

## Prologue

"Yo, the nigger's not gettin up. The nigger's not breathin. He be cold." Those were the words spoken to Veronica Taft by Charles 'Chucky' Pratt, when returning to her bedroom after checking on her four young children on the morning of December 30, 2010. Having found her only son, 2½ year-old Lyric, unresponsive and unable to wake him. Veronica started flipping out, screaming, "what do mean he's cold and not breathing, go get him, bring him to me." Chucky ran back to the children's bedroom, picked up Lyric and quickly brought him to his mother. In desperation, she immediately yelled at him and slapped his back, trying to wake him. But quickly realized he was cold, purple colored and not breathing and immediately started CPR then screamed at Chucky to call 9-1-1. He'd just finished dialing when she suddenly snatched the phone away and placed a hysterical call to 9-1-1 herself at 10:53 a.m. Then, half-dressed, with phone still in hand, flew down the stairs and out into the street, screaming hysterically, "call the police" and yelling, "does anyone know CPR?" A startled neighbor responded quickly and ran upstairs with her but was stopped by Chucky, asking who he was. He just shoved Chucky out of the way, ran to Lyric and started CPR.

By 10:56 a.m. Superior Ambulance, just a couple blocks away, was dispatched to Taft's 2nd floor apartment at 4½ Fayette Street in Binghamton, NY with a report of a child not breathing. Meanwhile, a very hysterical mother stood by, thinking her son may already be dead as she watched over her neighbor doing CPR. All the while, anxiously awaiting the arrival of the ambulance and hoping for a miracle.

Chucky just stood there before Veronica just shoved him aside saying, "get away from me." Then watched as Chucky suddenly punched the living room wall, once with each fist, leaving a large gaping hole. With crumbling pieces of wall-board and plaster falling to the floor next to the family Christmas tree.

Arriving two minutes later, EMT's ran upstairs and immediately took over the life-saving efforts on Lyric. Followed shortly thereafter by the first responding police officers from the Binghamton Police Department (BPD). Besides being cold and not breathing, EMT's also noticed Lyric's abdomen was bloated, causing the jean pants he was wearing to be extremely tight. They were quickly removed to ease the pressure. They also noted multiple abrasions and contusions on Lyric's head, face and neck. The dire situation was recognized immediately by the lead EMT, who quickly scooped Lyric into his arms and rushed him downstairs to the waiting ambulance, while continuing CPR. Later, he reported that Lyric's extremities were cold but his core was still warm.

Following close behind, Veronica jumped into the ambulance with Lyric and by 11:06 a.m. they were on their way to the ER at Lourdes Hospital. All the while, continuing CPR as well as intubation and other resuscitation efforts until their arrival just four minutes later at 11:10 a.m. Immediately upon arrival, the waiting ER staff rushed in and took over.

Lyric was in good hands as ER doctors and staff worked feverishly in their efforts to revive his cold and lifeless body. However, upon arrival he was already in full cardiopulmonary arrest, with a complete absence of spontaneous pulse respirations or blood pressure. And by 11:15 a.m. his rectal body temperature had plunged more than twelve degrees, registering a critically low, 86 degrees Fahrenheit. During the hospital's life-saving efforts, Lyric's clothing was removed and replaced with warm compacts and blankets. And a warm saline solution was pumped into his stomach. A witnessing patrol officer secured each item of Lyric's clothing and placed them into separate evidence bags and labeled them.

Veronica anxiously stood by in the waiting area, as investigators began questioning her about what happened. But at the same time, along with hospital staff, attempted to comfort her as she waited nervously, praying and desperately hoping that her son may still be alive.

Meanwhile, despite how hopeless it seemed, doctors and staff continued their heroic efforts, using any/all medical means available for nearly an hour. But Lyric's body monitor remained flat-lined throughout and his body temperature continued to drop. There was never any return of spontaneous pulse, respirations or blood pressure. And the early onset of Rigor mortis was starting to appear. Tragically, at 12:06 p.m. doctors were forced to make the call and it became official – Lyric was dead.