as though it had been there for some time. It had turned blue and was covered in maggots and flies. Dahmer admitted that he had seen the body there for days and just didn't bother telling anyone. In fact, he had to step over it to get to the dumpster. Hauptert called the police and reported the dead man. Hauptert informed the police that he had recollections of a man, approximately fifty years old, living in the meter room and consuming food from the dumpster.

In fact, according to the police report, the fifty-five-year-old man's name was Jaida Bohumil. He was 5'4" and weighed a mere seventy-eight pounds. The police had his fingerprints on file. The police report concerning Bohumil's death indicated that Dahmer was the one who found him. Dahmer told the police he had seen the man wandering Collins Avenue for weeks and that the man often complained of ill health. Dahmer said that Bohumil frequently spent the night in the meter room. The report also noted that Dahmer used Sunshine Subs as his home address. Dahmer's statement to the police that Bohumil had complained of health problems was a classic Dahmer fabrication. The truth was likely much more sinister. Dahmer likely killed the smaller man for his spot behind the sub shop. Hauptert reported that the man had not been beaten, but it would not have taken much to kill a man who weighed seventy-eight pounds and not leave marks.²⁵

After the incident with the dead vagrant, Dahmer settled into his job for a few weeks without further incident. However, after that initial honeymoon, he began showing up for work in the morning either still drunk from the night before or filthy and in total disarray. One day Hauptert noted that Dahmer showed up with his glasses broken. Hauptert sent him home. He was also aware that Dahmer sometimes helped himself to a blue van that was used by employees for deliveries. This blue van was notable because eyewitnesses reported a blue van in relation to the kidnapping and murder of Adam Walsh, the son of John Walsh, who would later host the television show *America's Most Wanted*. Walsh was kidnapped from a Sears department store in Hollywood, Florida, about thirty minutes from the sub shop. His severed head was found two weeks later in a drainage canal along Highway 60.²⁶

Despite Hauptert's warnings, Dahmer repeatedly showed up for work drunk until finally Hauptert was forced to let him go. It was September and Dahmer had only lasted five months. He realized he was out of options and called his dad for help. Lionel told his son that he had a new wife named Sheri and that things were different for him. He was trying to pick up the pieces after the divorce and create a new life for himself. Jeff begged his father for money. Lionel told Jeff that he would only give him money for a plane ticket back to Ohio on the condition that Jeff would play by Lionel's rules this time. Jeff agreed, adding that he had a plan. He was going to join the FBI.²⁷

Once he was back home, he was soon in trouble again. On October 7, 1981, he was arrested for "disorderly conduct, resisting arrest, and carrying an open container of liquor." The bar manager at the local Ramada Inn called the police when a man showed up to the bar with a fifth of vodka and refused to get rid of the bottle or leave the bar. When the police arrived, Dahmer refused to give them the bottle. They soon yanked it away from him,

causing him to fall off his bar stool. Lionel had to bail him out of jail. For this stunt, Dahmer was fined “sixty dollars and given a suspended ten-day prison sentence.”²⁸ At wit’s end, Lionel suggested that his son move in with his grandmother in West Allis, a suburb of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Jeff liked the idea immediately. And so Jeffrey Dahmer, a heavyweight and big-time drunk, set out for his birthplace, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, a.k.a. Beer City.