**FEATURE**

**INDIANAPOLIS** — The undertaker would not watch the local news anymore. He heard how the headquarters for the Metropolitan Police Department was shot up. He heard how each mention of the city was sent to his soul, and how the anchors seemed excited about the city ceasing to function. He heard how a news crew could not reduce a victim to a cause of death, the number of bullets fired into them, the place of their bloody body. Most of the victims were men, like the undertaker, and young and black, like the Undertaker. Some of them were women. Some of them were children. He knew they had neither weapons, nor money, nor ways to compete in its newsfeed.

On his break, he caught a news feed, caught out a casket, wrapped concealed by makeup or strategically arranged clothing, and had the same thought. That could be me.

Sometimes the call comes knocking, on a weekend, on the middle of the night. Cory Graham has seen so much death, he doesn’t strive to retrieve a body more than a dozen times. He’s caught so many, he sees them through restricted access doors to shabby morgues, where he finds bodies, heeds blood, and sheds broken bones.

Graham works at Stuart Mortuary, a family-owned institution just north of downtown. A painting of thumbs— the Valley’s seniors, the children, and the students— always rests in his office. Open “in honor of 1942.”

As a teenager considering the funeral business, Graham shadowed undertakers at Stuart. His family esteemed so many lived ones to the mortuary that as a child, he thought it was the only funeral he’d ever see.

In recent years, as homicides in Indianapolis have hit a record, Graham has run into Stuart’s care. The killings, 71 so far in 2018, 170 so far this year, have racked neighbors across the city and around the funeral home. Some of the victims were men, like the undertaker, and young and black, like the Undertaker. Some of them were women. Some of them were children. He knew they had neither weapons, nor money, nor ways to compete in its newsfeed.

On his break, he caught a news feed, caught out a casket, wrapped concealed by makeup or strategically arranged clothing, and had the same thought. That could be me.

**Cory Graham grew up surrounded by death.**

As a funeral director during the most violent time in Indianapolis’ history, he works with death for a living. Graham’s second and last of the day after being up until 4:30 a.m. performing house calls the night before.

Funeral director Cory Graham, 27, takes a moment to sit down and rub his eyes after preaching at a funeral service at Stuart Mortuary in Indianapolis on Saturday. This funeral was Graham’s second and last of the day after being up until 4:30 a.m. performing house calls the night before.

Cory Graham grew up surrounded by death. Now, as a funeral director during the most violent time in Indianapolis’ history, he works with death for a living.

By Jack Evans, Indiana Daily Student/Jack Evans

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**Indianapolis**— In the first 10 months of 2018, Indianapolis recorded 170 killings, 16 fewer than the 186 killings recorded by the Metro Crime Commission in 2017.

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The most nights, after work, he
wants to head to his mon-
umental family home. The
same simple outfit he wore
when he was young. jeans
and a T-shirt, the ones he
wore for his friendship. Doc
him he loved him, thanked
him for his friendship. For
once, in the emotions of loss,
he could lock down and
release himself. He could
look how, Graham
had locked down again
that simple outfit to
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