

CHASING EVIL: SHOCKING CRIMES, SUPERNATURAL FORCES,
AND AN FBI AGENT'S SEARCH FOR HOPE AND JUSTICE

*By John Edward and Robert Hilland with Natasha Stoyloff. St Martin's
Essentials. 2025. 368 pp. Hardcover, ebook, and audiobook*

Chasing Evil is a vivid account of the collaboration between Robert Hilland, an FBI agent, and John Edward, a psychic medium,¹ famous from TV, in pursuit of criminal investigations. A disclaimer tells us that the book is based on real events as recalled and recorded by the authors themselves. The book underwent a review prior to publication, to ensure that there were no prohibited disclosures and there is no FBI endorsement, but information about a number of the cases described was already in the public domain and could be followed in other sources. Where relevant, the chapters are preceded by lists of investigators, officials, and interviewees, whose identities could be confirmed and who, presumably, could also confirm aspects of the cases in which they were involved. The book also includes a number of photographs relevant to the investigations.

This book is difficult to review for this journal for a number of reasons. It is not aimed at scientific exploration; as the subtitle suggests, it is intended for an identifiable audience and, as one of the blurbs makes clear, "For true crime fans, this is the Holy Grail." The style is appropriate for the genre, with an insistent sense of amazement, highly emotive language (e.g., the eyes of the murderer are "like a shark's the second before it rips you apart" [p. 6]), and repeated references to the simple heroic battle between good and evil. The reader is kept in suspense by tensions that keep mounting and resolving—all part of the thriller convention—as the cases and the authors' personal stories intertwine and develop.

The main thread is the pursuit of a 'cold case' from 1991, taken up by Robert Hilland in 1998, of what might be a serial killer: the man's two wives disappeared without trace, and he may have been involved in the deaths of a number of other women. The narrative describes the efforts invested in building up the profile of the suspect through interviews with family members and those who knew him,

1. As defined by Google AI, "A psychic medium is a person who claims to have psychic abilities to communicate with the spirits of the deceased and relay messages between the spirit world and the living. Unlike a psychic who can have various abilities like predicting the future or reading energy, a medium's defining characteristic is their ability to connect with and receive information from spirits." The abilities ascribed to John Edward are those of a psychic, regardless of how one interprets the source of information.

and the physical searches in various locations as clues are followed. However, while the search for the missing wives is eventually successful in part, it does not lead to a full and satisfying victory for the protagonists. But then, as we are told on a number of occasions by John Edward, it is the process of learning and growth that matters.

This applies to the many other cases in which Hilland and Edward are involved, from sickening murders to the just as sickening case of dogs being bred for dogfighting by a famous sports person. As his career develops, Hilland's expertise in polygraph readings, and his move to the Organized Crime Squad, take him to different parts of the world, some of them very dangerous, such as Afghanistan. The outcomes quite often are frustratingly inconclusive, even when clearly pointing to the culprits, as often happens in real life. There is also a genuinely moving account of Robert's personal involvement in the aftermath of the attack on the Twin Towers in 2001 and its effect on both authors.

However, it is the involvement of Edward in criminal investigations that will be of greatest interest to the readership of this journal. Unfortunately, this emotionally charged fictionalized narrative, based on recollections and records of the authors going back many years, would not be possible to corroborate. On the other hand, the descriptions of how the psychic input works are strikingly similar to accounts of how other psychics, including remote viewers, portray the process, even though they all have individual specialisms, rituals, and interpretations of how it happens. Hilland said in an interview: "John never gave me evidence. He led me to places where I might find evidence. Think of it before the days we all had GPS. Somebody would say, 'Go down this rural road, you'll see a big red barn. Turn left.' Well, John's the guy that's saying, 'Hey, look for the red barn.' That's the best way I can describe it" (Baker, 2025).

Little research has been done into psychics' involvement in criminal investigations—neither general surveys about attitudes nor experiments where conditions are artificial tell us anything about case details. However, Schouten (2021, pp. 244–247, 261–264) describes the story of a gifted "psychic policeman" where the reporting is not anecdotal, since the police record all statements and actions, and where the outcome is also likely but not certain: they have reason to believe that the murderer had parked in the same place that the psychic identified. This characteristic feature, of the psychics' information not always being directly on target, appears in quite a few well-documented accounts—such as when the psychic tells the police in detail about the route usually taken by the victim but very little about the perpetrators (Janoszka & Weaver, 2023, p. 116)—and is also found in *Chasing Evil*.

Krzysztof Janoszka, who contributed to this review and who is an active police officer, found the book very interesting, and in particular the unique tandem in crime detection created by the authors. This relationship between the agent and the psychic is also very much part of the story. The special bond that forms between them develops from total rejection of the very concept by

the agent, through repeated exposure to John Edward's media appearances and desperation about the case, to seeking contact. Robert Hilland decides to call John Edward after listening to his show in 1998 (p. 47); this is quite early on in Edward's public mediumship, which began in 1995. During the first visit, Edward uses psychometry, and correctly identifies objects relevant to the case while discarding the control ones; he pinpoints the significance of locations, persons, or events (such as identifying the names and relationships to a watch that was significant at different times for different persons [p. 108]). Sometimes the instructions are very specific and in real time, as when looking for a child's body (chapter twenty-five); sometimes there are somewhat vague predictive statements that may have averted an assassination attempt (chapter five); and sometimes there are personal messages that turn out to be relevant. As in the case of other psychics, the information may be related to the events or persons of interest but extended over different time periods (the question of the "lady in the box" is not resolved until the year 2000, even though the box had been found in 1980).

There are similarities in the backgrounds of the authors: both are sons of 'alpha-male' policemen, and according to John Edward there already exists a 'karmic tie' between them (p. 222). Throughout the book there are conversations demonstrating the growing bond between the authors, with the agent becoming attuned to receiving psychic messages himself. As to the source of the information, for Edward it is the "Other Side", where spirits dispense general guidance about the journey one has to take in this life, as well as providing specific information. There are also dark, negative energies to be guarded against, but there is no discussion of the spirit world and how it works, while the ethics are a confrontation between good and evil. This is not a criticism: the worldview largely provided by Edward is simply part of the background. Each author provides an epilogue that is positive and hints at further cooperation.

According to Robert Hilland, in an interview on the NewsNation TV network, working with psychics is not common. However, perhaps it is more common than people are prepared to admit, considering the risk of ridicule and hostility. We doubt whether this book is likely to change such attitudes, but, for those who accept the basic premise of what Mayer (2008) calls "extraordinary knowing", this narrative offers some genuine-sounding insights into how cooperation based on awareness of limitations can work in practice.

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