RUSSIA’S CHESSBOARD KILLER

DEATH SENTENCE FOR SCISSOR-KILLER MARLENE

He Set Out To Slay 64 – But “Only” Made It To 48...

SPREE KILLER WANTED TO BE FREDDY KRUEGER FOR A DAY

DID THE MAD AXE-MAN KILL DAISY?

SYDNEY SHOCKER: FROM LOTTERY WIN TO KIDNAP AND MURDER
Axe-Man Kill Daisy?

The murder of 35-year-old Londoner Daisy Wallis remains an intriguing mystery to this day – nearly 70 years later. She was horrifically stabbed to death in the August of 1949 in the High Holborn office where she ran her business. Sex and robbery were quickly eliminated as motives. So why was she killed? Was it the random work of a violent, unhinged attacker? For the next decade, the inquiry into Daisy’s murder continued. At one stage, Frank Mitchell (right, centre), a notorious associate of the Kray twins, made a curious confession. Could he really have been involved? Turn to page 6 and Doctor Sleeps Through His Own Death Sentence

The murder of 35-year-old Londoner Daisy Wallis remains an intriguing mystery to this day – nearly 70 years later. She was horrifically stabbed to death in the August of 1949 in the High Holborn office where she ran her business. Sex and robbery were quickly eliminated as motives. So why was she killed? Was it the random work of a violent, unhinged attacker? For the next decade, the inquiry into Daisy’s murder continued. At one stage, Frank Mitchell (right, centre), a notorious associate of the Kray twins, made a curious confession. Could he really have been involved? Turn to page 6 and Doctor Sleeps Through His Own Death Sentence

For the full story.

Anthony Garcia (below, left) blamed two fellow-doctors for ruining his career and embarked on a deadly revenge. Four people died as a result of his murderous campaign, but when the US justice system delivered its verdict on him, Garcia couldn’t keep his eyes open. Turn to page 6 and Doctor Sleeps Through His Own Death Sentence.

Many people idolise movie stars or the characters they portray on film. Brit Daniel Gonzalez (below, right) wanted to emulate a character from the Nightmare On Elm Street horror film series. See page 10 and Maniac Wanted To Be Freddy Krueger For A Day for the shocking outcome.

UPERMARKET shelf filler Alexander Pichushkin had one ambition in life – he wanted to be the world’s most successful serial killer. He was determined to pass the total number of murders committed by his Russian compatriot Andrei Chikatilo – known as the Rostov Ripper. Chikatilo’s “score” was 53. Pichushkin claimed he killed 63 before being caught.

“For me, a life without murder is like a life without food,” he told a court in Moscow. “I felt like a father to all these people, since it was I who opened the door for them to the afterlife.”

He claimed that he placed a coin on a chessboard to represent each of his victims. He told police that he intended to fill in all 64 squares, but had fallen short by one when he was eventually caught.

Searching through all the missing-person files, the police could find only enough evidence to charge him with 49 murders, four short of the number achieved by Chikatilo, who was executed for his crimes in 1994.

Pichushkin stormed with rage. He felt like a long-distance runner who had been pipped at the post.

When his modus operandi for killing was revealed it sent a collective shudder through Muscovites. To the south-east of the city there is a 3,500-acre sprawling stretch of open space called Bitsievsky Park, criss-crossed by paths, dotted with cafes and covered with large areas of woodland. Here the city folk come to stroll, cycle, picnic and unwind from the stresses and strains of work.

Here too came Alexander Pichushkin, a chess fanatic, to play chess in the open air with anyone who had the time to spare. Often his opponents were the down-and-outs or elderly alcoholics who have littered Bitsievsky Park since the fall of communism. He would offer them a game, plus a couple of large vodkas while they contemplated their next move.

When the game was finished he would say, “Come over to the other side of the park and see the grave of my dog. I buried him there last month. He meant so much to me, I was so sad when he died. Let’s go and drink to his memory.”

There was no dog and no grave, but there was a secluded spot where Pichushkin could “open the door to the afterlife” for his companion. He never used a firearm or a knife, but relied either on frenzied blows to the head with a hammer or manual strangulation.

He was aware that both these killing...
methods took time, so he relied on the soporific effects of the vodka. Manual strangulation, he knew, demands a considerable physical effort, and keeping the hands there long enough to kill seems like an eternity. Similarly with hammer blows – the first rarely kills outright. But with the victim heavily intoxicated it was so much easier, because he or she wasn’t usually in a state to protest or fight back.

When Pichushkin killed with his hammer, he finished off each victim by sticking the unfinished bottle of vodka into his or her shattered skull.

Pichushkin tossed most of his victims into 20-foot-deep sewage pits next to his killing ground, although they weren’t always dead. One of the witnesses at his trial was a man who miraculously survived being thrown into a pit. Another was a 19-year-old woman who tred water for an hour before she managed to grip the slippery side of the pit and crawl out.

By 2005, as the number of murders mounted remorselessly, panic gripped the city. By then Pichushkin wasn’t even bothering to hide the bodies, leaving them among the trees for strollers to discover.

He was caught after killing his final victim, a 36-year-old female colleague and friend at the supermarket where he worked.

When in June 2006 he asked her to go for a walk in the park with him she was slightly suspicious and left a note at her home for her son, telling him she was going out with Alexander Pichushkin and enclosing his address and phone number.

“I knew this was the riskiest murder,” Pichushkin told the police. “Because I knew she had left that note. But I couldn’t control my bloodlust. As we were heading towards the park and talking, I kept wondering whether to kill her or to exercise caution. I finally decided to take the risk. I was in that mood already.”

The note left by his victim led police to his apartment. Even so, they made heavy work of arresting him in an elaborate operation in which special
forces officers dangled on ropes from the outside of the apartment building to prevent him committing suicide.

Pichushkin said he was 18 and a student when he killed for the first time. He suggested to a classmate that they kill someone, but when his friend refused, “I sent him to heaven.”

At the time he was having an affair with a girl named Olga, who lived next door to him. When she broke off the relationship in favour of a mutual friend named Sergei, Pichushkin killed Sergei by throwing him out of a window. Now he is also claiming that he killed Olga as well, first luring her to Bitsevsky Park, where her body was found in 2005.

Although he was originally under suspicion, Pichushkin says, the police finally decided that Sergei’s death in 1992 was suicide. That was the same year that his role model, Andrei Chikatilo, was tried and convicted of the murder of 53 women and children.

For the next nine years Pichushkin apparently didn’t kill anyone. He started his Bitsevsky Park serial murders in 2001, a year in which he killed 13 people, including six in one month.

According to prosecutor Yuri Syomin at his trial in September 2007 Pichushkin could be “particularly cruel.” After jabbing the half-empty vodka bottle into the opened skull of one of his women victims, he hammered tiny stakes around her eyes.

The court was crowded with relatives of the murder victims. Several relatives of other missing people turned up and said they suspected him of killing their loved ones too.

For most of the time Pichushkin sat glowing in the glass cage, an icy presence gazing at onlookers with an expression of boredom and disgust. Occasionally during the five-week hearing, he became animated, as when he revelled in describing his first murder. “It was like first love – it was unforgettable,” he said.

The court on the chessboard, number 64, if you had not turned up,” he said. “If you hadn’t arrived, I would never have stopped – never. You saved a lot of lives by catching me.”

And he added: “I had no interest in robbing them. The most important thing was to take their lives.”

Defence lawyer Pavel Ivannikov questioned the evidence in 23 of the killings where no body was found, and asked that he be cleared of those crimes. “I would not want him to be blamed for someone else’s crimes,” Mr. Ivannikov said.

But during their investigations when the police decided that there were so many killings they must be the work of two people, Pichushkin was furious. To prove that he killed alone, he said, he went out and killed two more people. He also admitted killing one of his last victims in February 2006 to demonstrate that he was still at large following inaccurate reports in Russian newspapers that the “Bitsevsky Maniac” had been caught.

In guessing that there might have been a second killer, the prosecution were almost right. Initially Pichushkin did have an accomplice. His name was Mikhail Odichuk, and the two men hatched a plan to become joint serial killers. When they went into Bitsevsky Park to look for places where they could hide their victims’ bodies, Pichushkin decided to strangle Odichuk.

“Had he no idea that he was searching for his own grave,” Pichushkin smirked. “After that he operated alone, and killing became an addiction. “In all these cases I killed for the same reason – to feel alive,” he said. “The closer someone is to you, the more pleasant it is to kill.”

In court he was held in a glass cage and spoke through a microphone. He never denied the murders but refused to enter a plea. “I am being treated unfairly,” he protested. “I am charged with only 48 killings, yet I have killed 63 times.”

This indeed was the absolute focus of his concern. For him, psychiatrists told the court, the real punishment came from being denied the title of Russia’s most prolific serial killer.

One expert thought there was a “sexual subtext” to the murders, for Pichushkin had described his criminal career as “a perpetual orgasm.”

“YOU SAVED A LOT OF LIVES BY CATCHING ME”

W HEN Alexander Pichushkin was arrested, police went to the cramped apartment and the bedroom he shared with his mother, and found his chessboard with numbers on its squares – all the way up to 63. He denied any involvement in the crimes at first, until he was confronted with subway surveillance camera footage that showed him walking with his last victim minutes before he strangled her.

After that he told his whole astonishing story. “And I would have reached the last square
Describing his first murder – “It was like first love – it was unforgettable,” he said

Pichushkin couldn’t be sentenced to death like his icon Andrei Chikatilo – Russia had had a moratorium on the death penalty in 1996. Instead, a month after the verdicts were delivered, he was given life imprisonment, the first 15 years of which were to be served in solitary confinement. The judge ordering him to undergo psychiatric treatment during his incarceration, although Russia’s foremost psychiatric institution had examined him before the trial and declared him sane and fit to answer for his crimes.

Throughout the sentencing hearing, Pichushkin lounged back inside his glass cage with one foot on a bench in front of him, oblivious to the dense throng of journalists crowding the courtroom. He lowered his eyes as the sentence was read out and appeared to smile.

“The judge asked him: “Do you understand the sentence?” Pichushkin replied: “I am not deaf.”

Was he then mad? His mother, who brought her children up after her husband abandoned the family, said her son might have been affected by a blow on the head by a child’s swing at the age of four, and by the sudden loss of his grandfather, the only paternal figure in his life.

If he was mad, he had made a skilful job of covering it. When he was at home he successfully kept up a pretence of being quite normal. Neighbours described him as quiet, gentle and fond of animals.

One neighbour, Svetlana Mortakova, remembered that as a boy Pichushkin was always pleasant and polite. “Once I found him in tears in the stairwell of the block of flats where we lived, speechless with grief over the death of his cat,” she said.

Prosecutors stated they would continue to investigate at least 11 other murders that he confessed to. If his role in those killings were confirmed, he would have achieved his ambition. The man who numbers his victims as if they were sacks of corn could be the most prolific convicted serial killer in Russian history.
Anthony Garcia blamed two fellow-doctors and their poor references for ruining his career. His response was to carry out two horrific double-murders in a bid for vengeance. But when justice finally caught up with the medic-turned-serial killer he could, it seemed, barely keep his eyes open...

“Abstain from doing harm,” is the phrase found in the fourth-century BCE Hippocratic Oath taken to heart by all doctors. Well, almost all.

Dr. Anthony Garcia, a graduate of Utah Medical School in 1999, screwed up his first residency at a family practice in New York when he yelled at a radiologist. It was the first sign of his quick temper – but not the last.

By Donald Carne

Six-foot-six Garcia was given a second chance a year later in the Pathology Department at Creighton University Medical School in Omaha, Nebraska – only to be dismissed for “unprofessional conduct toward a fellow-resident and the fellow-resident’s wife.” Doctors Roger Brumback and William Hunter were the signatories to the dismissal.

Professionals of all stripes – doctors, lawyers and teachers amongst them – know that a single bad reference can destroy a career, cost you tens of thousands in earnings and dog you for decades. So the watchword is “Think what you like, but don’t say it.”

Anthony Garcia learned this the hard way. For the next eight years, he drifted on the fringes of medicine, bouncing from one short-term appointment to another.

Wherever he went, those references from Brumback and Hunter pursued him. “Every time he tried to get a licence from somewhere it appeared that the information Creighton would provide was coming back to haunt him,” said Omaha Police Department homicide detective Derek Mois.

The final straw came in February 2008 when Louisiana State University discovered he had faked his references. They fired him.

Two weeks later, on March 13th, 2008, Dr. William Hunter arrived home to find the bodies of his 11-year-old son Thomas and his housekeeper Shirlee Sherman, 57. Both had been stabbed with precision in the carotid artery. Thomas was the youngest of Dr. Hunter’s four sons. He loved maths and science and was a “junk food addict,” said his father.

Detectives were confused by a double-murder that apparently had no motive. The only evidence they had was an eye-witness who had seen a smart-looking man call at the house carrying what looked like a briefcase.

Shirlee had two children and five grandchildren. “She would take care of everyone else before she took care of herself,” said her daughter.

Two years later, Anthony Garcia was in another temporary post – this time in Indiana – when he was dismissed after a letter from Dr. Roger Brumback told the employer that the reference Garcia had produced for them was a fake.

Garcia was angry. “I feel my actions do not rise to the level of denial of my medical licensure application,” he wrote. “I have been aggrieved and adversely affected by not being able to work as a physician in the state of Indiana.”

On Mother’s Day, May 13th, 2013, a piano remover arrived at the Omaha, Nebraska, home of Roger Brumback and his wife Mary, both 65. Surprised at finding the door ajar, he walked in, calling Dr. Brumback’s name.

He found the doctor and his wife dead with stab wounds to the neck. Roger had also been shot as he opened the door – blasted in the hallway. Detectives found the clip from a Smith & Wesson 9mm pistol on the floor of the hall.

“All the wounds were in a small area of the right side of the neck,” said Detective Mois. “All of these wounds told us...
that whoever did this was looking for this geographic spot. ‘Someone knows anatomy’ is what it told us.”

Roger Brumback, a specialist in Alzheimer’s, had written 14 books and started two medical journals. As a result of some research, he had a species of owl monkey named after him. He once credited his success to Mary, “whose unselfish devotion and support has sustained me throughout my career.”

The couple had been looking forward to the start of their retirement and were in the process of moving to West Virginia. Alert detectives noted the similarities between the Hunter and Brumback murders. And records showed that both doctors had tangled with Anthony Garcia.

It didn’t take long to discover that Garcia had recently purchased a 9mm pistol. His phone records put him in the area at the time of the attack and his charge card record showed he stopped off for a meal of chicken wings in a diner shortly after the double-murder.

“Why did he make a return journey of a thousand miles to spend four hours in Omaha? the prosecution later asked. “It wasn’t for the chicken wings.”

On July 15th, 2013, Anthony Garcia was taken into custody by the Illinois State Police in Jonesboro. He was charged with four counts of murder and transported to Omaha. Three years of legal wrangling followed. During that time, he refused to engage with psychiatrists or jailers and once accused five jailors of gang-raping him. It was all nonsense.

Garcia was brought before a Gage County court in October 2016 for a 17-day trial that was characterised by insults and accusations volleyed between the prosecution and defence. Each called the other “a jackass” until Judge Gary Randall told them to cool it. Garcia, though, appeared unaware of any of this. That was because he had promptly fallen asleep at the start of the trial and remained that way for most of the proceedings. Unless, of course, he was faking it...

Douglas County Attorney Don Kleine offered volumes of evidence that included items found in Garcia’s home – the reference letter, bizarre instructions to himself – “wear Band-Aids over ends of fingers, escape to Canada or Gulf of Mexico, sell car, steal an identity” and phone, laptop and charge-card records. It formed a persuasive narrative of vengeance.

Garcia had searched a Shakespeare quote on the internet: “If you wrong us, shall we not revenge?” (The Merchant of Venice, Act III, Scene I).

A key witness was eye-catching former exotic dancer Cecilia Hoffman, 26. She said Garcia had pressured her for a date at the strip club where she worked, and where he had been a regular visitor. She had replied that she only dated “bad boys.”

“Well, actually, I’ve killed people before,” Garcia allegedly said to her. “I said, ‘Oh, please, you’ve never killed anybody.’ He said he had.

“I said, ‘All right, tell me about it. He goes, ‘Well, it was an old woman and a young boy. They deserved it. Well, no, perhaps they didn’t deserve it. I feel bad about it.’”

Sam Motta, Garcia’s attorney, said Cecilia was making it up. “I killed a
young boy and an old lady?”’ he said, “That’s the worst pickup line in the history of the world.”

He agreed that Garcia, who liked to be known as “Dr. Tony,” was a regular at the Club Coyote strip joint but that wasn’t a crime. “Dr. Tony was like Norm at Cheers,” he said, “Everyone knew him when he walked in the door.”

The prosecution’s evidence was circumstantial and incomplete, he added. They had not placed Garcia at either of the two crime scenes.

The idea that Garcia killed four people over a reference was incredible. “To do that kind of butchery, that’s hate in your heart,” Motta said. “In those 12 years, what did you see that was so horrible that makes you believe that this guy would hold that much hate in his heart for 12 years and decide he was going to come back and kill? I don’t see it.”

But the jury did see it. Anthony Garcia was found guilty on all four counts of murder after the jury of six men and six women had deliberated for seven hours. Some of his old friends found it hard to believe. “I was very surprised because the person I knew was polite and easy-going and got along well with everyone,” said Dr. Steve Lore, who studied with Garcia at Utah.

Garcia never spoke to his attorneys during the trial and his later communications were all said to be “gobbledegook.” “Either he’s incredibly talented at sounding insane – or he is insane,” said Jeremy Jorgenson, one of the defence team. “I don’t know the answer.”

In September 2018, Anthony Garcia arrived in a wheelchair and, as far as anyone could tell, slept through the hearing as a panel of three judges sentenced him to death – but not before some courtroom excitement. Gage County District Judge Gary Randall was wheeled away on a gurney after he collapsed in agony. “I apologise,” he groaned. Judge Rick Schreiner took over. He explained that Judge Randall had undergone back surgery earlier that week which had left him in extreme pain. He didn’t ask if there was a doctor in the house.

Nebraska has not executed an inmate since Carey Dean Moore died by lethal injection for the 1979 shooting deaths of two Omaha cab drivers. With current execution protocols tied up in knots, it’s hard to predict whether Anthony Garcia, 45, will ever face an executioner. Meanwhile, he joins 11 other Nebraska inmates on Death Row.

After the sentence was issued Bradley Waite, Shirlee Sherman’s brother, said, “Lethal injection is way too good for him.”

Claire Hunter, the mother of Thomas, had impressed the court with her dignity throughout the trial. She now added, “Thomas was a wonderful, lively child. He was a joy in everybody’s life and he didn’t deserve what happened to him.”
When Sandy Met Killer Paul
What a great read your case report “Sandy’s Affair With A Serial Killer” (MMF 110) was. It’s almost like a novel or a grisly Hollywood movie.

It’s hard to believe that Sandy Fawkes, an experienced newspaper reporter, just could not see through Paul John Knowles, a sadistic serial killer of the late 70s who roamed America murdering at will, just for pleasure. Sandy came across as a woman of the world and soon got fed up with Knowles. She had to know that there was something seriously wrong with him and all the signs he was giving her about his dark secrets. He as good as told her he was a killer, yet she acted as if this was just a casual affair.

She was extremely lucky to remain alive – this was devoted to Knowles’s ego, as he wanted his story to live forever and for himself go down in history as a mass murderer. Her being a reporter who could tell his story worldwide surely saved her neck.

Was there ever a movie made of Sandy’s story? I am definitely going to read Sandy’s book In Love With A Serial Killer. Also, you state that a judge ordered that tapes which Knowles made about his life and crimes to a supernatural entity (they shared Florence’s mind). Ralph wrote freely of them – so freely that the local sheriff offered a sizeable reward for the capture of her killer.

It’s evident that Stanley Hoppe was addicted to bloodshed yet he somehow lay low for three years after the Toledo Clubbings. Did he perhaps suffer a severe depression that robbed him of his energy or did he content himself with torturing animals? We will never know. What’s certain is that, when his deviant lust and a brief period of opportunity coincided, he stripped,raped, battered and bit his child victim before strangling her to death.

He has been described as a sadist but a true sadist would have taken his victims to a safe house where he could torture them at length, whereas Stanley Hoppe’s main modus operandi was to strike quickly then flee the scene.

G. Davis, Weston-super-Mare

Sad Poisoning Tale Of The Bravos
Thank you for this incredibly fascinating and complex story of a Victorian poisoning case in high society (“The Poison Mystery To End Them All” – MMF 110). Of course manipulative, scheming Jane Cox was responsible for Charles Bravo’s excruciating death. Charles resented his wife’s connection to this leach although I understand Jane Cox’s reluctance to leave her cushy, opulent life at the Priory, and return to her previous existence. Life was hard for unattached women in the days before the Welfare State. Mrs. Cox’s yearly salary of £100 as companion to Florence Bravo came from Florence’s own purse, so I feel Charles’s hostility towards this woman was not for financial reasons. He may have suspected an unhealthy attachment between the two women (they shared Florence’s bed before her two miscarriages whilst Charles was “dismissed” to an adjoining room – a bizarre arrangement).

Florence’s tragic premature death was caused by the grief of losing Charles, the stress caused by the two inquests, the scandal stirred up by the revelation of her previous association with Dr. Gully – and of course her body would have been weakened by the miscarriages.

A truly sad story and one more example of how astronomical wealth does not always make for happiness.

B. Waters, Inverness

Mugshot

Murder Of Queensland’s Leanne
Has Murder Most Foul ever featured the wrongful imprisonment of Graham Stafford who was convicted in 1992 of the murder in Queensland, Australia, of 12-year-old Leanne Sarah Holland?

Iris Ann Dutton, Telford

No, we’ve never featured the case. Would other readers like to know more about it?
Shortly afterwards a 59-year-old man was attacked and stabbed at his home in Hornsey, and at 8 a.m. the same day a decorator was confronted by a naked man when he arrived at an elderly couple’s £800,000 home in Highgate, north London. The intruder fled, and in the blood-spattered hallway the decorator found the bodies of Dr. Derek Robinson, a 76-year-old retired consultant paediatrician, and his wife Jean, 68, a former music teacher. They had been stabbed repeatedly and their throats had been cut.

Gonzalez was arrested at a central London tube station five hours later. After questioning he had been charged first with the Robinsons’ murders, and then with those of Mrs. Harding and Mr. Molloy, and with the attempted murders at Hilsea and Hornsey.

A JUDGE stood in the doorway of a cell beneath London’s Highbury Corner Magistrates’ Court. The prisoner lay handcuffed on the cell floor, his jaw and right eye red and swollen – he had been banging his head against the cell walls. A policeman wearing a protective vest sat on a bench beside him. Two more policemen stood outside the cell. A special court was in progress.

Deemed too dangerous to appear in the dock, the man on the floor was Daniel Gonzalez, 24, a former mental patient charged with four murders and two attempted murders.

From the doorway District Judge Dorothy Quick asked him to confirm his identity and Southwood Avenue address in Woking, Surrey. Gonzalez’s only reply was a gurgle. His solicitor stepped into the small cell to say there was no application for bail. The judge remanded Gonzalez in custody for a week, and the court’s proceedings ended.

The events which led to Daniel Gonzalez’s arrest six days earlier on September 17th, 2004, had begun on September 15th when a 61-year-old man was attacked and stabbed while out for a walk at Hilsea, near Portsmouth. Later the same day Marie Harding, a 73-year-old grandmother, was stabbed to death as she walked home from her daughter’s house in Southwick, West Sussex.

Two days later, around 5.30 a.m. on September 17th, Kevin Molloy, a 46-year-old former publican, was found dead in a street in Tottenham, north London. His throat had been cut and he had multiple stab wounds.

He killed four and scarred two for life in a terrifying, inexplicable spree of violence...
Daniel Gonzalez (far right) tried to explain his deadly actions by saying he wanted to be like movie ghoul Freddy Krueger (right).

After the special court hearing held in his cell he was taken to Broadmoor maximum-security mental hospital in Berkshire, and when his trial began at the Old Bailey on February 28th, 2006, the jury heard that he had told the police he wanted to achieve fame as a serial killer and had planned to kill at least 10 people.

Denying murder, Daniel Gonzalez admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility, the defence accepting that he was the killer. He admitted the two counts of attempted murder.

But the Crown rejected his murder denials. “Gonzalez has claimed that he was acting under the control of voices, that he was being compelled by the voices to kill. We do not accept the veracity of those claims,” said the prosecutor Mr. Richard Horwell.

The DNA of one victim was later found on an ice hockey goalkeeper’s mask Gonzalez had dumped with other belongings at a London railway station. It resembled one worn by the serial killer in the film Friday the 13th, and Mr. Horwell told the jury: “It gives rise to the question of why on earth did he have that mask – a terrifying item in circumstances such as these.”

When the trial continued the next day the court heard that Gonzalez had told the police of his obsession with Freddy Krueger, a character in the film A Nightmare on Elm Street who kills his victims with a glove bristling with knives.

In London the next day he stole two kitchen knives from the Oxford Street store of John Lewis, and at 5.20 the following morning he waylaid Mr. Molloy in Tottenham High Road, using both knives to kill him with stab wounds in the stomach, chest, neck and face.

Shortly before 7 a.m. he forced his way into the home of the Hornsey victim, stabbing him in the chest and arm, before going to Highgate and killing Dr. and Mrs. Robinson an hour later.

The DNA of one victim was later found on an ice hockey goalkeeper’s mask Gonzalez had dumped with other belongings at a London railway station. It resembled one worn by the serial killer in the film Friday the 13th, and Mr. Horwell told the jury: “It gives rise to the question of why on earth did he have that mask – a terrifying item in circumstances such as these.”

When Gonzalez’s home was searched detectives found a magazine entitled Freddy Krueger’s Nightmares, and Mr. Horwell said: “The defendant told the interviewing police officers that at home he used to watch a lot of horror films and that he had wondered what it would be like to be Freddy...
Krueger for a day. Then a little later, perhaps appreciating his error, he said it was the voices that had told him to be Freddy Krueger.

Describing how the Robinsons’ deaths were discovered by a decorator, the prosecutor told the jury: “As he entered he saw the two bodies lying in the hallway and a large amount of blood on the walls and elsewhere. At the same time the decorator saw the defendant walk from the kitchen to the stairs. The defendant was preparing to take a shower to wash the blood off his body and he was therefore naked. He said something like ‘Sorry about this, mate.’”

As the decorator went for help, said Mr. Horwell, Gonzalez fled after searching drawers for cash. He had deep cuts in his hands and a cut lip, and he went to University College Hospital for treatment, giving a false name and saying he had received the injuries from broken glass. When he left he was followed, the police were alerted, and after his arrest he admitted killing the Robinsons. “As soon as I got in there,” he told detectives, “I had a breather and I thought, ‘OK, got it into my head. Ready, steady, go,’ and then I did it.”

In a locker at King’s Cross station he had left items including a note saying into my head. Ready, steady, go,’ and then I did it.”

Describing the attack on the man in Hornsey, Mr. Horwell said: “Fighting for his life, the victim took hold of the hand which held the knife and attempted to twist it. The defendant tried to bite his hand, and the victim bit the defendant’s neck.”

In a statement read to the court the Hornsey man’s wife said she was in bed with her husband when they heard glass breaking. Her husband went to investigate, telling her to stay in the bedroom, but she followed him and saw him grappling with an intruder.

“Both were fighting in the corridor. He tried to push the knife into my husband’s heart. My husband hit the man and for that reason it went into his upper arm. I got my slippers. I was in the corridor and hit that man with the slippers.”

She ran outside screaming for help, the court was told, as Gonzalez ran off. He then took a taxi to a hardware shop where he managed to buy another knife although he was covered in blood. Then he headed for his next victims in Highgate.

The court was told that, while on remand at Broadmoor, Gonzalez sat silently in the defendant’s cell, looking aggressive and said, “Sorry about that.”

Asked about Marie Harding’s killing, Gonzalez replied: “I felt clean, orgasmic. I had washed all the crap out of my life. I felt better. This was something to live for. It was a really good buzz. I felt like a superhero.”

What had prompted his three-day killing spree? “I wished that life was just fantasy,” Gonzalez said. “I’m just a teenage kid, man. I like skateboarding. I didn’t want to grow up. I didn’t want to do anything.”

Starting to weep, he continued: “It was very bad. I’ve had a really shit life. I don’t know what to do. I’m going to kill myself. I’m a little baby and I don’t feel very well. I just wanted to hurt someone, I just wanted to kill someone...

“I haven’t had a job for four years, I haven’t had a girl friend for ages. I couldn’t handle growing up to be a man. I was just sitting around playing PlayStation. I just couldn’t handle any more…I want to do the time. I want to get locked up. In fact I should go in the electric chair.”

Asked about Marie Harding’s killing, he said: “My head was in the clouds. I couldn’t just jump up and I went ‘woomph.’ I stuck it all the way in. It was such a long knife, the bloke had no chance, the poor guy, absolutely no chance. I stabbed him once and stabbed him again. I wanted to kill him quickly so I stuck it in his throat so he would just run out of oxygen really quickly. I think one of them could have gone through his heart.”

He said he had also bitten off one of Dr. Robinson’s fingers.

“Then the woman. I went like that – bang, bang – into her chest. She was really strong and I started feeling really sorry for her. I went through her throat. I stabbed her lots of times in the heart because I wanted her to die quickly.

“I just kept screaming, ‘Die quickly, die quickly, die quickly!’ She was just screaming for God and that.”

After one killing, Gonzalez “felt clean, orgasmic. I had washed all the crap out of my life. I felt better. This was something to live for. It was a really good buzz. I felt like a superhero”.

On the trial’s fourth day the jury was told that Gonzalez had assaulted several police officers after he was arrested. While he was being fingerprinted he punched a detective in the face, splitting his lip, and in the police station’s shower area he hit another officer in the face.

“I said, ‘Why did you do that?’” the victim, Detective Constable Stephen Ridley, testified. “He suddenly stopped looking aggressive and said, ‘Sorry about that.’”

The court was told that Gonzalez also aimed blows at officers on two other occasions, and in video footage he was seen throwing a hot drink in the face of a policewoman.

Flanked by five staff from Broadmoor, Gonzalez sat silently in the dock to watch 6th as tapes of his interviews with the police were played.

Describing the deaths of the Robinsons, he said: “I had no idea who they were. It was just the first place I went to. I wanted to kill someone. It was just the luck of the draw that I went into their house.”

The bloodstained knives Gonzalez used to make his frenzied attacks

DNA was found on the ice hockey mask that Gonzalez wore. Why would he have it, if he did not have murder in mind?

He had used a 12-inch kitchen knife to kill them, and he told detectives: “I just jumped up and I went ‘woomph.’ I stuck it all the way in. It was such a long knife, the bloke had no chance, the poor guy, absolutely no chance. I stabbed him once and stabbed him again. I wanted to kill him quickly so I stuck it in his throat so he would just run out of oxygen really quickly. I think one of them could have gone through his heart.”

He said he had also bitten off one of Dr. Robinson’s fingers.

“When the woman. I went like that – bang, bang – into her chest. She was really strong and I started feeling really sorry for her. I went through her throat. I stabbed her lots of times in the heart because I wanted her to die quickly.

“I just kept screaming, ‘Die quickly, die quickly, die quickly!’ She was just screaming for God and that.”

Asked about Marie Harding’s killing, Gonzalez replied: “I felt clean, orgasmic. I had washed all the crap out of my life. I felt better. This was something to live for. It was a really good buzz. I felt like a superhero.”

What had prompted his three-day killing spree? “I wished that life was just fantasy,” Gonzalez said. “I’m just a teenage kid, man. I like skateboarding. I didn’t want to grow up. I didn’t want to do anything.”

Starting to weep, he continued: “It was very bad. I’ve had a really shit life. I don’t know what to do. I’m going to kill myself. I’m a little baby and I don’t feel very well. I just wanted to hurt someone, I just wanted to kill someone...

“I haven’t had a job for four years, I haven’t had a girl friend for ages. I couldn’t handle growing up to be a man. I was just sitting around playing PlayStation. I just couldn’t handle any more…I want to do the time. I want to get locked up. In fact I should go in the electric chair.”

Asked about Marie Harding’s killing, he said: “My head was in the clouds. I couldn’t just jump up and I went ‘woomph.’ I stuck it all the way in. It was such a long knife, the bloke had no chance, the poor guy, absolutely no chance. I stabbed him once and stabbed him again. I wanted to kill him quickly so I stuck it in his throat so he would just run out of oxygen really quickly. I think one of them could have gone through his heart.”
venoms in his wrists. Emergency blood transfusions were needed, and Dr. Edward Petch, a Broadmoor consultant psychiatrist, said: “I have never seen anyone bite himself with that ferocity. He allegedly had killed four people and tried to kill six, and we all felt there was one more left. That was himself, and he would not stop until he had succeeded.”

Gonzalez was a schizophrenic, said Dr. Petch. But Dr. Philip Joseph, another consultant psychiatrist who examined him, said he was not mentally ill, he just had a personality disorder. “He told me, ‘I wanted to kill people because I was bored and wanted to know what it felt like.’”

Gonzalez was a psychopath who “killed because of the cold, callous person he is,” said the prosecutor. “It is his very personality that led him to kill people because I was bored and wanted to know what it felt like.”

An hour later they unanimously found Gonzalez guilty on all six charges. They found him guilty of murder, of the Crown Prosecution Service, and he was one more left. That was himself, and he would not stop until he had succeeded.”

Finally, on March 16th the jury retired to deliberate whether Gonzalez was mad or just plain bad. An hour later they unanimously found him guilty on all six charges. They had decided he was a drug-crazed, cold-blooded murderer, and not suffering from mental illness as his defence claimed.

He showed no emotion on hearing the verdicts. “I think I will be out in eight to ten years,” he had told a psychiatrist at Broadmoor, but on March 17th he learned he would die behind bars.

“In this case life should mean life,” Judge Ann Goddard told him, giving him six life sentences. Because of the seriousness of the offences, she said, whole-life orders would be made in respect of each of the murder sentences.

“You brought unspeakable misery and grief to the families of those you killed. When you set out to kill you armed yourself with a knife. You chose where to kill in places where there would be no witnesses, and you chose to kill those you considered vulnerable.”

The two men who survived his attacks had been left mentally scarred, “as have the families of those you killed as your actions have put fear into their lives,” said the judge. “It does not take any imagination at all to know how they have been affected by the events we have been hearing about – that includes the defendant’s family as well.”

Gonzalez had become the 29th offender in England and Wales to be given a whole-life tariff, and he was taken back to Broadmoor where he was already considered one of the most dangerous patients.

At his boarding school in Surrey he had gained eight GCSEs, become a skilled chess-player and shown talent as an actor, telling friends that one day he would be famous.

While awaiting trial he had posted a message on the school’s page on the Friends Reunited website: “I have been charged with four murders and attempted murder. Not bad, hey. Well at least you can all say you went to school with someone famous.”

In Broadmoor, Gonzalez attempted to kill himself by biting himself to death. He survived but committed suicide in August 2007 by slicing his wrists with the edges of a CD case.

MAD, BAD – OR BOTH?

DANIEL GONZALEZ’S mother was desperately worried. The behaviour of her mentally unstable son was becoming increasingly ominous. First he had run down the street naked, and now she had found her carving knives laid out in the kitchen as if he’d been looking for the sharpest. Before leaving the house he’d left a crazed three-page note.

She called the police, asking them to lock him up before he hurt someone. They couldn’t find him, and they couldn’t do anything anyway, they said, as he hadn’t committed an offence.

At her wits’ end, she phoned the social worker assigned to looking after Daniel. He was going off duty, and advised her to call the police if she was really worried.

Daniel had scratches on his neck and arm when he came home in the evening two days later. He’d got the scratches clearing a friend’s garden, he told her. A few hours earlier he had committed his first murder.

Although he had a very high IQ he had writing disabilities, and as a boy he was diagnosed as having a neurological disorder. At his primary school he was recalled as having been “incredibly disruptive.” He began taking drugs in his early teens, and was cautioned by the police for biting a bus driver’s face.

In 1998 Gonzalez was sectioned, diagnosed as schizophrenic, and spent seven months in a medium-secure psychiatric unit after he threatened a carer with a knife.

He stopped taking his medication two years later, saying its side effects were making him shake and dribble, and he turned instead to cannabis and other drugs, reverting to his former condition.

Gonzalez’s mother made repeated appeals for help. “Does Daniel have to murder or be murdered before he gets the treatment he so badly needs?” she asked in a letter to the director of Surrey social services.

In a statement issued after Gonzalez’s trial, the Surrey and Borders Partnership NHS Trust said it was very difficult to diagnose him precisely because he was a drug-user who admitted feigning illness. “These incidents were not preceded by a history of violence and the Trust does not believe that his actions could have been predicted.”

That may well be so, but did the jury get it right? What are we to make of it?

Some of us may be surprised that a “personality disorder” that prompts someone to go out and kill four complete strangers at random is not considered to be madness. And we may be even more surprised to see someone adjudged sane committed to Broadmoor, a mental hospital for the criminally insane. If Daniel Gonzalez was sane, as the jury concluded, what was he doing there?
Graeme was a well-mannered and responsible eight-year-old. His disappearance shocked the nation.

FROM LOTTERY WIN TO KIDNAP AND MURDER

IT WAS the end of the Age of Innocence. And it was the dawn of modern-day forensic science. Criminal investigation in Australia would never be the same again. So many individuals were involved, each bringing different skills, and it was this intricate teamwork that set an important pattern for the future.

What had looked like a mystery that might never be solved was slowly, piece by minute piece, unwrapped to reveal the cold-blooded killer of an innocent little boy.

The kidnap and killing of Graeme Thorne outraged the whole country. Australia demanded action. And, after weeks of painstaking and laborious investigation, police finally got their man – on the other side of the Indian Ocean.

The country breathed a sigh of relief that the country’s first kidnap-for-ransom case had been solved. But the case changed the country. Never again would parents let their youngsters go off to play all day in the hills and forests of the vast country without a worry in the world.

The kidnapping of the eight-year-old who lived at Bondi, in the eastern suburbs of Sydney, and the long search for him, changed the lives of virtually everyone.

In future, parents, grandparents, guardians, teachers and neighbours...
would be wary and watchful. Those with young children in their care would keep them close. Very close.

The Thorne case began on the morning of July 7th, 1960. Freda Thorne finished getting Graeme ready for school and at 8.25 a.m. she handed him his school case and watched him walk to the corner of the street, where he was to be met at 8.30 by a family friend who would drive him to school with her own children.

Mrs. Thorne returned to her housework, humming a little tune. She figured she was just about the happiest woman in Australia because, five weeks earlier, on June 1st, her husband had won first prize – 100,000 Australian pounds, tax-free – in a state-sponsored lottery to raise money for the building of Sydney Opera House. It would be well over £3 million today.

Bazil Thorne, a travelling salesman,

On June 1st, her husband had won first prize – 100,000 Australian pounds, tax-free – in a state-sponsored lottery to raise money for the building of Sydney Opera House. It would be well over £3 million today.

was a sober, sensible man. He put the prize money in the bank and went about his job until he and his wife decided how best to use the money.

As Freda Thorne tidied up the kitchen of her suburban rented home, she let herself dream of a cruise to foreign lands, a new home, new clothes, a new car...

The doorbell rang.

Her friend who drove the children to school asked if Graeme was ready. Mrs. Thorne looked at her in some surprise. “He left here over five minutes ago. Wasn’t he waiting for you at the corner?”

“No, he wasn’t there. He’s probably somewhere around. I’ll look.” So the young woman drove back to the corner. There, a shopkeeper told her that Graeme had come in a few minutes previously and bought a bag of crisps.

She drove around the district, but could not find the boy anywhere. “I can’t understand it,” she told the boy’s mother anxiously. “He seems to have disappeared.”

Graeme Thorne had indeed disappeared. During the weeks that followed, the No. 1 assignment of every police officer in Australia was to find the boy – and to bring to justice the person, or persons, who had abducted him from a busy street in suburban Bondi that July morning.

It was the first time in Australian
history that a child had been kidnapped for ransom. The country did not even have adequate laws for the prosecution of kidnappers.

Throughout late 1960, the Graeme Thorne abduction was the biggest news story in Australia – and the newspapers splashed each new development.

Graeme, big for his age, had dark hair and was stocky. Quiet-mannered and cool-headed, he had a sense of responsibility. Being brought up in a secure, happy home, he was friendly and inclined to trust people. Freda Thorne believed that, while waiting for the car on the street corner, he had got to talking with a stranger and somehow been persuaded to go off with him.

Bazil Thorne was out of town on a selling trip, so Mrs. Thorne frantically phoned the police. A few minutes later, Detective Sergeant Larry O’Shea arrived from the Bondi police station.

Freda told him her fears. “Graeme would not wander off by himself,” she said. “Someone must have picked him up in a car.”

Then she told the officer about the money her husband had won. O’Shea tensed.

Freda’s young friend said she had been taking Graeme to school every day for two months. “He’s been waiting for me at that corner every single morning, sitting on his school case.”

O’Shea said that the police would begin looking for the boy at once. Freda Thorne produced a recent photograph of Graeme. She said he was wearing his grey school uniform, consisting of a cap, short trousers and a jacket with a blue lion emblem on the pocket. He was carrying a school case which contained his books, a raincoat and a lunch of sandwiches and an apple. His name was written on a tag fixed inside the case.

O’Shea jotted down the description, then asked to use the phone. Just as Freda Thorne led him towards the phone, it began to ring. She picked it up and heard a man’s voice, soft and low-pitched, with a slight foreign accent. “Is that you, Mrs. Thorne?”

“Yes,” she replied. “Who is this?” “I have your boy,” the voice said. “Is your husband there?”

Freda Thorne fought back her panic. “Just a moment,” she said. She turned to O’Shea. “I – I think it’s Graeme’s kidnapper,” she whispered. “He wants to talk to my husband.”

O’Shea took the phone. “Yes? This is Thorne,” he said. “I’ve got your boy,” said the voice with the foreign accent. “I want 25,000 pounds by 5 o’clock today – or I’ll feed your boy to the sharks!”

O’Shea, thinking quickly, tried to play time. He was even hoping to trace the call. “Where am I going to get that sort of money?” he asked.

The voice said: “You’ve got that much. You’ve got plenty. You’ve just won 100,000 pounds. I want 25,000 by 5 o’clock today. You will hear from me again this afternoon.”

“Perhaps I can get the cash by then,” the detective-sergeant began. But the caller had hung up.

Within an hour, the streets of the seaside suburb were swarming with police cars. Dozens of officers, under the direction of Detective Inspector Alfred Windsor, acting head of the CIB (Criminal Investigation Branch), questioned all residents near the corner shop where the boy had last been seen. Pedestrians were stopped and questioned.

The owner of the corner shop told police that Graeme had been coming in practically every morning to buy a bag of crisps. “He was here this morning, as usual,” the shopkeeper said. “Then he went out to the corner and sat on his school case, eating the crisps, while he waited for the lady to come and pick him up.”

He hadn’t noticed anyone talking to the lad or any strange cars parked up.

Windsor later learned from Mr. Thorne’s employers that he was in the town of Dunnedah, 200 miles north of Sydney. He rushed home and waited for another phone call.

The Sydney afternoon papers soon appeared on the streets with headline stories of the kidnapping and, from then on, the phone rang constantly. Some of the calls were from reporters and radio and TV stations. Others were from well-meaning citizens who thought they may have useful information. Others were from the curious and the cranks. The kidnapper didn’t call.

Accompanied by police, a dazed, broken-hearted Bazil Thorne went to a Sydney TV station, where he broadcast a nationwide appeal over radio and TV. “The kidnapper will get his money if he will return my boy safely,” he said. “If this man is a father of children, I appeal

The metallic blue 1955 Ford Customline used in the kidnapping

The store where Graeme bought his crisps on the way to school. He was abducted from this corner
to him as another father – for God’s sake, send my son back in one piece."

But that night and the following morning passed with no further word from the kidnapper. By then, there was hardly a person in Australia who did not know of the kidnapping. People everywhere had seen Graeme’s picture on TV and were on the lookout for him.

The following morning, police got what appeared to be their first break in the case. An elderly man, out for a stroll in French’s Forest, in a northern suburb of Sydney, found the boy’s empty school case.

It lay behind some rocks, only a short distance from a main road. Detectives were convinced that it had been thrown from a passing car. About a mile and a half north, officers came upon some articles scattered in the bushes. They included a plastic raincoat and a school cap, both bearing the kidnapped boy’s name; and a plastic lunch bag containing an apple.

On July 10th, Mrs. Freda Thorne rallied sufficiently to send for Police Chief Ron Walden.

“I’ve been thinking back,” she said. “One evening about three weeks ago, a strange man came to the door. He said he was a private detective and asked me if a Mr. Bognor lived here. I told him that I didn’t know anyone by that name. Now that I think of it, there was something rather strange about him.”

Walden privately thought that there was certainly something strange about someone who began his inquiries by announcing that he was a private detective. “And there was something else – he had a foreign accent,” she said.

She described the visitor as between 30 and 40 years old, of average height, but thick-set and sturdy. He had dark, wavy hair, heavy eyebrows and a sallow complexion. He had a foreign appearance. He was wearing a sports coat and light-coloured slacks. His manner was quite pleasant and courteous. “She didn’t notice a car. On the following day, an engaged couple appeared at Sydney police headquarters and were ushered into the office of New South Wales Police Commissioner Colin Delaney. The young woman said that on July 7th – the morning of the kidnapping – her fiancé had driven her to work as usual.

“Before I do anything, I must have a description of the man who called on Mrs. Thorne – and I believe it could have been the same man.”

The young man verified his fiancée’s description of the man and the car. Neither had noticed the licence number of the car, nor had they observed whether there was a boy in it. But both were sure that the car was a metallic blue Ford Customline.

After Delaney conferred with Walden, it was decided to search vehicle licence records for blue Customline Fords and question everyone in the Sydney area who owned such a car.

The most puzzling aspect of the case was that the kidnapper had made no further attempt to contact Mr. Thorne about the payment of a ransom. On the advice of police, the desperate father had withdrawn 25,000 pounds from his bank account and was keeping it in readiness in his home.

In the days that followed, three people – a housewife, a bricklayer and a Chinese laundryman – reported that they had seen a stocky, wavy-haired man sitting on a park bench across from the Thorne home several times before the kidnapping.

On July 18th, after having received a score of phone calls from cranks and crackpots, Bazil Thorne received a call from a man who spoke with a foreign accent. He sounded sincere. “I know where your son is being held,” the man said. “I think I can negotiate for his return.”

Thorne asked the man what his proposal was. But the latter told him: “Before I do anything, I must have a small payment to show your good faith. There is a certain fish shop in Merrylands. I want you to leave a package containing a hundred pounds in small bills there. I will pick it up. Then I’ll contact you again.”

On police advice, Thorne drove to the fish shop and left a parcel containing blank paper. No attempt was made to collect it, however, so the police believed that the phone caller was an opportunist who had hoped to pick up a little spare change – then lost his nerve.

There were other attempts to make money out of the tragedy. Twice Mrs. Thorne was ordered to take the ransom money to Brisbane but it all came to nothing. By now thousands of pounds were being offered as a reward.

On the afternoon of August 16th five children were playing in a scrub-grown, refuse-littered vacant site in the suburb of Seaforth, not far from where the school case bad been found.

That evening at supper, one of the boys told his father that they had found a blanket “with something hard in it” under a protruding rock in the vacant land. The father went to investigate. He unfastened two knots which had
been tied in the red-and-blue blanket and saw a head and two small arms. He ran back home and phoned the police.

Three detectives from nearby Manly arrived and finished unwrapping the bundle. It contained the badly decomposed body of a boy about eight years old, dressed in grey shorts and a grey blazer with a blue lion emblem on it.

The boy’s hands and feet had been tightly bound with twine, while there was a dark blue scarf tied around his neck. The officers knew they were looking at the dead body of Graeme Thorne. They put through an immediate call to Sydney police HQ. Bazil and Freda Thorne were informed that a boy’s body had been found. Then the police drove Mr. Thorne to the morgue. He broke down in tears as he identified the body as that of his son.

Early next morning 100 detectives and police officers gathered at the vacant site. While some of them cut through the bush and conducted a minute search, others fanned out through the suburb and made a door-to-door canvass of residents. The police effort in the area developed no clues. But the experts at the morgue had greater success. The autopsy, conducted by Dr. C. E. Percy and Dr. John Laing, showed that Graeme had sustained a skull fracture at the back of the head, apparently from a heavy blow. The condition of the lungs also indicated suffocation.

The doctors stated that the boy might have died from either of these causes, or from a combination of them. He had been dead for at least five weeks. Very possibly, he had met death on the same day that he was kidnapped.

While the doctors examined the body, Detective Sergeant Alan Clark, head of the CIB scientific squad, went to work on the boy’s clothing and the blanket. With painstaking thoroughness, he went over the blanket with a vacuum-cleaner and deposited the dust and other matter into a glass jar. He repeated the process with the boy’s clothing. On the various articles, he found hair, soil, mortar and fragments of dead leaves of shrubs.

Clark submitted the samples to three leading Australian experts – Dr. Cameron Cramp of the Sydney Medico-Legal Laboratory, Dr. Joyce Vickery of the Agriculture Department, and Dr. Whitworth of the Geological and Mining Museum.

Other detectives succeeded in tracing the blanket to a woollen mill in South Australia. Officials there stated that only a few hundred blankets of that particular pattern had been manufactured. Most of them had been sold to dealers in New South Wales. But, unfortunately, they had no way of checking on the sale of a particular blanket.
Meanwhile, the hunt for the suspicious car had been continuing. After checking through the registrations of more than 200,000 cars in Greater Sydney, the police had found that there were about 200 blue 1955 Customline Fords registered in the area. Detectives were sent to question the owners of each of these cars.

On August 24th, Detective Sergeant Brian Doyle visited a factory in Darlinghurst, where he spoke to a man named Stephen Bradley, an electroplater, 34 years old – a handsome, sturdily-built man with slightly wavy dark brown hair. Doyle asked if he owned a 1955 Customline Ford. “Yes. It’s AY0-382,” Bradley replied. Speaking with a slight foreign accent, he went on to tell Doyle that he was a naturalised Australian citizen of Hungarian birth – and that he was married with three children. He had changed his name from Baranyay, he said.

“You can tell me where you were on the morning of July 7th?” Doyle asked.

“What day was that?” Bradley asked.

“It was a Thursday – the day of the Thorne kidnapping.”

“I remember that day,” Bradley said, after a moment’s thought. “It was the day I moved from my home in Moore Street, Clontarf, to the new place I bought in Manly.”

Doyle asked what he did that day.

“Well, I took the day off from my job. I didn’t get up very early – maybe about 8 o’clock. I had breakfast. Then I helped my wife and children get ready to leave. They flew to Hayman Island that day for a holiday. I saw them off in a taxi at 10 o’clock.

“Then I was busy around the house, until the removal men came at 11. I worked with them all afternoon. I even helped them carry the piano out. We didn’t finish until nearly 5 o’clock.”

“Where was your Ford all that time?” Doyle asked.

“It was in my garage.”

“Did you drive to Bondi at any time during the day?”

“No, I certainly did not.”

After asking Bradley a few more questions, Doyle thanked him for his help and left. The electroplater’s answers had been prompt and straightforward, and Doyle saw no particular reason to suspect the man. Bradley had no police record. He was, apparently, a prosperous citizen who lived a quiet family life. There were plenty of people in Sydney with slight foreign accents.

However, the detective drove round to Bradley’s former home in Clontarf where he spoke to a young man who said he had bought the house from Bradley and moved in on July 9th. “I talked to Bradley several times and he seemed a fine chap, very successful in his work,” the man said. “He needed a larger house, because his children were growing up.”

So Doyle checked Bradley off his list and continued his canvass of Customline owners.

During the next week, the police were at a virtual standstill in the case. And then the reports of the scientists were submitted. Dr. Cramp reported that the hair found on the blanket and the boy’s clothing was of two types – human hair and dog hair. The human hair was brown and not over three inches long. The dog hair appeared to have come from some soft-coated animal with hair at least four inches long. It was of a reddish colour, though lighter at the roots. Dr. Cramp suggested that it was from a Pekingese, or a dog of a similar type.

Dr. Vickery reported that the boy’s clothing and the blanket had contained fragments of the leaves of two flowering shrubs not ordinarily found in the Sydney area. She had visited the vacant site and had not found the shrubs there. She believed that they might have come from the garden of a private home.

Dr. Whitworth’s report stated that, while the blanket and clothing contained soil of the type found in the vacant site, they also contained soil of an entirely different type, which clearly came from some other location.

Detective Sergeant Clark, of the scientific bureau, presented these reports to Walden and Delaney. The soil and the leafy material indicated that the boy had been taken to an unknown place. There, either before or after his death, Graeme had apparently been lying on the ground. Later, his dead body had been bundled into the blanket and taken, probably in a car, to the vacant site. The kidnapper had then thrown away the boy’s belongings in French’s Forest.

The officers saw no reason to think that Graeme Thorne had ever been taken out of the Sydney area and were sure the kidnapper was a local man. They assigned more than 200 detectives to the task of checking every private home in Seaforth and nearby suburbs for shrubbery of the type of the leaves found.

This search was conducted patiently and methodically throughout September. With no new leads, the kidnapping lost the big headlines. Many people thought it would never be solved.

Then Detective Inspector Edward Freeman, now in active charge of the case, hit on a new line of approach. He realised that owners of blue Customline Fords had been checked before the police had received the reports from the scientists. Freeman now ordered that the homes of all these car owners be revisited and the shrubbery carefully examined.

And so, on October 3rd, Detective George Shiel went to the house in Clontarf where Stephen Bradley had formerly lived. He introduced himself to the new owner of the house, then asked to see the garage. As they approached it, he noticed two large flowering shrubs of different types, one on either side of the door. He compared the leaves with photographs of leaves taken from the murder blanket. They looked identical.

“Do dead leaves from these bushes ever blow into the garage?” he asked the new owner.
The family’s clothing and other personal effects were well-furnished and in good order, so the officers went in. The rooms were tidy, and the kitchen was clean. Bradley asked where the Bradleys now were. The man said, “The last time I saw them was a week ago on Sunday. That would be September 23rd.”

The officers called in Detective Sergeant Doyle, who supplied the address to which Bradley had moved – 49 Osborne Road in Manly. Freeman, Doyle and Shiell drove there at once. The house proved to be a large two-family residence. Bradley’s name was on the ground-floor bell, but there was no answer. They tried the bell and were admitted to the upstairs flat by a young man who told the officers he had moved into the flat on July 30th. He had talked to Stephen Bradley several times and had also met his wife and their three children.

“Where are the Bradleys now?” Freeman asked.

“They must have gone away,” the man said. “The last time I saw them was a week ago on Sunday. That would be September 25th. Bradley’s car is gone, too.”

“Did the Bradleys have a dog?” Shiell asked.

“Yes, they had a young Pekingese, a nice little animal. I saw Bradley take it somewhere in his car on Saturday.”

He said he had a key to the Bradley flat, so the officers went in. The rooms were well-furnished and in good order, but it was soon evident that most of the family’s clothing and other personal belongings had been removed. Water, electricity and phone had been shut off, as though the Bradleys were planning an extended absence.

Then the officers made a significant discovery – a small notebook, in which local phone numbers had been jotted down. Leaping through the book, Freeman noticed a number for a veterinary surgeon in Darlington. The officers drove to the address and talked to the kennel manager.

“Stephen Bradley left his Pekingese, Cherry, with us on September 24th,” the man said. “He asked us to keep her for an indefinite period while the family was away.”

“Did he say where he was going?” Freeman asked.

“Yes, he left his address.” The manager consulted a notebook. “He will be at 6 Almond Court, Bayswater Road, London, England.”

“Did he say when he planned to leave for England?”

“He didn’t say, but I assumed he was leaving very soon.”

Back at headquarters, Freeman got on the phone to all airlines flying from Sydney, but none of them had had a booking for the Bradley family. Then he tried the P&O Steamship Line. He was told that Stephen Bradley and his wife and their children had sailed for England on the steamer *Himalaya* on September 26th.

As the investigation took a new turn, Detective Sergeant Clark went with Dr. Cramp and a group of detectives and technicians to Bradley’s home in Manly. There, they vacuumed a mat and took hair samples from a comb and a brilliantine bottle. Then technicians, searching outside the house, discovered a roll of exposed 35-millimetre film in a dustbin. Clark processed the film and found several shots of a woman and three children having a picnic on a red-and-blue checked blanket.

The blanket appeared identical to the one in which Graeme Thorne’s body had been wrapped. The young man from next door later identified the people in the photograph as Bradley’s wife and their three children.

Later that day, police found Bradley’s blue Ford Customline at a dealer’s in Granville, to whom he had sold it. The car was towed to the Bondi police station, where Clark and his men found soil, hair and leaves of shrubs in the boot. Drs. Cramp, Vickery and Whitworth were given samples to compare with specimens found on the blanket – and in the two houses where the suspect had lived.

Three days later, the experts’ analyses were completed. The dog hair found on the murder blanket was identical with the hair of Bradley’s Pekingese. The brown human hair found on the blanket was identical with brown hair found in a brush in the boot of Bradley’s car and in the bathroom of his Manly house.

The leaves of shrubs found outside Bradley’s garage in Bondi matched leaves found on the murder blanket. Earth and mortar taken from under the Bondi house matched the earth and mortar on Graeme’s clothing. Twine found in Bradley’s garden was identical with the twine used to tie the boy’s hands and feet.

A photograph of Bradley was obtained from his former employers. This was shown, along with photos of a dozen other men, to Freda Thorne. She picked out Bradley as the “private detective” who had visited her home asking for “Mr. Bognor” before the kidnapping. Next, the engaged couple picked out Bradley as the man they had seen standing beside the blue Customline at the scene of the kidnapping.

Soon afterwards, the police traced the taxi-driver who had picked up Mrs. Bradley and her children in Bondi at 10 a.m. on the day of the kidnapping. He stated that Stephen Bradley did not see his family off that morning. They had carried their own luggage to the taxi and he had not seen a man anywhere. Bradley had apparently lied to Doyle about his activities that morning.

It was now October 8th. According to P&O officials, the *Himalaya* was in the Indian Ocean and due the following day...
in Colombo, Ceylon [now Sri Lanka]. Walden cabled the police at Colombo, asking them to arrest Stephen Bradley aboard ship and hold him there, pending arrival of a warrant charging him with kidnapping and murder. Bradley's wife and children were not to be detained.

At Colombo, Inspector A.E. Stephenson and other officers came aboard the Himalaya and took Bradley into custody. He was taken to court, where the prosecutor asked for a provisional arrest warrant under Ceylon's fugitive ordinance, pending arrival of an Australian warrant and a request for extradition. The magistrate granted the warrant and Bradley was led off to jail.

He was later permitted to return to the ship briefly and talk to his wife. He urged her to go on to England with the children and she agreed to do so.

Bradley was held in Colombo for more than a month, sleeping on a straw mat and eating food consisting mostly of rice. Meanwhile, an extradition hearing was held in Sydney, at which the police prosecutor called more than 50 witnesses.

On October 20th, the magistrate decided that there was a strong presumption that Stephen Leslie Bradley had kidnapped and murdered Graeme Thorne. He ordered that the testimony of the witnesses and a murder warrant be forwarded to the court in Ceylon to secure Bradley's extradition. He was flown back to Sydney four weeks later.

During the journey, according to Doyle, Bradley turned to him abruptly and said: “I have wanted to talk to the police for a long time, but the lawyer assigned to me in Ceylon would not allow it. I have done this thing to the Thorne boy, you know. I want to tell about it.”

Detective-Sergeant Brian Doyle said he got a confession from the suspect during the flight home.

When they arrived at police headquarters in Sydney, however, Bradley wrote out a statement in longhand in the presence of the two detectives. This is the statement, exactly as written:

I have read in the newspaper that Mr. Thorne won the first prize in the Opera-house Lottery. I decided that I would kidnap his son, I knew the address from the Newspaper and I have got their phone number from the telephone exchange. I went to the house to see them, I have asked for someone but can not remember what name. Mrs. Thorne said she did not know that name...

I watched the Thorne boy leaving the house and seen him for about three mornings and I have seen where he went and one morning I have followed him to the School at Bellevue Hill. One or two mornings I have seen a woman pick him up and take him to School. On the day we moved from Clontarf I went out to Edgared Street.

I parked the car in a Street, I don't know the name of the street it is off Wellington Street, I have got out from the car and I waited on the corner until the boy walked down to the car. I have told the boy that I am to take him to the school. He said why, where is the Lady. I said she is sick and can not come today.

Then the boy got in the car and I drove him around for a while and over harbour bridge. I went to a public phone box near the spit bridge and I rang the Thorns. I talked to Mrs. Thorne and to a man who said he was the boys father. I have asked for 25,000 pounds from the boys mother and father. I told them that if I don't get the money I feed him to the Sharks and I have told them I ring later.

I took the boy in the car home to Clontarf and I put the car in my garage. I told the boy to get out of the car to come and see another boy. When he got out of the car I have put a scarf over his mouth and put him in the boot of the car and slammed the boot. I went in my house and the furniture remover came, a few minutes later.

When it was nearly dark, I went to the car and found the boy was dead. That night I tied the boy up with string and put him in my rug. I put the boy in the boot of the Ford Car again, and then I threw his case and cap near Waitany Bay and I put the boy on a vacant lotment near the house I went to see with a astate agent, to buy it sometime before.

It was signed: S.L. Bradley.

After Bradley had signed the statement, the detectives summoned Detective Inspector Windsor.

Bradley assured him that he had given the statement voluntarily. He denied, however, that he had struck the boy, fracturing his skull, and stated that he must have hit his head on the spare-tyre rack. He also denied that he had attempted to strangle the boy, saying that he had tied the blue scarf around his mouth to keep him from crying out.

Bradley arrested in Ceylon by local authorities.

The following day, Bradley was put in a police line-up with 13 other men of similar age and appearance. Freda Thorne picked him out at once as the man who had visited her home. The young engaged couple also identified him as the man they had seen on the corner where the boy was kidnapped.

Bradley was then taken out in a police car. He showed the officers where he had parked, waiting for Graeme to arrive on July 7th. He then directed them over the route he had taken with the boy through Bondi Junction and across the bridge to the Spit area. He showed the police a telephone booth from which he had called Mrs. Thorne while the boy sat quietly in the car. He said the boy did not resist him at any time.

When he was taken to his garage in Bondi, Bradley's composure broke down at last and he pleaded, “I don’t want to go in there! That’s where I did it!”

He told the officers that, during the afternoon, he had gone out to phone the Thorne home again, but he saw the newspaper headlines about the kidnapping and became frightened.

“I phoned the house again and a man answered,” he said. “But I was too scared to say much. I hung up right away.”

Bradley said that, after returning home and finding the boy dead, he carried the body from the car boot and hid it under his porch. Then, at about 9 o’clock that evening, he wrapped it in the blanket and drove it to the vacant site. Then he threw away the boy’s belongings in French’s Forest. He said he knew of the vacant site because, during the spring, he had visited the house next door as he had considered buying it.

On March 29th, 1961, after an eight-day trial, an all-male jury found Bradley guilty as charged. Stephen Leslie Bradley had admitted the kidnapping and an abortive attempt to collect the ransom, but denied killing the child. The jury set his sentence at life imprisonment.

Steven Bradley died in 1968 after just seven years in prison.
ANGELO DI Lucia flirted with all his women customers while he sold them cones and penny licks at his Sligo ice-cream parlour in the summer of 1914. Sometimes he serenaded them loudly with a Neapolitan love song he’d learned in Italy many years ago as he filled scallop shells with creamy white scoops. He was a big man with oily black hair, and a sensual mouth that could bellow with laughter or narrow in fury. He’d moved to Sligo two years ago with his wife Rosa and their two babies, and had built the Ratcliffe Street parlour into a successful business. When war broke out, Italy was an ally and townsfolk often called in to wish his country luck against the Austrians.

He and Rosa had been married 10 years, and she was now pregnant with their third child. Looking at her, he found it hard to remember the 20-year-old beauty he had been determined to bed. Her voluptuous curves had caved in and these days she stared at him from behind a curtain of straggly hair.

Unable to speak English, she could only help behind the scenes at the parlour and rarely left the house. She felt homesick for the little village south of Turin where her mother still lived, and longed to feel the sun burning her face instead of the Atlantic rain that seemed to soak her whenever she slipped out to the cathedral to pray in the wonderful multi-coloured light of its 69 stained glass windows.

On good days, she sensed accurately that isolation, loneliness and Angelo’s sneering bad temper were leeching her energy and confidence. On bad days, she felt worthless and panicky that isolation, loneliness and Angelo’s behaviour confused and anger. She couldn’t be lovers right then. Jane were talking about when they exchanged secret smiles and looks. Jane into the shop to show her how to serve the ice cream. Handing her a fold of waxed paper, he doled out a scoop, and watched as she slowly and carefully licked it clean, all the time fixing him with her dark green eyes. In the days that followed, he thought of little but her tongue exploring his body.

Seventeen-year-old Jane had come to the bustling town of Sligo three years ago to work as a domestic servant. Her family lived 14 miles away in Ballymote, a wild and beautiful area of mountains, waterfalls, shimmering lakes and mysterious prehistoric remains.

Although it was more than half a century since the great famine had claimed 52,000 people in Sligo, Jane had grown up knowing she had to seize opportunities while she could. If I play my hand well, she thought, Angelo di Lucia could be a winner.

But she had to be careful. Angelo’s 17-year-old brother Pascali – or Patsio for short – was living with the family, and she knew Angelo could get jealous if she paid him too much attention. She also had to keep on the right side of Rosa, now four months pregnant, for a while at least.

Over the next five months, Angelo became infatuated with the girl he called his “little signorina” and took every chance to be alone with her, even locking the doors between the shop and the kitchen so he could fondle her among the vats and churns.

He pressed her for sex, saying he’d fallen in love with her, couldn’t live without her, and would find a way to marry her. He took her to picture houses several times a week, and occasionally to dances, never offering Rosa any kind of explanation or excuse.

As Rosa’s pregnancy advanced, Angelo’s behaviour confused and bewildered Rosa. She couldn’t understand what her husband and Jane were talking about when they exchanged secret smiles and looks. Surely they couldn’t be lovers right under her nose? She must be going mad. It was all her fault. But even if they were lovers, where could she go? Who could she turn to? Her children needed a father. She couldn’t leave.

“My wife’s head is gone. I think she’s crazy. Will you kill her for me?...If you get a noggin of whiskey it will give you great courage and you’ll be like the devil...I’ll marry you once it’s done”
certainly not now with another baby due at any moment. As his passion for Jane grew more urgent, 30-year-old Angelo considered ways of getting rid of Rosa. Leaving Patsio in charge of the parlour, he took Jane out into the country to have sex in the fields and woods. Sometimes, he waited till Rosa was in bed, then crept along to Jane’s room where he threw her down on the prickly straw mattress, dragging off her nightshirt in a frenzy.

Following the arrival of her third child on November 30th, Rosa developed symptoms of post-natal depression and the doctor advised her to rest. All three children – two babies and a toddler – had been sleeping in the couple's bedroom, so Angelo moved into Patsio’s room “to get some rest.” Jane was instructed to sleep alongside Rosa so she could help with the babies in the night.

One morning when they were together in the kitchen, Angelo pulled Jane close and whispered: “My wife’s head is gone. I think she’s crazy. Will you kill her for me? Then I’ll give you everything. I’ll help you if you start it. I’ll tell you what to do. If you get a noggin of whiskey, it will give you great courage and you’ll be like the devil. You’ll be strong, and I’ll marry you once it’s done.” Jane knew Angelo had neither love nor liking for Rosa, and was ambitious enough to consider his proposal. Proceeding cautiously, she replied: “I can’t do it without someone to help me. I haven’t the nerve to do it alone, no matter how strong I am.”

A week later, the doctor pronounced that Rosa was well on the road to recovery, but on Angelo’s orders the two women continued to share a bedroom. He knew he had to act fast, so on Monday evening he cornered Jane in the yard.

“It’s got to be tonight,” he whispered, pressing a hammer into her hand. “You know what we agreed. I love you.”

It was a long night. Jane sat by the gas fire rocking the cradle until about 2 o’clock when Rosa got up to fetch clothes for the baby from another room. An hour or so later she went downstairs for some bottles of lemonade, and offered one to Jane. When she refused, Rosa flung the contents in her face and started babbling in Italian. She seemed...
overwrought and restless and Jane wondered whether she really had lost her mind. She’d already told Angelo that if she’d died in childbirth she knew he’d have remarried within the month.

It was early morning when Rosa finally fell asleep. The fire had gone out and it was still dark as Jane rose quietly from her chair, pulled a piece of cloth from her pocket, and crept across the room to where Rosa lay. Her mouth was open and she was snoring lightly.

Balling the cloth in her hands, she quickly stuffed it into Rosa’s mouth, pulled a hammer from under the mattress, and called out to Angelo. But Rosa was up and fighting and spitting out the cloth. She grabbed Jane’s hair and caught hold of the hammer, pushing it away as Jane tried to strike her with it.

The noise of the women grappling in the darkness started the babies howling and brought Angelo rushing into the bedroom. Seeing that Rosa had dragged Jane down on top of her and was tearing out handfuls of her hair, he pitched into the struggle, wrenching the hammer from his wife, and throwing himself across her chest. Pinned to the floor by his bulk and weakened by childbirth, she could do nothing to defend herself against the hammer blows that fractured her skull.

When Angelo climbed off his dying wife, the babies were screaming and he saw Jane vomiting in a corner of the room.

“Don’t just stand there snivelling!” he shouted at her. “Go and get me a whiskey, and bring up a mop and pail and some bandages.”

He was still shaking as he lifted his wife’s warm body onto the bed. There was a pool of blood on the floor where her head had rested.

When Jane returned with the bandages, he washed Rosa’s face and head and carefully bound the three deep wounds in her forehead. He changed her into a clean nightdress and burned the old chemise on the kitchen stove. Jane mopped the vomit and blood off the floor and went to wake Patsio, who appeared to have slept through the whole commotion.

“Tell Patsio to go and get the priest,” said Angelo. “We’ll say Rosa killed herself.”

When Canon Doorly arrived at 8.10, he found a grief-stricken Angelo kneeling at his wife’s bedside, sobbing loudly. Thinking he was too upset to answer any questions, Doorly suggested he leave the room while he anointed Rosa. When he bent over to remove the bandages – which had slipped down to her eyebrows – he found she was still warm.

Shortly after Doorly left, Inspector Sullivan came to interview Jane and Angelo. They seemed to have agreed on some kind of story – however ludicrous – because Jane told him she had spent a disturbed night with Rosa, but finally dozed off in the early hours of Tuesday morning.
At 6 o’clock she was awakened, she said, by the baby crying, and it was then that she saw, to her horror, that Rosa had been severely beaten. She ran screaming onto the landing where she met Angelo and Patsio.

It was the last time Jane Reynolds and Angelo di Lucia agreed any version of events. Over the coming weeks, each spun different stories at different times and blamed one another for the killing. The Sligo Independent newspaper reported that the whole affair caused “a painful sensation throughout the town, and large crowds gathered outside the court where the inquest was heard.”

Angelo, who was the first witness, told the court: “On Monday night I went into my wife’s room and stayed about five minutes, smoking a fag. Then I went to my brother’s room and slept there. I’d left my wife in bed with the baby, and the servant girl was sitting on her left hand side. My wife was right-handed. She gave another snore and then died.”

Angelo described how he had washed his wife and got Jane to mop the room because “I couldn’t look on the blood.” He continued: “I didn’t ask the servant what happened to my wife because I think she has done it to herself. My wife thought I was dissatisfied because she’d had three daughters and no son and she said some time she would leave me. Jane Reynolds made no statement to me that my wife had killed herself. She and my wife had been on friendly terms, and the night before she died she promised to buy the servant something.”

Patsio was next on the stand, and he told the jury that he’d heard nothing until Jane called out to Angelo to come and see his wife as she was lying on the floor dying. This was apparently not enough to fully rouse Patsio and he fell asleep again.

“When I awoke the second time it was to hear my brother crying. At about 7 o’clock, the servant wakened me with one of the children in her arms, crying. She said my sister-in-law was dead.”

Dr. P. J. Flanagan told the court that Rosa, a healthy young woman, had died as a result of concussion caused by head injuries. Death, however, was not instantaneous. He said that she had probably been unconscious for several hours, and she died afterwards.

According to Jane Reynolds, Rosa’s behaviour that night was strange. She put one of the babies on the floor and laughed, and when the newborn baby started to cry, she shook her in her cradle.

“At last I fell asleep. The baby woke me at 6 o’clock with its crying, and I cleaned her bottle in the dark and put it in her mouth. Then the other baby wailed and I picked her up out of her cradle. I went into the bedroom and saw the woman in bed with a bandage round her head. My brother was there, crying and roaring, but I didn’t speak to him. I didn’t think it strange that my sister-in-law should be dead.”

Hopes were high that Jane Reynolds would be reprieved. After all, no 17-year-old had been hanged in Britain or Ireland since 1889...
The jury promptly returned a verdict of murder, and immediately after the inquest Angelo was arrested. The following morning Jane Reynolds was picked up at Sligo railway station and the inquest. Angelo was arrested. The verdict of murder, and immediately after
pleaded not guilty. But the prosecution had to testify against each other.

The inquest. Angelo was arrested. The verdict of murder, and immediately after
pleaded not guilty. But the prosecution had to testify against each other.

Although the defendants had been jointly charged with murder, they were tried separately in Dublin because they had to testify against each other. Holding her baby in her arms, Jane pleaded not guilty. But the prosecution – using a wooden model of the ice cream parlour and adjoining house – stacked up evidence against her until the defence were forced to claim that her “confession,” given in the waiting-room at Sligo railway station, had been taken under duress and was inadmissible.

In his summing-up, the judge pointed out that in none of her statements did Jane Reynolds claim she had left the bedroom on the night of the murder. The jury retired for an hour and returned a verdict of guilty with a very strong recommendation for mercy, which the judge ignored. When he
received a fair trial in Sligo.

Angelo’s lawyer claimed he would never lead an innocent Irish girl astray, and the Italian who was said to have feelings in the town ran high against Angelo. The trial of Angelo di Lucia opened next day with the prosecution claiming that an innocent man who found his wife dying from severe head wounds would have had everyone in the house up, and sent for the police. But Angelo di Lucia washed his wife’s head, and did not question Jane Reynolds because he knew all about it and was a party to it.

Rosa’s cousin Joseph Mezza told the court he hurried over from Belfast when he heard by telegram that she was dead. “Angelo was crying and said he didn’t know how it had happened. He told me he heard the servant girl screeching and rushed into his wife’s bedroom and found her on the ground. He told me his wife wasn’t ‘all there in the head,’” The defence argued that if Patsio’s evidence was true, Rosa met her death before her husband left the room he was sharing with Patsio.

The prosecution countered that after Angelo had been roused by Jane, he had been absent for up to an hour from the room he shared with his brother before he came to tell Patsio that Rosa was dead. What was Angelo doing during that time?

The trial of Angelo di Lucia opened next day with the prosecution claiming that an innocent man who found his wife dying from severe head wounds would have had everyone in the house up, and sent for the police. But Angelo di Lucia washed his wife’s head, and did not question Jane Reynolds because he knew all about it and was a party to it.

Rosa’s cousin Joseph Mezza told the court he hurried over from Belfast when he heard by telegram that she was dead. “Angelo was crying and said he didn’t know how it had happened. He told me he heard the servant girl screeching and rushed into his wife’s bedroom and found her on the ground. He told me his wife wasn’t ‘all there in the head,’” The defence argued that if Patsio’s evidence was true, Rosa met her death before her husband left the room he was sharing with Patsio.

The prosecution countered that after Angelo had been roused by Jane, he had been absent for up to an hour from the room he shared with his brother before he came to tell Patsio that Rosa was dead. What was Angelo doing during that time?

The jury took little more than 30 minutes to convict Angelo of his wife’s murder and he too was sentenced to hang at Sligo Prison, on December 2nd, 1915.

Hopes were high that Jane Reynolds would be reprieved as no 17-year-old had been hanged in Britain or Ireland since 1889. Public pressure won, and on November 13th her death sentence was commuted. Three years later she was released on condition that she enter a convent.

On November 23rd, Angelo di Lucia was also reprieved on the grounds that it would have appeared perversive to reprieve one and not the other when both had been proved jointly responsible for the murder. He was released 12 years later, in 1927, and was deported to Italy.

A century later, it’s hard to imagine how Jane and Angelo hoped to convince anyone that Rosa had committed suicide by bashing herself over the head with a hammer three times when the first blow would have knocked her unconscious.

It’s also hard to understand how they could claim that all this happened while Jane slept soundly in the same room less than a yard from a woman trying to kill herself with a hammer.
RICHARD JARVIS looked forward to his Sunday walks in the countryside around New York’s Long Island. They refreshed him after six days of breathing in fumes as a painter and decorator.

One of his frequent haunts was Hollis Woods, a favourite spot for picnickers and lovers, and he set off after breakfast on October 3rd, 1937, with a spring in his step. The autumn trees were a blaze of fiery colours.

He shuffled and crunched through the swirling leaves, passing a narrow lane that wound through thick undergrowth to a 30ft clearing a couple of hundred yards away. Glancing down it he saw a parked car. Unusual, he thought, for couples to park there during the day. And although one of the doors was open, there was no sign of movement.

Feeling uneasy for no reason he could have put into words, he walked slowly down the path. As he reached the car, he froze. Lolling on the front seats were the blood-drenched bodies of a young man and woman.

Heart hammering and gasping for breath, he ran back through the woods until he reached the main road. A motorcycle patrolman heard him shouting and within an hour more than 100 police officers had converged on the clearing – among them Deputy Chief Inspector John Ryan who took charge of the case.

While his men swarmed over the site searching for clues, Ryan stood quietly beside the car’s open door, surveying the bodies. The young man sat at the wheel with both hands in his lap, one holding his wallet. His head was tilted against the closed window. Two shots had been fired into his temple, and blood had run down his cheek to the back of his neck, staining his neat grey-checked suit and smooth hair. Apart from the bullet holes, his body showed no other sign of violence.

The girl, aged about 20, was sprawled half on the passenger seat and half on the running board, her feet twisted in different directions. She had been shot twice through the right temple and blood from the wounds had gushed over her face. Both bullets had ripped through her skull and exited on the left side.

She was wearing a red velvet suit with a white blouse – now sticky and crimsoned with blood from stab wounds to her chest. Her open handbag lay on her lap, but her lipstick had fallen onto the floor of the car. It looked to Ryan as if the killer had used this to draw a red circle, an inch and a half...
in diameter, on the foreheads of both victims.

The watch on the dead man’s wrist was shattered, showing the time it had stopped as 2.42. He wore a gold signet ring and, although there was no money in his wallet, it was open at the compartment that held his driving licence. In his jacket pocket Ryan found a leaflet from the fairground roller-skating rink in Mineola, Long Island.

The woman wore a gold cross on a fine chain round her neck. Her purse contained no money, only her door key and a ticket for the Mineola skating rink, serial number 1140.

Police commissioner Lewis Valentine turned to Ryan: “Crack this case fast and don’t stint on the expenditure,” he told him gravely as Howard Neail, the medical examiner, came forward to give them his preliminary findings.

“The boy died instantly,” he said.

“Two shots entered his right temple, piercing his brain. The girl has two in-and-out wounds running from right to left. These came from a small-calibre revolver, probably a .25.”

“What about the stab wounds?” asked Ryan.

“Whoever did that wanted to make sure she was dead,” said Neail, kneeling beside the girl and gently unbuttoning her blood-soaked blouse. “I’d say he used a long, thin-bladed instrument like a stiletto for this.”

“Was she sexually assaulted?” asked Ryan.

“Judging from the condition and position of her clothes, I’d say no. Though I won’t know definitely until I’ve done the autopsy.”

After the bodies had been shifted onto stretchers and taken to the morgue, Ryan and his men began an intensive search for the bullets that had killed the girl and passed straight through her. Eventually, they found one dented, bloody slug on the floor of the car, but there was no sign of the second.

“Keep looking till you find it,” he ordered. “The second slug could be very important, especially if it came from a different gun. This would establish whether more than one person committed the murders.”

Neail turned to Ryan. “Say, doc, are you sure all the shots were right to left? If they were, the second bullet must be somewhere in the car.”

“Absolutely certain,” said Neail.

“That’s strange,” said Ryan. “The left-hand car window was closed and there are no bullet holes in it. That leaves only two possibilities. Either the left window was open during the shooting or the killer shot her while she was out of the car.

“If he shot her while she was in the car, as seems most likely, and the left window was open, what point would the killer have for closing it? And if he shot her outside the car, he’d have had to drag her back in it again.”

“I think we can safely say she was killed inside the car,” said Neail. “The entry and exit wounds are in an even line.”

The missing bullet was never found, but one of Ryan’s lieutenants recovered four exploded shells, a cartridge, a crumpled Chesterfield cigarette wrapper, an empty aspirin box, and three cigarette butts.

“I think it’s what we haven’t found in the car that’s most important,” said

Victim Lewis Weiss and (above) the macabre crimson circle left on his forehead. Below, the bodies of the youthful victims are removed from the crime scene as officers continue to search for clues.
Ryan. “Neither victim had a cent on them, but no robber waits around long enough to draw red circles on his victims’ foreheads.”

“That’s true,” said Lieutenant Henry Flaherty. “But no killer seething with vengeance or hate would wait around long enough to empty a purse and a wallet having committed this carnage. And no sex fiend would rush off without assaulting the bodies.”

“It’s too early to theorise,” said Ryan. “I want everything including these wood and the gun combed. I need the gun and the dagger the killer used. Maybe they’re in that little pool at the end of the lane. Dredge it.”

By the time Ryan returned to his office, the bodies had been identified. Lewis Weiss had been a well-built, six-foot graduate of Jamaica High School. An only child, he lived with his parents in Queens Village and worked as a clerk with the American Steel and Wire Corporation which had offices in the Empire State Building. He was studying at night to be a civil engineer.

Nineteen-year-old Frances Hajek was also a Jamaica High School graduate and an only child who lived with her parents in Queens Village. During the day she helped them run their bakery. At night she attended dress design and commercial art classes at the local college. Friends described her as “bubbly and sparkly, like champagne.”

The first question journalists asked Ryan was: “Is this the ‘Triple X’ killer again, inspector?”

Ryan had been wondering the same thing himself. Triple X had never been caught and for seven years local police and residents had feared he would strike again. Aspects of this new double-murder, he thought, certainly resembled ‘Triple X’.

During May and June of 1930, a tall, thin killer had shot three men on three different evenings. Each one had been with a girl in a car parked in a secluded spot.

His first victim, Joseph Mozynski, was in the driver’s seat with his girlfriend when the murderer crept up to the car and shot him through the head, killing him instantly. He then pinned a newspaper cutting on the dead man’s chest showing a crimson circle. The postmark preceded even the police discovery of the body.

Triple X proved the authenticity of the letters when he wrote to a New York daily telling them what he had done and where Sowley’s body could be found. The postmark preceded even the police discovery of the body.

A month later he struck again, but his third victim survived and next day detectives received a cryptic note saying: “My mission is ended. You know what we want you to know. Quiet your people and tell them 3-X is no more. Do not let anyone fool you. If any more letters come, they are fakes. I am leaving for Russia today. Please note that I do not say the U.S.S.R. We do not recognise them. It is settled. Signed 3-X.”

Since then, neither the police nor anyone in the close-knit community of Queens had discovered whether the killer who called himself 3-X was a raving psychopath or a spy. With no closure to the case, people dreaded his return, and this new horror bore some of his hallmarks: the boy, the girl, the parked car on a lonely road, the shots…

But it was different, too. This killer had murdered the man and the woman, and used a knife as well as a gun. And instead of the familiar signature, this crime bore the macabre symbol of a crimson circle.

At police headquarters, Ryan tried to question Frances Hajek’s distraught mother about her daughter’s movements the day she died. Knowing that the hours after a murder are crucial in the process of detection, he pressed her harder than he would have wished. But she was incoherent with grief and only gradually composed herself enough to respond.

“Please try and tell us what Frances did before she left home, Mrs. Hajek. The sooner you can, the sooner we’ll catch the murderer.”

Fighting back tears, she replied: “At seven-thirty on Saturday night Frances went out and bought white shoes to wear at the Mineola rollerskating rink. Then she came home and waited for Lewis to call.”

“When did he arrive?”

“He came at eight-thirty and they left almost immediately.”

“What time did you expect her to return?”

“They didn’t say, but Frances usually came straight home.”

At this point she broke down again and buried her face in her hands.

“She never stayed out late. Never smoked or drank. She always told me she was going out with and where she was going.”

“Were there any persistent men that Frances refused to go out with?”

“She had no enemies. Lewis was her boyfriend.”

“Frances was very pretty,” said Ryan. “There must have been others.”

“Somebody called her last night and invited her to a college dance. But she had to turn him down because she already had a date with Lewis. Then there was some guy who fell in love for his gun.

He then quizzed the hysterical girl about her religious beliefs, escorted her to a bus stop, and requested a kiss goodnight.

Triple X proved the authenticity of the letters when he wrote to a New York daily telling them what he had done and where Sowley’s body could be found. The postmark preceded even the police discovery of the body.

A month later he struck again, but his third victim survived and next day detectives received a cryptic note saying: “My mission is ended. You know what we want you to know. Quiet your people and tell them 3-X is no more. Do not let anyone fool you. If any more letters come, they are fakes. I am leaving for Russia today. Please note that I do not say the U.S.S.R. We do not recognise them. It is settled. Signed 3-X.”

Since then, neither the police nor
The parents of Lewis Weiss could shed little light on the murders.

"Sure of that?"

"Yes."

The parents of Lewis Weiss could shed little light on the murders. His father, hunched in grief, said his son had no enemies. He had gone to a football match on Saturday afternoon, returned home for dinner at six, and left soon afterwards

"She left the house."

"Why did she leave the house?"

"Y ou're sure they left here at that time?"

"At eleven-forty-five."

"What time did you close this night?"

"Now can you tell me what time they were here?"

"Number 1474."

"Y es.""No, sir."

"Do you keep a record of your ticket sales?"

"Yes."

"What was the last ticket sold?"

"Number 1474." Ryan showed Frances’s 1140 ticket to the man.

"Why is that?"

"Certainly I remember them."

"Ah! Now I remember," he said. "They got here at nine-forty-five. I remember thinking at the time that it was pretty late."

"What time were they here last night?"

"Hard to say."

"Do you keep a record of your ticket sales?"

"Sure of that?"

"I'm positive." "You're sure they left here at that time?" "I'm positive." Weary after 24 hours of continuous investigation, Ryan returned to his office, sank into his worn leather chair, and pored over the mass of reports that had accumulated on his desk. At this crucial stage of the inquiry, he knew his best to assign his officers over the next few weeks. The task was familiar. His office, sank into his worn leather chair, his hands, hunched in grief, said his son had no enemies. He had gone to a football match on Saturday afternoon, returned home for dinner at six, and left soon afterwards
Gedeon murders.”

Creighton admitted the whole thing was a hoax on his part to sell his story to the press, and Ryan arrested him on charges of giving false information in the investigation of a homicide.

Evidence from the police experts was confusing. There were no fingerprints at the crime scene and the ballistics report said that the bullets had come from a .25-calibre automatic. But none of them matched any on file.

Neal placed the time of death between two and three in the morning – which bore out the testimony of the shattered watch. His examination revealed that Frances was still a virgin and that there had been no sexual assault. Lewis had died of two shots to the head. The first was a contact wound and the second fired from a distance of about 15 inches. The stab wounds on Frances’s body showed that the blade was a stiletto-like instrument about half an inch wide.

Most curious of all were the findings of the police toxicologist who examined the victims’ vital organs. Lewis, he said, had clearly been drinking beer and eating nuts and pickles which had not been fully digested. But he would have been in full control of his faculties. The level of alcohol in Frances’s blood, however, showed she was drunk at the time of her death. According to the toxicologist, she died only a short time after consuming a large amount of alcohol.

There were no traces of make-up on Lewis’s lips or face which indicated that the couple had not been necking when they were murdered. This seemed to throw out the theory of lovers surprised by a sex-crazed maniac or killer seeking revenge.

So why had they driven to a lonely spot in the woods? Did the killer force them there?

Ryan now believed they must have stopped at a bar sometime between 11.45 p.m. when the rink closed and the time they were murdered, and every police officer in Queens was ordered to check out the pubs and roadhouses on their patch.

All dry-cleaners were warned to be on the lookout for bloodstained clothes as it was clear that Frances’s blood would have spurted all over the killer when he stabbed her.

The student who had invited her to the dance was brought in for questioning and released as innocent. The poet was also traced, questioned and cleared. The pond near the crime scene was dragged, but there was no sign of the murder weapons.

Two evenings after the murders, a Bayside high school student called Robert Kocroschek was skating at Mineola when he saw a familiar figure. Four months earlier he had bravely chased and brought down a man who had assaulted a woman in the street near her home in Queens. With the victim still screaming, Kocroschek had grappled with the attacker, but he proved too powerful and managed to escape.

Recognising the man as that same assailant, he slipped off his skates and ran to phone the police. Everyone at the rink was discussing Frances and Lewis killings.

“You got me wrong!” he shouted. “I’d never do anything like that. Maybe I’d touched that woman when the guy chased me. But I ain’t no killer.”

“So how do you account for this?” said Ryan, pointing to a bloody handkerchief he had taken from the prisoner’s pocket.

“I had a nosebleed,” he said. His alibi for the time of the murders held good and although he was cleared of homicide he was later tried for attempted rape.

A few days later a waiter at a bar recognised photographs of Frances and Lewis and told detectives he had served them on the night of the murder.

“There were four people in the party,” he said. “They all seemed pretty angry with each other. Weiss had a real argument with a tall, light-haired man called Slim because he was paying too much attention to the girl. They almost had a fight.”

“Are you positive the couple was the same as the pictures I’m showing you?” asked Ryan.

“Looks just like them.”

Hopes rose briefly when a dry-cleaner found a .25 automatic in a suit pocket, but ballistic tests proved it was not the murder weapon.

“How was the girl dressed?”

“She wore some kind of red dress and a dark hat with a veil on it,” he said. His descriptions of the other two members of the party were circulated to neighbouring police and Angelo “Slim” Roccero was soon located. The tall, slender 22-year-old had a record of five arrests for sex offences – the latest for shouting obscenities in the street at girls in Brooklyn.

“I ain’t no murderer,” he said. “I don’t even read the newspapers. Don’t know nothing about no red circle killings.”

He was released after his alibi checked out, and the waiter’s story was junked. When Ryan re-questioned Mrs. Hajek, he learned Frances had never worn a veil in her life, certainly not on the night of her murder.

The case was at an impasse, and Ryan called a meeting with the police commissioner and chief inspector at which he laid all the evidence before them.

“The killer must be a man of tremendous ego to dramatise his crime the way he did with those red circles,” said Commissioner Valentine. “Seems to me there’s a good chance he’ll strike again, and maybe revisit the scene. Why not work undercover and get some detectives to pose as courting couples in
But ballistic tests proved it was not the murder weapon. Investigating a report that the couple had gone from Mineola to another rink in Queens, detectives learned that the manager there would certainly have noticed Frances and Lewis because he was very friendly with the Weiss family. “Lewis was a member of the Christian Science congregation which I also belong to, and his dad is a lay reader there,” said the manager. “I’m certain neither of the young people were at my rink.”

Detectives had also wondered about a possible connection with the red circles stamped on the wrists of people attending the college dance that Frances had been invited to. But this, too, was discounted as simply a way of making sure who had tickets. That year the head of the dance committee had happened to secure a circular bank stamp.

In an interview with MMF’s sister magazine True Detective in February 1937, John Ryan revealed that Lewis Weiss had told a friend he often visited the clearing in Hollis Woods “for one purpose or another.”

DEMONS DROVE “SON OF SAM” TO MADNESS

At one o’clock on the morning of July 29th, 1976, a 18-year-old medical technician named Donna Lauria and her friend, 19-year-old Jody Valente, a student nurse, were sitting in Jody’s stationary car outside Donna’s home in the Bronx. As they were about to call it a night and go home to bed a young man walked out of the darkness towards the car, took a gun from a brown paper bag and started shooting; he left Donna Lauria dead and her friend wounded in the thigh.

Another similar shooting took place on October 23rd, in the middle-class Queens district. Carl Denaro had a small portion of his skull shattered but suffered no brain damage; his 18-year-old girlfriend Rosemary Keenan was unharmed. A month later, at midnight on November 27th, Donna DeMasi and her friend Joanne Lamina were shot and wounded while sitting on the steps outside Joanne’s home at 262nd Street in the same district of Queens. Donna fully recovered from a neck wound, but the lower half of Joanne’s body was paralysed by a bullet in her spine.

Ballistics experts quickly established that all three attacks had been carried out in the same gun, a distinctive .44 Bulldog – giving the murderer the provisional name “The .44 Killer.”

On January 30th, 1977, as John Diel and Christine Freund sat in a Pontiac in Queens the passenger window was shattered by bullets, one of which tore into Christine’s skull; she died later in hospital but her fiancé was unharmed. The next random attack was made on March 8th, when 19-year-old Columbia University student Virginia Voskerichian was shot dead in the street.

When Valentina Suriani and Alexander Esau were both fatally shot as they sat in their car in the Bronx on April 14th, 1977, the breakthrough came. The killer began to expose himself.

Police officers from Operation Omega, the task force established to investigate the killings, found a letter lying near Alex Esau’s car. Addressed to the New York Police Department, it read: “Dear Captain Joseph Borelli,

I am deeply hurt by your calling me a woman-hater, I am not. But I am a monster.”

The killer also wrote a letter to flamboyant New York Daily News columnist Jimmy Breslin on June 1st: “…Not knowing what the future holds I shall say farewell and I will see you at the next job? Or should I say you will see my handwriting at the next job? Remember Ms. Lauria. In their blood and from the gutter, ‘Sam’s Creation’. .44.”

Now the Daily News had a new name for the killer: “Son of Sam.” Breslin, through his column, replied to the letter, goading the killer into making another move.

It came on June 26th, in Queens, where Salvatore Lupo and Judith Placido were wounded while they sat in a car. On July 31st, Stacy Moskowitz and Robert Viola became the last victims of “Son of Sam;” shot in their car; 20-year-old Stacy died in hospital and Robert was blinded.

Son of Sam then made one fatal mistake. After the final shooting he walked back to his yellow Ford Galaxie, took a parking ticket off the window and threw it in the gutter. Mrs. Cecilia Davis saw this, and thought no more of it until she saw the same young man while she was out walking her dog later that night. This time he was carrying something up his sleeve that Mrs. Davis thought might be a gun.

When the police were informed, they ran a check on the car that the ticket had been issued to and came up with the name David Berkowitz, resident of Pine Street in the suburb of Yonkers.

When detectives found his car there was a loaded semi-automatic rifle on the seat and a letter in the glove box, addressed to the head of Operation Omega, threatening another killing. They settled down to wait till Berkowitz came out of his apartment to claim them. No sooner had he settled himself behind the wheel than he was taken from the car and asked: “Who are you?”

“I’m Sam,” he replied with a smile. He went quietly to the police station and made a full confession.

David Berkowitz, born illegitimately in June 1953, was rejected by his mother, a fact which prompted his slow descent into illness. Uncomfortable in female company, his paranoia grew over the years. In 1974, so he later claimed, Berkowitz became aware of “the voices” – as he lay in the darkness of his squalid apartment; they were telling him to kill. When police searched the Yonkers flat after his arrest they found the walls covered with scribbled messages such as “Kill for My Master.”

The source of the name “Sam’s Creation” seems to have been Berkowitz’s neighbour Sam Carr, whose black labrador kept Berkowitz awake at night with its barking. He began sending a series of hate letters to Carr, and in April 1977 shot and wounded the dog.

With his generally peculiar behaviour and a fondness for sending anonymous letters to people he believed were intent on doing him harm, Berkowitz had already provoked complaints to the police, though such was his otherwise engaging charm that nobody seriously considered him a candidate for Son of Sam.

Obviously a paranoid schizophrenic, Berkowitz was nevertheless found fit to stand trial, though that process was pre-empted by his plea of guilty. On August 3rd, 1977, Berkowitz was sentenced to 365 years, to be served at the Attica Correctional Facility.

The great clamour surrounding the case, from the high level of public
Ryan also suggested that someone besides the killer knew who committed the crime, and that it could have been the work of one man using a gun and a second man using a knife.

At that stage, *True Detective* was offering a $1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of the Weiss-Hajek killer and to move things along the magazine decided to do some digging of its own.

One of its journalists found that from ancient times a circle or geometrically enclosed symbol had been used to ward off evil. The sign had then passed beyond protection and evolved into “a mystic focus of power.”

Armed with this information, reporter Michael Stern and editor John Shuttleworth set out for Hollis Woods and the crime scene.

“We walked about three hundred yards before coming to a hard gravel clearing where the bodies had been found. There’s a dead end a little further on, so why did they stop here?” asked Stern.

“The complete isolation and privacy of the place impressed us,” he wrote. “Here was indeed a spot ideal for a murderous mind to achieve its macabre masterpiece in villainy.”

The police were still fine-combing the woods for the murder weapons, but not far from the death scene Stern and Shuttleworth found pages ripped from a porn magazine.

“As I see it,” said Shuttleworth, “these two young people never drove to this spot of their own free will even though Weiss knew the place. The killer was either a psychopath given an unmissable opportunity or there’s something in all this we haven’t yet fathomed.”

Stern agreed that the killer was insane, delusional, impotent, and driven by fury to avenge his frustration with gun and knife.

John Ryan held to the belief that the killer had posed as a police officer, but his reasons for this are not on record. The case remained unsolved.

Forty years later, from July 1976 to July 1977, New York was terrorised by a killer who identified himself only as “Son of Sam” (see panel left for details) He perpetrated eight separate handgun assaults, several against amorous couples in parked cars. In all cases, the primary targets were young women in their teens and twenties. Six of the 13 people attacked died from their injuries.

When David Berkowitz was finally arrested, he confessed to all the shootings and to writing a series of “satanic” letters to the NYPD and reporter Jimmy Breslin.

Several years later, he accused other people of involvement in the crimes – particularly two Satanists called John and Michael Carr who, significantly, both died violently within two years of Berkowitz’s arrest.

The Son of Sam parallels with Weiss-Hajek are only partial, but they offer a new slant on an old case. In the end, did Ryan and his team underrate and fail to explore the significance of the red circles?
Forty-six-year-old Mrs. Susanna van der Linde had just settled down for morning coffee with her teenage daughter Zelde in the living-room of her smart suburban home in Bellville, Cape Town, when the phone rang. She put down her cup and picked up the receiver.

“Mrs. van der Linde?” the woman caller said. Before Susanna could reply, the caller continued: “My name is Marlene Lehnberg and I work at your husband’s office. I think you should know I’m in love with him and I see him every night. We have sex regularly. What are you going to do about it?”

Susanna van der Linde’s hand began to shake and she looked uneasily across the room at Zelde. When she was sufficiently recovered from the shock, she replied icily: “I will speak to my husband this evening.” Then she rang off.

She did speak to her husband that evening. The conversation was not documented, but next day Chris van der Linde challenged his teenage lover Marlene. “Why did you call my wife last night?” he demanded.

“Because I love you,” Marlene replied. “You’d better find someone else to take you home after work,” van der Linde snorted.

Marlene was to say: “He was cross about it, and he didn’t take me home that evening. But the next day things were normal again.”

The next few days were difficult ones for Susanna van der Linde, and not just on account of her husband’s cheating. She had seen a crippled man, a “Cape coloured,” loitering around the front of her house, and, living in a country where violence and murder are everyday occurrences, she was scared.

When she was out shopping she bought a dye gun, one that fires a stream of coloured dye at the victim, as a measure of self-protection. She decided not to open the front door to anyone before she had scrutinised them from the window.

Three weeks later Marlene Lehnberg phoned Susanna again. “Can we meet?” she asked. “I feel we ought to have a chat together.” Susanna agreed a rendezvous at her home during Marlene’s lunch hour that very same day.
Marlene picked up the story: “I drove out to Bellville and arrived at her home in Gladstone Street at about 1.15 p.m. I rang the bell. She looked out through the window and then unlocked the front door. I entered the lounge and sat on the first chair coming in. She sat on the piano stool.

“After saying I was glad to meet her, I asked her what she was going to do. She replied that as long as I was prepared to play second fiddle, so was she. She also said she couldn’t understand how Chris could see me and her at the same time. But she couldn’t give him a divorce because of the children.

“There was no ill-feeling between us. This was the first and only time I met Mrs. van der Linde.”

This was, if Marlene is to be believed, no more than a matter-of-fact sort of conversation between two women who were rivals for the same man’s hand – his wife, to whom he had been married for 25 years, and his teenage lover, 30 years his junior. In fact, it was much more than that. For Marlene Lehnberg, sitting so cosily in the living-room chair, wasn’t there to have a chat with her rival.

She had come to size up the layout of the house. For she had already planned to murder her lover’s wife.

And the man she had persuaded to help her do the killing was the crippled “Cape coloured” man seen hanging around in the street outside the suburban house.

Marlene Lehnberg was born in October, 1955, into a puritanical family that was high on God and low on cash. Her father was a maintenance man with five children to feed – a family that didn’t dance, drink, smoke, go to the cinema or, in the case of the girls, use make-up.

Marlene was academically a star pupil at school, and taught at Sunday school to younger kids, but her social and emotional backwardness made her a bad mixer. A lot of her potential was cast aside when she left school at 16. So too was a lot of her religious upbringing. She fancied herself as a movie star, left the family home, did a bit of modelling, and, discarding the restraints of her upbringing, posed in the nude.

She was 16 when she got her first job as a clerk and receptionist at the Orthopaedic Workshop, at Mowbray, near Cape Town. The workshop’s chief technician was Chris van der Linde, 47, married to Susanna, father of three mature children, deeply religious and strikingly good-looking.

A little more than a year after their meeting Marlene and her boss were in bed together. “I was a father figure to her and she was good company for me,” van der Linde was to insist when, a few years later, the fall-out from their affair was engulfing all of South Africa. “In any case, I loved my wife and family and I had no intention of giving them up.”

Marlene, though, had every expectation that that was just what he would do. And she was prepared to make the decision for him if she had to.

This is how she described the blossoming of their romance: “At my very first meeting with Chris van der Linde, I was attracted to him, and he took an immediate interest in me. During April and May, 1973, an affair started between the two of us, seriously. He started taking me home in the evenings after work, and sometimes during the lunch hour we would go for a drink. A while after the affair became serious, we were intimate for the first time. We were then intimate on numerous occasions up to the end of 1973 or the start of 1974.

“The reason we stopped was because of the children. A little more than a year after their meeting Marlene and her boss were in bed together. “I was a father figure to her and she was good company for me,” van der Linde was to insist when, a few years later, the fall-out from their affair was engulfing all of South Africa. “In any case, I loved my wife and family and I had no intention of giving them up.”

Marlene, though, had every expectation that that was just what he would do. And she was prepared to make the decision for him if she had to.

This is how she described the blossoming of their romance: “At my very first meeting with Chris van der Linde, I was attracted to him, and he took an immediate interest in me. During April and May, 1973, an affair started between the two of us, seriously. He started taking me home in the evenings after work, and sometimes during the lunch hour we would go for a drink. A while after the affair became serious, we were intimate for the first time. We were then intimate on numerous occasions up to the end of 1973 or the start of 1974.

“The reason we stopped was because of the children. A little more than a year after their meeting Marlene and her boss were in bed together. “I was a father figure to her and she was good company for me,” van der Linde was to insist when, a few years later, the fall-out from their affair was engulfing all of South Africa. “In any case, I loved my wife and family and I had no intention of giving them up.”

Marlene, though, had every expectation that that was just what he would do. And she was prepared to make the decision for him if she had to.

This is how she described the blossoming of their romance: “At my very first meeting with Chris van der Linde, I was attracted to him, and he took an immediate interest in me. During April and May, 1973, an affair started between the two of us, seriously. He started taking me home in the evenings after work, and sometimes during the lunch hour we would go for a drink. A while after the affair became serious, we were intimate for the first time. We were then intimate on numerous occasions up to the end of 1973 or the start of 1974.

“The reason we stopped was because of the children. A little more than a year after their meeting Marlene and her boss were in bed together. “I was a father figure to her and she was good company for me,” van der Linde was to insist when, a few years later, the fall-out from their affair was engulfing all of South Africa. “In any case, I loved my wife and family and I had no intention of giving them up.”

Marlene, though, had every expectation that that was just what he would do. And she was prepared to make the decision for him if she had to.

This is how she described the blossoming of their romance: “At my very first meeting with Chris van der Linde, I was attracted to him, and he took an immediate interest in me. During April and May, 1973, an affair started between the two of us, seriously. He started taking me home in the evenings after work, and sometimes during the lunch hour we would go for a drink. A while after the affair became serious, we were intimate for the first time. We were then intimate on numerous occasions up to the end of 1973 or the start of 1974.

“The reason we stopped was because of the children. A little more than a year after their meeting Marlene and her boss were in bed together. “I was a father figure to her and she was good company for me,” van der Linde was to insist when, a few years later, the fall-out from their affair was engulfing all of South Africa. “In any case, I loved my wife and family and I had no intention of giving them up.”

Marlene, though, had every expectation that that was just what he would do. And she was prepared to make the decision for him if she had to.

This is how she described the blossoming of their romance: “At my very first meeting with Chris van der Linde, I was attracted to him, and he took an immediate interest in me. During April and May, 1973, an affair started between the two of us, seriously. He started taking me home in the evenings after work, and sometimes during the lunch hour we would go for a drink. A while after the affair became serious, we were intimate for the first time. We were then intimate on numerous occasions up to the end of 1973 or the start of 1974.

“The reason we stopped was because of the children. A little more than a year after their meeting Marlene and her boss were in bed together. “I was a father figure to her and she was good company for me,” van der Linde was to insist when, a few years later, the fall-out from their affair was engulfing all of South Africa. “In any case, I loved my wife and family and I had no intention of giving them up.”
him or myself about these calls. By this time I was deeply in love with him and he declared his love for me.”

The cooling of their sexual liaison was torture for Marlene. She said she began to think she must leave Cape Town and start a new life somewhere else, as far away from Chris van der Linde as she could go. After all, he had made it explicitly clear: he would never leave his wife and family. On the other hand, he pleaded with her not to go away.

She said: “I told him I had made up my mind and was determined to leave. Eventually he accepted it.”

But it didn’t happen. She stayed on, still working at the orthopaedic workshop, and still making love to her boss – on the golf course after work, in his car, anywhere they could find to assuage their physical turmoil and to forget their romantic dilemma.

How could it all end? As far as van der Linde was concerned, he hoped it would never end, since he enjoyed the lover he euphemistically described as “good company after work.” For Marlene, there was only one obstacle between her and lifelong happiness with him. That was Susanna van der Linde.

She looked around desperately for someone to help her. First her gaze fell on Robert Newman, an engineering student living in her apartment block. “I want to marry my boyfriend, but he’s already married,” she explained. “Would you kill his wife for me?”

Newman was astonished, and then thoroughly alarmed when, following his refusal, she stole his pistol from his room. He went to the police to report the theft, and the conversation. Marlene simply denied it.

The next potential assassin she approached was Marthinus Charles Choegoe. He was an outpatient at the orthopaedic workshop where she worked, a “Cape coloured” cripple who had lost a leg in a car accident. From time to time he complained about his artificial leg, generally to Marlene the receptionist, who was ever-present with her sympathetic ear.

Choegoe, 33, married with two kids and living in a corrugated iron shack, was just about everything you wouldn’t look for if you were seeking a partner in murder. He was almost illiterate, depressed, uneducated, dirt poor, badly handicapped and generally unfit. He also had a couple of suspended sentences under his belt, one for hitting his mother-in-law and the other for having a gun.

“I have some work for you to do, Marthinus,” she told him one day in July, 1974. “I’d like you to meet me at 7 o’clock tonight at the Rondebosch Town Hall, so we can discuss it.”

Choegoe remembered what happened next. “I told her I had no money to get there from Retreat, where I was living. So she gave me one rand for the bus and train fare. She arrived a quarter of an hour late with a bottle of gin. Before she gave it to me she said she wanted me to murder someone for her and that she would pay me well.

“I said, ‘But Miss Marlene, I cannot do a thing like that. It will send me to the gallows.' [Capital punishment was indeed in force in South Africa.] She then said to me, ‘Marthinus, were you ever involved in a court case?’ I said I had been. I was charged with carrying a dangerous weapon. She said, ‘That’s the sort of person I’m looking for. Someone who can handle a dangerous weapon.’

“She asked me to go and murder the woman, and handed me the address on a piece of paper. I was to come through on the following Wednesday to kill her. She also handed me a gun.

“On the Wednesday I came through to Bellville. Miss Marlene had given me an office phone number and I had to phone her when I went to murder the woman.

“I went to look at the house where the woman lived. When I got to the gate I saw a woman sitting on the step. My plan was to go and tell her that another woman had a plan to kill her and she must phone the police. I said to her, ‘Missus, I want to tell you something, please.’ But she was too frightened, and chased me away.”

He phoned Marlene, telling her he hadn’t done the job. When they met again he complained to her that they would hang him if he were caught, whereupon she replied: “No, Marthinus, you are a cripple. They won’t think you could do anything like this. Besides, the police are very stupid.”

When he continued to protest, Marlene came up with her trump card. “She offered me her car that she didn’t want any more, and also a radio which I could fetch from her work next day. And she also said, ‘Do this for me, Marthinus, and you can have sex with me.’”

Marlene had certainly come a long way from teaching Sunday school. He drank the gin she gave him and collected the radio. The sex he could have after he had done the job. He went to Bellville the following Wednesday, but was too scared to do any more then walk past the house. When he reported this new failure back to Marlene she wrote to him:

“The date will now be Tuesday the
wouldn’t give me an inch”

“Still hesitant, he phoned her. “It seemed to me I was scared because I was bewitched by her,” he said. “I had no power against her.” She was insistent. ‘Marthinus, you must do the job for me,’ she said. ‘Use anything. I’ll pick you up in the car and take you to Bellville. And bring a hammer with you.’”

Marlene duly gave him a lift to Bellville, slapped him 50 cents for the phone call to her after he had done the murder, and drove away. He said: “I felt in my heart, well, Marthinus, you are now going to murder a person. That was all that was going on in my heart. When I got to the gate the order in my heart told me, put on your gloves, as she said.

“I opened the gate and went in. I climbed the steps very slowly – I am unsteady on the one side. I rang the bell, but she wouldn’t open the door.”

Something was warning him, he went on – he was frightened. He had already decided to give up, and limped painfully back to the road. Meanwhile, inside the house, Susanna van der Linde, who had spotted him through the window, was frantically phoning the police. A few minutes later they picked him up, limping down the road half a mile from the house.

He wanted to explain why he was there, but a sergeant said, ‘Shut up. We’re going to thrash you!’ At the police station a constable beat him up, but amazingly he wasn’t searched. If he had been they would have found Marlene’s letter, telling him how to murder Susanna, in his pocket.

A few days later Marlene wrote another letter, this one to Chris van der Linde. It revealed that their romance had spectacularly collapsed, and it also revealed the extent of her heartbreak. It read:

“My darling, what have you done to me?”

You’ve ruined me forever. The man I loved so much, who I could talk to, who meant the world to me, who comforted me, has just discarded me. I wish I could die. I will never forgive you for what you’ve done to me.

“Every night you’d say how much you love me but that was false pretence. Is it so easy after all this time to give me up? You told me you couldn’t live without me, you thought of me all the time. I gave up everything that I had to give up, but yet you wouldn’t give me an inch.

“You have been really selfish although you won’t admit it. Having a home and having me as long as I don’t complain. You know where your bread was buttered.

“You got everything you needed physically and emotionally from me, so you didn’t have anything to complain about when you got home… What about the promise you made to me? No matter what happens, you’ll never give me up. You’d always make a plan. You said to me that if anything had to happen to your wife you’d look after me. What is the difference if you divorced her now or you waited a year or two till she died of maybe a nervous breakdown?

“My darling: If you loved me so dearly as you put it to me, won’t you do something? I’ll forever love you and I’ll wait for you, praying that you’ll come back to me.”

Only hours after she had written that letter, at the end of October, 1974, Marlene gave in her notice at the orthopaedic workshop. She had a job in Johannesburg to go to, she said; she had always wanted to go to Johannesburg.

She said a fond goodbye to her lover – a parting that, superficially at least, seemed to indicate that there was no ill feeling.

Marlene could have left it just like that, but she didn’t. On Monday morning, November 4th, she and Marthinus Choegoe were heading back to the van der Lindes’ Gladstone Street house in Bellville. According to Choegoe, as they drove there Marlene told him again, “Marthinus, if you do this thing, I’ll buy you the car I promised you and then you can have sex with me.”

When they arrived at the house, he said, Marlene went in first, to engage Susanna in conversation. Choegoe followed her a few minutes later, and on sight of him Susanna picked up the phone to call the police. Choegoe said: “Miss Marlene ran towards her and hit her with the pistol butt on the left jaw. Then she jumped on her. I helped Miss Marlene because I can’t move fast – I was bewitched by her. I had to do it. I throttled the woman half dead. Next Miss Marlene told me to take some scissors off the table and stab three holes in the woman’s heart.

“The woman was then half-conscious on the floor and I took the scissors and
stabbed her in the chest.”

“There was mayhem in the living-room as Choegoe continued stabbing with the scissors. Furniture was upturned and blood splattered across the carpet. Susanna was screaming, and pleading with Marlene to leave her alone. Then, as she was repeatedly stabbed with the scissors, she rolled on the floor, gurgling and groaning. When she finally went into her death throes, Choegoe drew back from her body, gasping for breath. He remembered: “Miss Marlene said, ‘Can you see how easy it is?’”

Then she went outside to bring her car closer to the house. When she came back she sprayed him with the dye gun, into his mouth and over his clothes. She told him she was “making a bluff.”

Marlene drove Choegoe back to his home, and then set off for Johannesburg to fulfil her escape plan. She reckoned the more distance she could put between herself and the murder scene, the safer she would be. While she was driving north, Chris van der Linde, alarmed that his wife wasn’t answering the phone, alerted his daughter Zelda, who went home and discovered her mother’s body.

The police soon concluded that two people were involved in the murder. Their thoughts turned to the mysterious “Cape coloured” cripple whom the victim had several times reported. When they heard that Susanna’s husband was a girlfriend named Marlene they also started thinking about her.

They found Marlene quickly enough. At first she denied everything. Finally she said, “Marthinus did it. I asked him to do it and I took him there. It did not bother me at all. It was as if I had got something off my mind. I was prepared for what would be the result.”

Marlene handed over Choegoe’s address and the one-legged killer was picked up at his home in Retreat. Charged with murder, he said: “When Miss Marlene dropped me off at my house after the murder, I said to her, ‘Miss Marlene, if you don’t keep your promise, I’m going to the police.’ She replied that I could trust her, but that if she did not keep her promise I could do what I liked, because she was not worried.”

The court was treated to an extraordinary image of their final sexual romp, as described by the stiffly upright Afrikaner during cross-examination by Mr. Dennis Delahunt, defending Marlene. Van der Linde said he decided to stop having intercourse ever again with Marlene from the day she told him she was expecting his child. In the event, she miscarried.

But in fact he had sex with her one other time after that. That was one evening before she left for Johannesburg. “Miss Lehnbrg never said to me, ‘I love you,’ except in the letter I got from her. That was the first time she mentioned that.”

Choegoe continued stabbing with the scissors. Susanna was screaming and pleading with Marlene to leave her alone.

Linde together, and others saw her going to the Van der Lindes’ home on the day of the murder. But these witnesses were merely the curtain raisers to the prosecution’s star witness, Chris van der Linde himself.

From the start, he insisted, his relationship with Marlene was “a fatherly friendship,” explaining, “I did not love Miss Lehnbrg. I loved my wife. I liked Miss Lehnbrg.”

How many times did he have sex with her, he was asked? He replied: “It happened. I cannot say how many times. You will have to ask Miss Lehnbrg. She can help me there.” Told not to be evasive, he said, “No, honestly, I am not able to say how many times.” But they were having sex regularly until his wife heard about it.

Marlene, he went on, was very good at her work. “I gave her a lot of support. She asked me many questions. She was always a proper lady, and I have always respected a lady.”

He didn’t exert a lot of influence over her, he said. “She had confidence in me. If I saw that she sat, or was dressed, without propriety, I brought this to her attention. During work I was very conscientious, very proud. During working hours Miss Lehnbrg was a receptionist and conducted herself as such. After work she was good company for me.”

He agreed that he had sexual relations with her in the workshop but he never called her by her name of Marlene. She was always Miss Lehnbrg, or “Sweets.” Asked if it were true that two other female employees were in love with him, he said: “If they fall in love with me, and more people fall in love with me, can I help it?”

When he told the court that as far as Marlene was concerned, she never asked him whether he loved her, Mr. Justice Diemont interposed: “I find this difficult to believe.” Van der Linde then said: “Miss Lehnbrg never said to me, ‘I love you,’ except in the letter I got from her. That was the first time she mentioned that.”

Crowds outside the courthouse in Cape Town following the verdicts

The court was treated to an extraordinary image of their final sexual romp, as described by the stiffly upright Afrikaner during cross-examination by Mr. Dennis Delahunt, defending Marlene. Van der Linde said he decided to stop having intercourse ever again with Marlene from the day she told him she was expecting his child. In the event, she miscarried.

But in fact he had sex with her one other time after that. That was one evening before she left for Johannesburg. “Miss Lehnbrg dared me to do it,” he said. “It went half-way. I realised what I was doing and stopped immediately.”

Mr. Delahunt: “Mr. Van der Linde, that is a very peculiar thing that a man should decide, half-way through intercourse. Why did you come to such a decision?”

“There is no reason. At first I was
the noise drowned him out. Outside the
some fainted. Marlene bit her lip.
to death. Some wept, some screamed,
Marlene and Choegoe were sentenced
of law. And I can find no extenuating
possible to prove a murder in a court
murdered Susanna van der Linde.
young woman. That is not the issue. The
strictly speaking, relevant.
ignominious role he played, is not,
satisfied, rather than ashamed, of the
bad impression in the witness-box, that
in perspective as far as the trial was
had been torn to pieces by the evidence.
"As far as
completely right."
and very much in love with you?"
my wife."
"No, I wouldn’t
not allow any
between me and
wife."
the Attorney-
Mr. E. O.
Harewood, told the
court that Marlene
had been plotting
Susanna’s murder
for months. She
was, he said, “cold-blooded, ruthless and
brazen.” The defence suggestion that
she was under Van der Linde’s influence
had been torn to pieces by the evidence.
It was left to the judge in his
summing-up to put Chris van der Linde
in perspective as far as the trial was
concerned. “The fact that he made a
bad impression in the witness-box, that
he showed himself to be sanctimonious
and self-righteous, that he seemed
satisfied, rather than ashamed, of the
ignominious role he played, is not,
strictly speaking, relevant.
“He is not charged with seducing a
young woman. That is not the issue. The
only issue is whether the defendants
murdered Susanna van der Linde.
That has been proved as clearly as it is
possible to prove a murder in a court
of law. And I can find no extenuating
circumstances."
Pandemonium broke out as both
Marlene and Choegoe were sentenced
to death. Some wept, some screamed,
some fainted. Marlene bit her lip.
Choegoe tried to say something, but
the noise drowned him out. Outside the
courthouse, police with dogs had to
control the crowd.
After the sentence psychiatrists and
mind experts moved in on Marlene
behind the scenes, desperate to prove
that she was mentally abnormal.
They failed in that, but what they
discovered was that she was about
half of everything she shouldn’t
have been She was not a psychopath
but she had marked psychopathic
tendencies; she had a psychopathic
disorder that was “at least mitigating;”
she was mildly schizophrenic and
mildly depressive; there was nothing
pathological in her make-up but some
aspects were obsessionai; she was
without remorse, remote, and able to
dissociate herself completely from the
crime.
Why? They explained that many of
her personality problems were formed
in childhood. Her parents were very
hard up and couldn’t afford another
child when they realised that Marlene,
their second daughter, was on the way.
When she was born, for many years
change of personality, and habitual loss
of memory, suggested that the car crash
had caused damage to the pre-frontal
lobe of his brain. He was extremely
remorseful.
He was undeniably much influenced
by Marlene, who was a white woman
and thus enjoyed superior status, in a
country where at that time it was much
more comfortable to be white than to be
black.
In the event, Marlene was at first
refused leave to appeal against her death
sentence. But Choegoe was granted
leave to appeal. The appeal denial
against Marlene was later overturned
and the two killers accordingly
appeared before the Appeal Court at
Bloemfontein on July 23rd, 1975. In
both cases the death sentence was set
aside. Marlene was jailed for 20 years
and Choegoe for 15 years.
In all the circumstances it seemed
about right. But South Africans argued
among each other for years – and
continue to argue – about whether
justice was done when Marlene was
spared the hangman’s noose.
One man who believed it was right
was Chris van der Linde. He had prayed
for the reprieve, he said. But the case
severely traumatised him. He went off
to live the life of a recluse in a tiny,
remote cottage on the same farm where
Susanna was born in the Magaliesberg.
His last words before he left Cape Town:
“I’m finished with females. They’re
dangerous.”
Except for one female, that is – his
wife Susanna. Her body was buried in
the nearby graveyard, a stone’s throw
from his cottage, and he was said to feel
at peace just by being close to her. He
died there in 1983.
Marlene Lehnberg went on to serve
11 years behind bars and was released
in December 1986. Choegoe, who was
paroled six months earlier than his
fellow-killer, in June 1986, went on to
become an evangelical preacher and
Marlene spent years in relative
obscurity. She suffered from
osteooporosis and had been
diagnosed with breast cancer when
she committed suicide, five days
before her 60th birthday, in October
2015.
Those were the easy answers to the murder mystery. The motive and the name of the killer were more difficult.

The body of attractive 35-year-old Daisy Wallis was found at 10 a.m. on August 16th, 1949, in her third-floor office at 157 High Holborn by her new employee, 19-year-old Sheila Bennett, who had started working for her the day she was killed. Tenants had keys to the front door of the small building but when Sheila arrived a little before 9.30 it was locked. She waited, no one came and so she went to have a coffee in the local café. She came back a little before 10 o’clock and found the front door had been left unlocked and open by another tenant. She went up to Daisy’s office and found the key in the door. She went in and there on the floor was her employer.

She ran to a neighbouring office and told Anne Henderson that she thought Daisy had had a haemorrhage but the older and more worldly woman realised at once Daisy was dead, her pink dress covered in blood. Sensibly neither she nor Sheila touched anything and they went back to Anne’s office and called the police.

And so began an inquiry which lasted for more than 10 years and in which over 600 people were interviewed and 300 sets of fingerprints were taken. Sheila was able to tell the police just who had been in the office on the day before. They included a Polish man and, when she left for the night at about 5.45, Daisy was still talking to a woman who had come in half an hour earlier.

Almost simultaneously with the police, Daisy’s father and mother arrived at the office looking for their daughter. She had missed supper at their Willesden home the night before but that had not fazed them and they went to bed about 9.30 that evening. But the next morning they found that – most unusually – she had not come home. If she ever stayed with friends she always called her mother. Her father telephoned her office without success and they had come looking for her.

In charge of the inquiry was Detective Superintendent Harold Hawkyard, a long-serving officer who had arrested Thomas Browne for the murder of PC George Gutteridge in 1928. Now he organised the fingerprinting of Daisy’s office. Over the months the owners of all but one print were found and eliminated and the missing owner did not have a criminal record. The next thing was to discover who, if anyone, in the neighbourhood had heard or seen anything the previous evening.

Hawkyard’s next problem was: why would anyone kill this modest, hard-working woman? Was it a robbery gone wrong? A jealous lover? A sex attack? Or had Daisy somehow become involved in the post-war black market and paid the price? All, at one time or another, were suggested motives.

First, however, her body was taken to the St. Pancras mortuary where the eminent, if sometimes brusque and difficult, Dr. Francis Camps performed the autopsy. He thought she had been

DID THE MAD AXE-MAN KILL DAISY?

When Londoner Daisy Wallis was horrifically stabbed to death at work, police struggled to find a motive for her killing. Both sex and robbery could be ruled out. Eventually, an infamous associate of the Kray twins made a curious confession...

Case recalled by James Morton

October 2008
dead for 16 to 18 hours before her body was found. Apart from having defensive wounds – she had a cut left hand and arm indicating she had tried to fend off her attacker – and small bruises and abrasions on her chin, ankle, and right buttock, she had been stabbed five times.

The first was a slightly left to right stab below the right shoulder blade passing through the ninth rib and into the lung. The second was through the fourth dorsal vertebrae into the lung. Neither would have caused instantaneous death.

The third was through the left shoulder blade, and the fourth from the front to the inside of and below the left nipple. The fifth and final blow, to the heart, would have been fatal, said Camps. The last two wounds had caused a haemorrhage into the left chest cavity and belly and the heart. He thought the knife used to kill Daisy was a double-edged one.

She had bled so much that Camps had difficulty taking a sample for the autopsy.

But, curiously, despite the struggle there must have been, there was little sign of disorder; her typewriter was untouched, the telephone hanging down, her wooden armchair had been pushed back and one of its legs had caught in the mat by Daisy’s desk. There was no other disturbance to the room.

A sexual attack could be ruled out almost immediately. Her panties, suspender belt and the rest of her underwear were in place. So too could a robbery – her handbag and purse were untouched. Unless, that is, her attacker had panicked and run off, leaving the spoils behind.

An Iris Wilkins, who had known Daisy, was due to meet her at the office that fatal evening but had gone to the cinema and forgotten. She rang about 6.10 p.m. and the phone had rung for about a minute before a well-spoken man had answered it. When she asked for Daisy he rudely told her she’d gone and “to ring earlier next time.” He had an “office voice” thought Iris. Could the man have been her killer? Would a man who has just killed a woman calmly answer the telephone? Eventually the police thought Iris had rung a wrong number.

Two teenage sisters, Florence and Ethel Crowley who lived in a nearby building, thought they had heard screams. “But we often hear shouting,” said one, “and take no notice of it.” The other added, “It was more than one scream. It seemed close to us.”

When asked if she could distinguish any words she said “Murder, I think.” High Holborn was a fairly rough area at the time and there was always noise from the postmen in the nearby Drury Lane sorting office.

There was, however, one positive line of inquiry. A husband and wife, Harold and Doris Littler, who were in the area said they had seen an Italian-looking man with dark hair and long sideburns, about 5ft 4in, running down Dunn’s Way, a lane near to the building, at about the time of the murder. He was wearing an open-necked, short-sleeved shirt and seemed to be carrying a light-coloured jacket.

Apart from defensive wounds, she had been stabbed five times. The last two wounds had caused a haemorrhage into the left chest cavity and belly and the heart. The knife was double-edged.

Frank “Mad Axe-Man” Mitchell – was this associate of the Krays a murderer?
sister downstairs, said Daisy did not confide in her and was moody. Before the war Daisy had worked for an airline, and, during the war, with the Ministry of Aviation. After the war she had worked in various secretarial jobs but she had ambition and decided to cash in her savings to set up a secretarial agency in the spring of 1949. At the time of her death it was not doing well and indeed about a third of her £500 capital had gone already. The police decided to concentrate on her love life and they found that she was a solitary woman who joined clubs such as the Overseas Club and the Players Theatre often to get cheap tickets and that then she didn’t go there any more. She was also a member of the Fifty-Fifty club which had a reputation for catering for gays. She had never drunk much and even less since she had had a bout of rheumatitis. Ernest Walton, who let her the office room, said she kept herself to herself. “A superior class of person,” he said. She had been very upset when her typewriter was stolen in a burglary six weeks previously and he had lent her another. Knowing she was struggling to make a living he had reduced the rent. He didn’t think there was any suggestion of immorality.

One discovery was that she kept a series of diaries in Clarke’s shorthand, a system taught 30 years earlier, but which by 1949 was obsolete. Police secretaries couldn’t transcribe it and so outside help was obtained at a cost of two guineas. There was speculation it would contain the names of a number of male friends. Could one of these be the jealous boyfriend? But when it came to it, hopes that the diaries might contain details of her sex life were wrong. In fact the contents were disappointing and related solely to meetings with girlfriends and office business.

Again there were a number of sightings and stories about her, few of them accurate ones. An ex-police officer who kept a pub near Matlock in Derbyshire said she and a man had stayed there. Both he and his wife had recognised Daisy from her photograph in the Daily Express. But they were wrong. She was known to have stayed at the Albion Hotel, Eastbourne, in July paying 30 shillings a day. Was this a rendezvous? But she had taken a single room and neither of the other two men staying alone at the same time fitted the description of the man seen running away. There was no suggestion they knew her and indeed one, aged around 40, had asked the receptionist to go for a swim with him. “An unusual invitation,” thought Detective Sergeant A. Moran. Did Daisy work in Isow’s in Brewer Street as a cashier at one time? asked one writer. If she did, a Mr. Stroud might be able to help regarding the man. No, she did not and that was another lead snuffed out.

People thought she often went to the Norfolk Hotel and other public houses in the Paddington area. Someone had seen her outside the Cafe Royal in Regent Street one lunchtime. They might well have done. She always shut the office up during the lunch hour. But she does not seem to have used the time for a liaison.

A Val Renny wrote, giving her address as the Acocks Green, Birmingham, Post Office, saying Daisy was a very dear friend and that she was about to marry a man Tomio and the police should look for a £1,000 diamond ring. But that line of inquiry led absolutely nowhere.

Hawkyard’s officers traced a number of men who had known her before and during the war as well as more recently. Certainly there had been romances, one or two with married men, but they had fizzled out. The police could only find one instance when she had spent the night with a man and then she had told him she was having a period. It was as long back as 1941 or 1942 during an air raid. In the spring before her death she had been out to the cinema with a man and then the police should look at the Acocks Green, Birmingham, Post Office, saying Daisy was a very dear friend and that she was about to marry a man Tomio and the police should look for a £1,000 diamond ring. But that line of inquiry led absolutely nowhere. Camps thought that Daisy probably had not had sex for a couple of years before her death and perhaps not at all. Daisy had even told her mother she thought she might never marry during the war as well as more recently. Certainly there had been romances, one or two with married men, but they had fizzled out. The police could only find one instance when she had spent the night with a man and then she had told him she was having a period. It was as long back as 1941 or 1942 during an air raid. In the spring before her death she had been out to the cinema with a man who had come to the agency looking for a job, but that was about it. None of the men questioned resembled the man running away.

Camps thought that Daisy probably had not had sex for a couple of years before her death and perhaps not at all. Daisy had even told her mother she thought she might never marry. So much for the jealous boyfriend theory. Rather patronisingly Hawkyard’s report thought her to be a “quiet friendly woman of amiable disposition, a woman who was anxious to marry and yet not one who chased after men.”

Then there were the questions of the stolen typewriter and the possibility that she had surprised a burglar. Typewriters were targets of theft after the war, just as computers are today, and the stolen...
Frank “Mad Axe-Man” Mitchell wrote his confession (below, left to right) to the murder of Daisy Wallis while in Broadmoor but when on the run in 1966 he sent a note explaining his case to The Times (bottom left).

By 1966 Frank Mitchell (inset below) had spent 18 of his 32 years in prison. A muscular giant with a reputation for violence and burglary, Mitchell was friends with Ronnie Kray, whom he had met 10 years previously in Wandsworth.

In 1955 he had been certified insane and sent to Rampton high-security mental hospital. Going on the run in 1957, he assaulted the home owner during a burglary, and when recaptured was sentenced to nine years. Placed in Broadmoor hospital – where he confessed to the murder of Daisy Wallis – he soon escaped again and earned his nickname “The Mad Axe-Man,” by threatening an elderly couple with the weapon while burgling their house.

He was recaptured and, with little hope of release, the Krays arranged Mitchell’s escape from Dartmoor Prison on December 12th, as part of an attempt to force the authorities to provide a release date – going as far as encouraging him to write to the editor of The Times detailing his plight – and hid him in a flat in London.

However, Mitchell’s conspicuous bulk and precarious mental state made him a liability and his disappearance remains a mystery. Although accused of his alleged murder at the Old Bailey, with no body, the three Kray brothers and Freddie Foreman were found not guilty.
Wallis typewriter was traced to a David Hill, also known as Goldhill, a man with a record dating back to 1934, who had been sentenced to 12 months for receiving stolen machines. When questioned, Hill denied stealing Daisy’s typewriter but instead confessed to killing a girl, Margaret, in Southend. It was a completely false story and, after the police officers left, he set fire to his cell and had to be placed in a straitjacket.

If she had surprised a professional burglar and was killed as a result she was very unlucky. Anyone convicted of an office burglary in those days could expect a prison sentence but, with the death penalty in operation, burglars did not generally carry weapons, still less use them.

On October 27th, the coroner Bentley Purchase recorded a verdict of murder by some person or persons unknown. But that did not mean the case was shelved.

In February 1954 the police thought the Wallis murder had some similarities with that of 44-year-old Beatrice James, stabbed 60 times in her Wembley home, with a dagger-like knife, for which 35-year-old Raymond Harold Barker was on trial. His description more or less tallied. He was interviewed and put on an identification parade but Harold and Doris Littler, the husband and wife who had seen the man running away, said he was not the man. In the March, Barker, who had been Beatrice James’s lover and had killed her when she said she was leaving him, was found guilty but insane and sent to Broadmoor.

With any murder which goes unsolved for any length of time it is not uncommon for the police to receive letters from prisoners informing on their fellow-prisoners or their former partners in crime. Some are downright malicious. One man whose name came up in a letter from a fellow-prisoner was found to have been in Malaya (now Malaysia) turned out to have been in Aberdeen.

Then came a confession. In September 1957 the hulking “Mad Axe-Man” Frank Mitchell, who nine years later escaped from Dartmoor with the help of the Kray twins and was later murdered on their behalf, wrote to the Police Commissioner – something regarded as being in breach of Broadmoor regulations – saying he had killed Daisy. At the time he had a reputation for office breaking. Until escaping from Rampton on January 18th, 1957, Mitchell had no convictions for violence. Then on March 4th he was convicted of a serious attack with an iron bar on a man and woman whose house he burgled while on the run and was sentenced to nine years. Mitchell had been transferred to Broadmoor where the doctors thought he was merely seeking attention, but it was agreed the police should interview him over Daisy’s murder.

Daisy’s murder.

Mitchell had been transferred to Broadmoor where the doctors thought he was merely seeking attention, but it was agreed the police should interview him over Daisy’s murder. The general impression they got was that Mitchell knew little about the murder and that he was fed up with life and wanted to be hanged. What he did know he could have read in the papers. And of course the fair-headed giant did not resemble the suspect in any way.

There was one further flurry of interest. When the block was being demolished for redevelopment on May 16th, 1957, a rusting sword was found on the second floor of 154 High Holborn – but since Daisy’s office was in 157 it would have been a very difficult climb over roofs to dump it. Because of its shape, there was only the remotest possibility it could have been the weapon. The final door open to the case was now closed. A note towards the end of the police file reads, “It seems that all avenues have been explored without success. Perhaps we have been unfortunate.”

But were they? Or did they simply place too much reliance on the dark Italian-looking man seen running down the alley? There is also a note in the file that her killer could have been a woman, but that is all. It was never seriously considered. Daisy was certainly trying to avoid one woman who was inviting her Wembley home, then in 1953, as in 1944, to lunch. On the day of her death she had said she could not meet her that evening because she had to work in the office until 8 p.m.

Should they perhaps have looked more closely at some of Daisy’s women friends? One reason why there were no fingerprints could have been that in those days women almost always wore gloves...
If you’re interested in true crime, you’ll be fascinated to learn about crimes that have taken place “down your way” – and that’s the focus of this special edition of True Crime Library Bookstore. We’ve brought together almost 100 local-interest crime titles from some of the leading publishers in Britain and Ireland – so you’re sure to find one that’s local to YOU.

Here is just a small selection – you can find the full range at www.truecrimelibrary.com or call +44(0) 20 8778 0514 and ask for a full list of our titles. All titles are paperback unless otherwise stated.

### True Crime History:
- Berkshire Murders ................... £14.99
- Greater Manchester Murders .... £14.99
- Herefordshire Murders ............ £14.99
- Kent Murders ....................... £14.99
- Somerset Murders ................. £12.99
- South London Murders .......... £12.99
- West Country Murders .......... £14.99
- Worcestershire Murders .......... £14.99

### Foul Deeds & Suspicious Deaths:
- Bath ....................................... £12.99
- Coventry .............................. £10.99
- Grimsby & Cleethorpes .......... £12.99
- Guernsey .............................. £10.99
- Hampstead, Holborn, etc. .... £10.99
- Uxbridge .............................. £12.99
- Worcester ............................. £10.99

### Murder & Crime:
- Essex .................................... £9.99

Prices include UK postage and packing. For rates outside the UK, please order by phone or via our website: www.truecrimelibrary.com

Total order value £__.___

### YOUR DETAILS

Name __________________________
Address __________________________
Postcode __________________________
Tel _______________________________
Email __________________________

### YOUR PAYMENT

☐ Cheque or postal order enclosed, made payable to Forum Press (UK only)
To pay via credit/debit card, call 020 8778 0514
You can also order through our website: www.truecrimelibrary.com

Return your form and payment to: True Crime Library Bookstore, PO Box 735, London SE26 5NQ, UK

Remember, you can always view and order our complete stock of books and magazines at www.truecrimelibrary.com
Lyda Trueblood’s Unique Method Of Murder...

...There Were So Many Fatal Affairs

NOTHING, IT seemed, could stop the little blonde Missouri sex kitten from accumulating money. Or keeping grave-diggers busy. An enthusiastic performer after dark – or during the day, for that matter – Lyda Trueblood was born in 1893 on a horse ranch outside Keytesville, one of the family of Billy Trueblood who for some reason was known as “Honest John.”

Two brothers, Ed and Bob Dooley, lived nearby. Like Lyda’s parents, they were farmers, and they loved to come into town on Saturday nights to swig hard cider and swing the girls on the dance-floor.

Ed, two years his brother’s senior, was a clumsy hand at rolling his own cigarettes. His efforts left loose tobacco dangling, and it was joked that when Ed lit up, the fire department was placed on alert.

One night at a dance, he and Lyda were swinging it when Ed said, “Let’s go outside while I have a smoke.”

“You know somethin’, Ed?” said Lyda.

“No, what?”

“I’d like a cigarette too.”

This was a risky business in those days – when a female was caught smoking, even in her home, she was marked down as a “fallen” woman.

So Ed and Lyda, leaving Bob in the dance-hall, went outside and Ed rolled a couple of cigarettes. He gave one to Lyda and she dragged on it with deep satisfaction.

Then a piece of flaming tobacco, dangling from the tip of Ed’s cigarette, was blown by the wind and set fire to his high celluloid collar.
Lyda ripped a scarf from her dress, wrapped it around Ed's throat, and snuffed-out the burning celluloid before it could set the farmer on fire. “Golly, Lyda,” said Ed, rubbing his hot red neck and grinning foolishly, “how can I ever thank you? You might have saved my life.”

“Oh,” said Lyda, “it was nothing really.”

“But it was, darling.” Lyda blinked seductively. “What did you just call me?”

“It just slipped out,” said Ed. “I called you ‘darling.’”

“Oh,” Lyda told him, “I’m so glad you did. Do you know something?” She paused. “Maybe I shouldn’t say this, but I think it would be a good idea if me and you just got hitched.”

Ed gulped, reached out with his rough hands and grabbed her. He was all for consummating the union right then and there. They went inside and Ed beckoned to Bob who was on the dance-floor.

“Bob,” he said, “me and Lyda’s goin’ to get hitched.”

Bob just stood there, shifting his weight from one foot to the other, looking first at his brother, then at Lyda. Then he burst into tears.

“What’s wrong with you, Bob?” demanded Ed. “All I said was me and Lyda was goin’ to get hitched.”

“That,” said Bob, trying to regain his composure, “is just the trouble. I wanted to marry Lyda.”

“You what? This is the first I’ve heard of it.”

“It don’t make no difference. I had it in mind for a long time.”

Ed exchanged glances with Lyda. It was an awkward moment for all of them. Then Bob struck out his hand, grabbed his brother’s hand and shook it vigorously. “No hard feelings,” he blurted.

The marriage of Ed Dooley and Lyda Trueblood took place in the local church. Lyda had a half smile of promise on her lips. The groom, having given up celluloid collars, was wearing a stiff linen number and a shiny blue serge suit. Bob was the best man.

It wasn’t until after the ceremony that the newlyweds sprang a surprise on everybody. Somebody asked Lyda where she was going on honeymoon.

“There ain’t going to be no honeymoon,” she replied. “Me and Ed – and Bob here – are goin’ to run a ranch in Idaho. We’ve bought a little cattle ranch near Twin Falls. We’re going there right away to start our lives all over again.”

Ed held his bride’s hand and gave a silly grin. Bob looked off into space. “You say Bob is goin’ along with the both of you?” somebody asked Lyda.

“Yup.”

So, an hour after the wedding, the three of them set off for Twin Falls in Ed Dooley’s Tin Lizzie.

Arriving in Idaho, they headed straight for a rundown ranch on the outskirts of Twin Falls where they settled down to make the most of what they had. Ed Dooley, working hard by day and by night, was getting everything he wanted. Bob Dooley, just to be near the girl he’d loved and lost, made himself useful around the house and farm. And Lyda, seeing to the brothers’ meals, was also cooking up a plan of her own.

One night just before bedtime, she, her husband and brother-in-law were sitting around in the parlour when Lyda told Ed, “I was just thinking that things would be terrible around here if anything happened to you.”

Ed asked what she meant.

“Insurance,” said Lyda. “You ought to protect me, Ed, just in case God should take you before me.”

The next day Ed took out $2,000-worth of insurance, naming his wife as beneficiary.

“What a wonderful husband you are, Ed!” exclaimed Lyda, rewarding him in the way she knew best. “And,” replied Ed, that silly grin on his face, “you’re one wonderful little wife. I hope we live together forever.”

But then one morning some six months later, Ed Dooley woke up with terrible pains in his stomach. “It’s something you ate,” said Lyda. “I’ll fix you something to put you right.”

Bob said he thought he’d better drive into Twin Falls for a doctor.

“Don’t bother,” said Lyda. “I’ll fix him up in no time.”

She kept Ed in bed, making him broths and cups of tea. But everything tasted bitter to Ed. “Drink it down, honey,” Lyda would say when he gagged on a sip of tea. “It’ll be good for what ails you.”

But the pains grew worse. Then Ed began to complain that the soles of his feet felt very sensitive. “Now don’t you worry, sugar pie,” Lyda would say. “Everything’s goin’ to be all right. Your Lyda will see to that.”

Ed had been in bed, tossing and turning and throwing up for about a week, when Bob said he thought it was high time for a doctor. Lyda looked at him, kissed him, and started his blood boiling by unbuttoning his fly and slipping her hand inside his trousers. Not unnaturally, Bob completely forgot about doctors.

Then one night about a week later Ed Dooley began to yell in terrible pain. Bob, who had heard the noise, went into the sick-room, saying he was going for a doctor.

“It’s too late,” said Lyda. “He’s gone.”

It was 3 o’clock in the morning.

“I better drive into town and get an undertaker,” said Bob.

“There’s nobody awake at this
time of night,” replied Lyda. She was standing in front of a lamp and her nightgown was disarranged. She looked at Bob with eyes that matched the bedroom. Then slipping off her gown, she reached for Bob’s hand. “Let’s go into your room and talk,” she murmured.

Lyda made short work of inducing Bob to forget about his brother. “I feel kind of ashamed of myself,” Bob said when it was all over.

“Well don’t,” said Lyda. “This is just how poor Ed would have wanted it.” They took Ed back to Keytesville, where Honest John consoled his pretty widowed daughter. After the funeral, Lyda perked up. “Daddy,” she told Honest John, “me and Bob are goin’ back to Twin Falls.”

“Bob still has feelings for you, Lyda,” said Honest John. “I can tell by the way he looks at you.”

“I think a lot of Bob,” she told her father. “Maybe I will marry him one of these days.”

There were a good many raised eyebrows when Lyda and Bob set off again without benefit of clergy for Idaho.

Lyda, with a fine show of scorn for cash, hadn’t bothered about the insurance policy that Ed Dooley had taken out on his life. But a man from the insurance company, hanging around Twin Falls with a cheque for $2,000, came to the ranch within an hour of Lyda and Bob’s return.

“What good is the money,” Lyda said. “when I don’t have the man I loved with me?”

“We all have crosses to bear, Mrs. Dooley,” said the insurance man. “Try to bear up.”

But Lyda made no attempt to bear up. It took the insurance man more than an hour to calm her.

A week later she began to talk about taking out insurance – $2,500-worth – and he did.

The happy couple were so busy getting adjusted to living together that they never did get around to searching out a preacher.

Typhoid fever was practically a death sentence in those days. And, sure enough, Bob hit the bed, stricken with something. He was dead within a week.

The local coroner drove out to the ranch. “What’d he die from?” he asked.

“Typhoid,” Lyda answered.

Having collected $4,500 in insurance on Ed and Bob, she decided to stay in Twin Falls. She banked the insurance money, sold the ranch, moved into a Twin Falls boarding-house and got a job in the Grille Café.

Now 24, Lyda was by this time a real head-turner. She not only wore rouge and lipstick, but eyelash make-up as well.

Lyda drew the ranchers, in town for a hot night, to the cafe by the dozen. “You’re drawin’ us here like flies, Lyda,” one of them told her.

Flies. The word stuck in her mind – a little circumstance that was to contribute a footnote to criminal history...

Although Lyda, with that face and body, made the boys think of only one thing, she was of the you-can-look-but-you-can’t-touch school. She let the horny-handed ranchers and farmers go just so far and no further.

There was a waiter at the cafe who was something of a clown – so much so that Lyda paid little attention to him. His name was Billy McHaffie and because of his addiction to the exploding-cigar type of humour, he was known as Oh-You-Kid McHaffie.

One night towards closing, Lyda began to study him. McHaffie was open-faced and dopy-looking and that gave her an idea.

“Billy,” she said, “why don’t me and you get together for a little game of cards?”

“What? When?” asked McHaffie, delighted that she had at last given him a second glance.

“In my room,” said Lyda, with a promising smile.

A deck of cards was by no means the only thing that was shuffled in Lyda’s room that night.

In the weeks that followed, the whole town talked about Lyda and Billy McHaffie. One night, lying with Lyda, Billy got a bright idea. “Why don’t me and you get hitched?”

Lyda, staring at the ceiling, didn’t answer for a while. Then, slowly, she said, “Why not, Billy?”

The marriage of Lyda Trueblood-Dooley to Billy Oh-You-Kid McHaffie was the social event of the season.

“Where,” somebody asked the non-blushing bride, “are you going on your honeymoon?”

“Me and Billy,” she said, “are leaving Twin Falls. We’re moving to Montana.”

“Why? What for?”

“Billy wants to be a rancher.”

Somebody looked at Billy. There was no way of telling what he thought
of the idea; he was just standing there, looking at his bride, with other thoughts in his mind.

The happy couple had no sooner settled down on a ranch outside Hardin, Montana, when Lyda had something to take up with him. “Billy,”
Lyda said one night, “do you know something? A man ought to have insurance on himself in case something happened to him.”

“I don’t believe in insurance,” Billy said.

“But you’ll have to learn to believe in it.”

“Why?” Billy asked. “Nothin’ is goin’ to happen to me.”

“Never mind now about the ain’t.”

“Well,” said Billy, “it’s like this; I just took out a lot of insurance and it’s goin’ to keep me broke payin’ the damned premiums.”

Lewis just stood there, measuring Billy. “You know somethin’?” he asked.

“If I was married to a pretty little woman like this” – he jerked his thumb towards Lyda – “I wouldn’t mind bein’ broke payin’ for insurance – I wouldn’t mind at all.”

Lyda just stood there, looking at the stranger. Now it was her turn to flash a smile. That insurance remark of the stranger’s, sincere as it was and innocent as it sounded, was to have far-reaching consequences. It was to pave worry about a thing,” Lyda said. “I’ll get the doctor in town and you’ll be all right.”

This has to be said for Lyda: she did drive into town and consult a physician. The doctor, running about night and day ministering to flu victims, was practically out on his feet. “I can’t come to your place, Mrs. McHaffie,” he told Lyda. “But give your husband plenty of whisky and orange juice – and see that he’s covered up and kept out of draughts.”

The next afternoon Billy fell into a delirium and began to moan and thrash around on his bed. In no time at all Lyda had him lying there, the top of his pyjamas unbuttoned, the covers off

The Idaho jury mostly farmers themselves were shocked by the testimony while Lyda (right) sat seemingly unconcerned by it all

insurance,” said Lyda, stretching out her arms. “Come here. Come to Lyda.”

The next day McHaffie, who had undergone a change of mind about insurance during the night, drove into Hardin and sought out an estate agent who also dabbled in insurance policies.

“How much?” asked the agent.

“My wife says five thousand dollars’ worth.”

One bleak afternoon, when a bitter mid-winter wind was howling in from the north, Lyda and Billy, who had gone to bed early, heard a car outside. Jumping into enough clothes to make themselves respectable, they hurried downstairs and answered the door. There stood a grinning stranger, every tooth in his head capped with gold.

“Allow me,” he said, “to present myself.”

He turned out to be Harlan Lewis, a farm implement salesman. “I’ve been looking over your land, he said, “and notice you ain’t got many implements.”

“We just moved here from Idaho,” said Billy. “But we don’t want any equipment right now.”

Lyda put a hand on Billy’s arm. “Just looking over your land, he said, “and give him another shushing, Lewis, flashing those gold choppers, asked, “What’s going on? One of you seems to be interested in equipment, the other

the way for two more murders...

Meanwhile, Billy signed up for some farm equipment. “The stuff’ll be delivered soon as I send the order in to Omaha,” said Lewis. “I’ll stop by and see how everything’s goin’ when I come by this way again in the spring.”

Lyda told her husband to throw some more logs on the fire while she went out and said goodbye to Lewis. “What you said about stoppin’ by in the spring,” she said to him as he got into his car. “You’ll be sure to keep your promise, won’t you?”

Lewis looked at Lyda and read something in her eyes. “You bet I will!” he almost yelled. “You just bet I will!”

One night three months after McHaffie had taken out that insurance, he came in off the machinery that Harlan Lewis had sold him and told Lyda that he didn’t feel too good. “Oh, dear,” said Lyda, “I hope you ain’t catchin’ the flu.”

The country was in the midst of the great influenza epidemic and people were dropping like flies.

“Are you supposed to have a belly-ache and a funny feeling on the soles of your feet with the flu?” asked Billy.

“I don’t know,” replied Lyda. “By the way, did you pay your second premium on that insurance?”

“Yeah,” said McHaffie. “Posted it two weeks ago.”

A couple of afternoons later Billy came in from the fields, burning up with fever, and took to his bed. “Don’t

him – and a mid-winter wind whisking through the now open window.

The next day, when Lyda drove back into town and told the physician that her husband had passed away, the doctor just nodded and signed a certificate ascribing death to the flu. Not wishing to rush things and possibly raise more eyebrows, Lyda decided not to be in too much of a hurry cashing in her husband’s insurance policy. But McHaffie, tucked away in a cheap pine coffin, had no sooner settled down for the long deep sleep when, as Lyda was clearing out his things, she came across a notice from the insurance company saying that their policy had lapsed for nonpayment of premiums!

Outwitted at her own game, she was biting her lip and looking into space when there was a knock at the door. Answering it, she found herself standing face to face with Harlan Lewis.

“Well, well, Missus McHaffie!” he said, flashing those expensive teeth. “I said I’d be back – and it ain’t even spring yet!”

“Don’t,” said Lyda, “call me Mrs. McHaffie. The son of a bitch is dead and gone – and I never want to hear his name again.”

“What happened?”

“Nothing,” replied Lyda. “Nothing I ever care to talk about.”

One biting cold day in December 1920 – five years after the Dooley
brothers had bitten the dust, three years after Billy McHaffie had gone under and a year and a half after Harlan Lewis had dropped in on Lyda for the second time – the newly-elected sheriff of Twin Falls, Edward Sherman, summoned Virgil “Val” Ormsby, his deputy.

“Val,” said Sheriff Sherman, “you’re a young man and I’m about to put you on your first case.”

“OK,” he said to the sheriff. “What’s the case?”

“You know Bud Taylor, the foreman on the Blue Hills ranch just outside town? Well, he’s been on the phone. Claims he can put us on to a poison mystery.”

“Poison!” echoed Ormsby.

“Well, you know how people are. They go off half-cocked. Anyway, poison’s a hard thing to prove and you’ve got to be careful about accusing innocent people.”

Half an hour later Ormsby was sitting in the Blue Hills ranch house, talking to Bud Taylor.

“You knew Ed Meyer, one of my best hands, didn’t you, Val?” Taylor began.

“Yeah, Ed died here a couple of months back.”

“Well, we had two doctors in. One said Ed died of typhoid and the other said he died of ptomaine. Do you know what he really died of? He was poisoned!”

“What makes you say that?”

The foreman recounted a little history. Big Ed Meyer, only a few months before his death, had married a girl named Lyda Lewis. Lyda, Bud Taylor said, was a great believer in insurance. And so Meyer had taken out $10,000-worth, naming his bride as the beneficiary. Then he died less than two months after taking out the policy.

“It’s surer’n hell bet,” Taylor went on, “that this woman got Ed to take out a policy so’s she could poison him and collect on it!”

Ormsby made notes. “What I want you to do, Val,” Taylor went on, “is dig Big Ed and have an autopsy and prove he was poisoned.”

“Wait a minute,” said Ormsby. “The sheriff’s office can’t just go and dig a body without evidence. All we got here is your say-so, and how do we know you’re right?”

Taylor grew impatient. “I know damn well I’m right! Something happens to every man this woman marries!”

During the next few days Deputy Ormsby dug into the records of Big Ed Meyer’s death. He learned that, while Dr. David Coughlin had ascribed it to ptomaine, Dr. Harry Bieler had ascribed it to typhoid. Calling on Dr. Coughlin first, Ormsby asked if it was possible that the ranch hand had died by being poisoned.

“What makes you ask a thing like that?” asked Coughlin.

Ormsby just shrugged.

“Well,” pressed Ormsby, “then it’s entirely possible that Big Ed Meyer was poisoned and you didn’t notice it?”

“Yes,” admitted Dr. Coughlin, “that’s possible.”

Ormsby then tackled Dr. Bieler. “I could have been fooled,” the physician agreed when the deputy explained his suspicions.

Confident now that he was on the trail of something, Ormsby barged into Sheriff Sherman’s office. “I think,” he said to the sheriff, “that I’m on to a murder – maybe several murders.”

Ormsby filled the sheriff in on what he had learned. The sheriff gave his deputy a long, hard look. “Keep digging, but for God’s sake keep your mouth shut until we have the goods on that girl,” he said finally.

Ormsby went to the local library. “Got anything on poisons?” he asked. The librarian had just one volume on the subject. Ormsby tucked it under his arm and went back to the sheriff’s office.

“What I’d like to do with your permission,” he said, “is try to backtrack on this Lyda girl. Meantime – he held up the poison book – ‘I’ll be reading this.”

Then he headed off for Keytesville, Missouri, where he set out to find anybody who could fill him in on the Dooley brothers.

“Since their father is still around,” the deputy’s hotel receptionist told Ormsby. “He runs a farm just outside town.”

Old Alonzo Dooley squinted at Ormsby when the deputy approached him in a barn behind the house.

“I’m here to see you about your boys who died five years ago,” Ormsby said after he had introduced himself.

The deputy asked Dooley if he knew whether Lyda had collected any insurance on the deaths of his sons.

The policy on McHaffie had lapsed for non-payment of premiums – Lyda had been outwitted at her own game. But not all was lost. Her next victim came knocking on her door!
“Did she!” snapped Alonzo, steamed up now after all those years. “She sure did!”

Hours later, Ormsby went back to the hotel and began to read the poison book. By the time he returned to Twin Falls, he was something of an amateur authority on lethal substances.

Figuring that both the Dooley brothers and Ed Meyer had been poisoned by Lyda for their insurance, Ormsby pressed Sheriff Sherman for an autopsy on Big Ed. Sherman, still reluctant to cause a public outcry on mere suspicion, refused. “Keep digging, Val,” he urged.

Ormsby now began to put himself in Lyda’s lethal shoes. Where, he wondered, would she have got the poison? Drugstores, he knew, sold arsenic – a favourite ingredient of poisons – under various guises. There was arsenic in ant poison, and it was also to be found in rat and coyote poison.

Knowing that all sales of anything containing poison were recorded in the ledgers of drugstores, Ormsby began a tour of Twin Falls. He looked at the poison sales registers until his eyes hurt. He knew that many murderers bought poison which they claimed was intended for rats, but he found nothing to indicate that Lyda had bought anything containing a lethal substance.

Stymied, but by no means discouraged, the deputy next decided to try to get a lead on what happened to Lyda’s second husband and suspected third victim Billy McHaffie. The only clue he had about McHaffie was the rumor that, after marrying Lyda, he had gone to live in Montana, which now became Ormsby’s next stop.

He was in luck. In going through the state’s death records, he found that William McHaffie had, three years before, been buried after dying of the flu.

Deputy Ormsby sped to Hardin. He poked around the premises of what he knew in his bones had been another murder scene – the fourth that he now had in his sights – and found nothing. He got back in his car and began a tour of the area, looking into the poison sales books at drugstores. Once again he drew a blank. His suspect had signed for nothing containing poison of any description.

Then it occurred to him that he could do worse than inquire around the insurance agents in the district. And this led him to the very man who three years before had written a $5,000 policy on Billy McHaffie. His name was Jack Reynolds and he had an office in the main street in Billings.

“Yes, I insured McHaffie,” said Reynolds, “and I was sorry right after I did it too.”

“Why?” asked Ormsby.

“Because I’ve always had the suspicion that his wife took that insurance out on McHaffie just so she could kill him. But murder is dangerous stuff to talk about – so I’ve always kept my mouth shut... until now.”

“What makes you suspect foul play?”

“Well, not long after McHaffie died, Lyda married a friend of mine. His name was Harlan Lewis. He was an implement salesman.”

“What happened to him?”

Reynolds shrugged. “I don’t know. After they got married they moved to Denver, Colorado, and that’s the last I heard of either of them.”

“But if he was a friend of yours, why didn’t you hear from him?”

“We had a disagreement before he left.”

“What about?”

“Insurance. Lyda and Lewis came in here and she wanted him to take out ten thousand dollars on his life, with her the beneficiary.”

“So?”

“So I told both of ‘em point-blank that I didn’t like the look of things. Then I drew my friend Lewis to one side and told him if he knew which side his bread was buttered on, he wouldn’t have anything to do with that woman. And do you know what he did? He punched me on the nose and told me he never wanted to speak to me again. Then he and Lyda walked out and went into the office across the street.”

Ormsby looked out the window to follow Reynolds’s gaze. He saw another insurance man. Going there, he introduced himself to the insurance man – a character named Arms.

“When,” the deputy asked, “did a policy holder of yours by the name of Harlan Lewis die?”

Arms looked up his records. “Less than a year ago,” he said. “Why?”

“Never mind why. Just tell me what his address was.” Arms gave Ormsby an address in Denver, Colorado.

In Denver the deputy found himself wandering through an unoccupied house on the edge of town. This was the house where Lyda had lived with Harlan Lewis, her third husband and, the deputy suspected, the fourth of five men she had somehow poisoned.

There was a small barn at the rear of the property. Ormsby wandered into it. Poking around the cellar, he saw an old cardboard box. Opening it, he found a pile of blackish paper, each sheet around one foot square. At first he thought it was carbon paper but, picking up a piece and examining it, he began to curse to himself.

Why hadn’t he thought of this – why hadn’t he suspected it before? He had found a box of old-fashioned fly papers which, when soaked in water, make an arsenic solution!

So that was how Lyda had got away with it all those years! She had bought fly papers, for which no records were kept and the purchase of which never aroused suspicion, made a lethal potion from them and, pretending that it was a bitter medicine, administered it to her victims.

Ormsby rushed back to Twin Falls. He now had enough evidence to start digging up bodies. The first to come up was Big Ed Meyer. The authorities couldn’t have been less surprised when the autopsy showed that Big Ed was shot through with arsenic.

Then the Dooley boys were disinterred, and they like Big Ed were filled with arsenic. Next came Billy McHaffie. He too was a sight for sore microscopic eyes. Finally, Harlan Lewis was exhumed and he was as arsenic-happy as the others.

The law now had, after five long years, the goods on a modern Borgia who poisoned five men and turned a tidy profit in the process. But where was she?

Deputy Ormsby took to the road once more. By checking baggage records, he traced Lyda to San Francisco. And there, checking marriage records, he learned that a month previously she had become the wife of sailor Paul Southard.

Navy records disclosed that Southard had gone on a tour of duty in Honolulu. Ormsby dispatched a cable, asking the police there to arrest Lyda Southard and hold her.

She was living with Southard near Pearl Harbor, in a little bungalow.

He suddenly realised how Lyda had got away with murder for so long. She bought fly papers – for which no records were kept – and soaked them in water to produce an arsenic solution!
Lyda Southard was sentenced to life imprisonment and sent to the Idaho State Penitentiary at Boise. She lost no time in turning on the old charm. Soon she was in charge of the rose garden. Keeping an eye on the future, she turned an inquiring gaze on a none-too-bright trusty named Dave Bryant. Dave had the use of a prison car and used to run errands outside the gates, so Lyda propositioned him. Bryant was to get a saw to cut through the cell bars and a rope so she could climb over the wall after dark – and he was to be waiting outside for her in the car.

“We’ll go away together, Dave,” she promised, “to the South Seas or somewhere. Now won’t it be nice for you after all these years to live happily with a lady like me?”

Dave said it sure would, and he got busy. The escape, which took place in May, 1931 – 10 years after Lyda checked into

### MMF 110 COMPETITION

**WIN LANDRÚ’S SECRET**

On April 12th, 1919, acting on a lead from a housemaid, the Paris police arrested a short, bald, 50-year-old swindler at his apartment near the Gare du Nord. A century later that man, Henri Désiré Landru, remains the most notorious and enigmatic serial killer in French criminal history.

The official version of Landru’s murderous rampage was so shocking that it almost defied belief. According to the authorities, Landru had made “romantic contact” with 283 women during the First World War, luring 10 of them to his country houses outside Paris where he killed them for their money.

Yet no bodies were ever found, while Landru obdurately protested his innocence.

The true story of Jaffre Landru, buried in the Paris police archives for the past century, was more disturbing. In Landru’s Secret, Richard Tomlinson draws on more than 5,000 pages of original case documents, including witness statements, police reports and private correspondence, to reveal the fascinating details of the case.

For a chance to win a hardback copy of Landru’s Secret – The Deadly Seductions Of France’s Lonely Hearts Serial Killer by Richard Tomlinson (Pen & Sword History, £25.00; ISBN: 978-1-52671-529-6), just answer this question:

**In which year did Landru go to the guillotine?**

- [ ] 1920
- [ ] 1921
- [ ] 1922
- [ ] 1923

The first correct answer out of the hat after the closing date of March 26th will win. Send your answer, with your name and address, to **MMF 111 Competition, PO Box 735, London SE26 5NQ** or email **murdernostfoul@truecrimelibrary.com** with “MMF 111 Competition” in the subject line, and including your full postal address. The answer and winner will be announced in **MMF 112**. Good luck!

The winner of the competition in MMF 110, with the answer Mrs. Hudson, is Mrs. Marie Neale of Stapleford.

Congratulations! Your prize – a paperback copy of The Murder That Defeated Whitechapel's Sherlock Holmes – will be with you soon!
For nearly a week, the New Zealand press had been reporting on the police investigation into the death of Natacha Hogan, 21, whose body had been found in Auckland’s Pigeon Park near Karangahape Road. She had been battered to death with rocks.

Then a shocking and significant letter arrived at the offices of the New Zealand Herald.

“To all you stupid f----, I’m writing to you f----- cause those pigs do not have a f------ clue,” the letter read. “I don’t even think they can read. I thought they would have caught me by now.”

The note, full of spelling mistakes and profanities and signed with the initials “NBK” – a presumed reference to the 1994 movie Natural Born Killers – and a badly drawn star, gloated on the death of sex worker Natacha. “Satan is telling me to kill all the bastards,” it said.

The letter claimed Natacha, known to her friends as Twiggy, was the killer’s fourth victim, though this proved to be bravado. And it threatened that there would be more victims to come.

“It seemed like it had a feel of being genuine,” said the newspaper reporter who first saw the letter. “I rang the guy in charge of the case and he sent someone straight away to pick it up because it said stuff the killer would know.”

Six days earlier, in the early hours of October 19th, 1996, Hayden Poulter, 35, out of his mind on a cocktail of alcohol, cannabis and LSD, wandered in and out of bars along Karangahape Road “looking for a bitch to kill.”

He met Natacha, who had been plying her trade that night, at about 5 a.m. and offered her $60 for oral sex. The streets were busy, full of supporters still celebrating the All Blacks’ victory in the first rugby league test against Great Britain at Auckland’s Ericsson Stadium. Natacha agreed to Poulter’s terms and suggested they use his car, a Toyota Corolla, parked nearby. Poulter told his victim he preferred the park and, as they walked into the cemetery next to it, Poulter removed his heavy Jack Daniel’s belt buckle.

He first struck Natacha on the side of the head with the heavy Jack Daniel’s belt buckle, then he struck her with a rock and raped her.
Road, not stopping until he hit the volcanic Piha Black Sand Beach on the western foreshore. On the way, Poulter discarded Natacha’s purse after failing to find the $60 he’d given her. He also ditched the remaining half of his belt buckle.

By the time he reached the beach, Natacha had already been found by a nun walking her dog.

A former police officer recalled the Karangahape Road of the 90s, in the days before prostitution was legalised and the road gentrified with coffee shops, designer boutiques and men in suits. “Seedy is a reasonable description of it. I don’t think you would have taken your mum up there for a cup of coffee. There were characters up there.”

“It was a potpourri of people, drama, drugs, grog and gangs,” added a spokeswoman for the New Zealand Prostitutes’ Collective.

However, the collective perception of Karangahape Road in those times is perhaps misjudged – the sex industry never accounted for more than a small fraction of its income. On October 26th, 1996, the day after the New Zealand Herald received Poulter’s letter, the killer bought a five-inch-blade Army-style knife which he hid within his jacket.

He drank beer in a bar where he watched the All Blacks win the second rugby league test on television. At 4.20 p.m., he walked down the street and around the corner to Cleopatra’s massage parlour. He paid $50 for a high-pitched scream. They dashed to the massage room and threw open the door. Poulter stood there with the bloodied knife in his hand as Ladda squirmed on the floor with a knife wound in her back.

Poulter slashed and stabbed at Ladda Nimphet and Herbert Norris repeatedly. He escaped through a window – but not before slashing himself in the leg by accident.

Ladda Nimphet and Herbert Norris died from their wounds. A city-wide search began that lasted through the next six hours. Later that night, at 11.13 p.m., an exhausted Poulter walked into Auckland’s central police station and impassively placed his knife on the counter.

In his confession, Poulter blamed the killings on a second personality that occupied his head with him – named Hell. In his muddled state, he said, he thought his victims were gang members out to get him.

“Although people won’t believe me, I do have remorse,” he said. “I am sorry for what I did, I will be punished for the rest of my life, but I can’t change the past. All I can do is change me.”

Poulter’s problems began deep in the new arrivals, driving the knife into Herbert’s forehead and slashing Angkana’s arm and thigh. As his victims lay incapacitated on the floor, Poulter stabbed Ladda and Herbert repeatedly.

He escaped through a window – but not before slashing himself in the leg by accident. Poulter stood there with the bloodied massage parlour. He paid $50 for a Thai masseuse, Angkana Chaisamret, heard a high-pitched scream. They dashed to the massage room and threw open the door. Poulter stood there with the bloodied knife in his hand as Ladda squirmed on the floor with a knife wound in her back.

Poulter slashed and stabbed at Herbert Norris and another masseuse, Angkana Chaisamret, heard a high-pitched scream. They dashed to the massage room and threw open the door. Poulter stood there with the bloodied knife in his hand as Ladda squirmed on the floor with a knife wound in her back.

Poulter slashed and stabbed at Ladda Nimphet and Herbert Norris died from their wounds. A city-wide search began that lasted through the next six hours. Later that night, at 11.13 p.m., an exhausted Poulter walked into Auckland’s central police station and impassively placed his knife on the counter.

In his confession, Poulter blamed the killings on a second personality that occupied his head with him – named Hell. In his muddled state, he said, he thought his victims were gang members out to get him.

“Although people won’t believe me, I do have remorse,” he said. “I am sorry for what I did, I will be punished for the rest of my life, but I can’t change the past. All I can do is change me.”

Poulter’s problems began deep in the past. His parents were British but they separated when Poulter was young and his father emigrated elsewhere. Poulter’s mother and stepfather wanted to start a new life on their own.

Poulter’s teenage years were spent in boys’ homes and foster homes. A short stint in the Navy didn’t work out and he was discharged. He drifted through jobs that included shearing, demolition crews, fishing and farming, supplementing his income with petty crime.

Melancholic, he tried to kill himself three times, then took to drugs and entered an addiction clinic. He met a woman there and briefly it looked like he might get his act together – but when she was jailed for robbery, it pushed him over the edge. “Something that was building up for years,” he said.

In 1997, Poulter was sentenced to life by Justice Paterson at the Auckland Central Court with a minimum of 15 years. “It is unlikely, I suspect, that I will ever be so moved as I have been by the statements in this case,” Justice Paterson said. “You took three lives but it is no exaggeration to say that you have devastated if not destroyed the lives of many others.”

By May 2018, Poulter had unsuccessfully applied for parole on seven occasions. As he faced the parole board for the eighth time, they were told of Poulter’s “reintegrative journey” that included successful days of guided release into the community.

Granted parole, Poulter was released in June but two months later he was recalled due to a breach of conditions, which included that he could not enter Auckland or consume any drugs or alcohol for the rest of his life. Four weeks later, on September 23rd, 2018, Poulter was found dead in his cell at Whanganui Prison.

After being sentenced in 1997, Poulter had written a letter to the New Zealand Herald apologising for his actions. “It’s been almost a year and I’m still struggling to come to terms with it all. I am constantly plagued and tormented with bad dreams. For me, it is a punishment on its own and something I have to live with for the rest of my life.”

“The remorse I have within me is genuine and deep, especially for Natacha as her life was a lot like mine, filled with abuse and violence. I am sorry Natacha. I am sorry Ladda. I am sorry Herbert. I am so very sorry.”

Above, Poulter’s first victim Natacha Hogan. Left, the NBK letter sent by the killer. Below left, police search the cemetery where Natacha was found.
Get your copy of MURDER MOST FOUL delivered direct to your home – at 25% off the shop price!

FOUR ISSUES, PACKED WITH GREAT STORIES, FOR JUST £13.50

3 EASY WAYS TO SUBSCRIBE:

• Visit www.truecrimelibrary.com
• Call 020 8778 0514
• Post Complete the order form below

The world’s No.1 true crime quarterly
• Save 25% on the shop price • Never miss an issue • Get your copy first • Delivered direct to your door • Post-free in UK
• The perfect gift for yourself or a friend!

You can also subscribe to True Detective, Master Detective and True Crime at £31.50 for 12 issues

SEND TO:
Forum Press, PO Box 735, London SE26 5NQ

☑ Yes! I would like to subscribe to MURDER MOST FOUL for one year (4 issues) ☐ Tick here if it's a gift subscription
☐ UK £13.50 ☐ Outside UK (surface mail) £23/US$31
☐ Europe (airmail) £26 ☐ Rest of World (airmail) US$40

YOUR DETAILS:
Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. Forename ___________________________________________
Surname ____________________________________________________________
Email ______________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________ Postcode __________________________
Country ___________________________ Telephone ________________________

GIFT SUBSCRIBER DETAILS:
Mr./Mrs./Miss/Ms. Forename ___________________________________________
Surname ____________________________________________________________
Email ______________________________________________________________
Address ___________________________ Postcode __________________________
Country ___________________________ Telephone ________________________

PAYMENT:
☐ By credit/debit card:
Please debit my ☑ Visa ☐ Mastercard ☐ Maestro number: ____________
__________
Expiry date _______ Security code _____
☐ By cheque mode payable to Forum Press (UK only)
She was a “wild creature…” A Love and Death Classic of the 1950s is

HENRY JORD

Left: Felix Bailly. Above, René Floriot, attorney for the Bailly family, addresses the Paris jury

The proprietor had his moment in the limelight later that day, Saturday, March 17th, 1951, when he told police about the girl and how she had kept fondling a pistol in her right coat pocket.

But whatever her hands were doing, her eyes were intent on the street, and whenever the window frosted over she blew on it. It was a dull, grey street, the kind tours avoid like the plague. Besides, it was early, 9.15 a.m., and except for an occasional car or bundled-up pedestrian hurrying past, there was little life on the street.

Across from the bar was a high iron lattice gate, giving access to a secluded courtyard and apartment building. The girl’s eyes were fixed on the gate as though waiting for someone.

She didn’t have to wait long. At 9.45 a tall young man strode along the street. She watched him swing the gate open,

WHENTHE slim, dark-haired, dark-eyed girl walked into the Paris back-street tavern, only the cat that sprawled by the cash register looked up. Two drunks slouching against the bar were pursuing their own wine-propelled dreams, and the tavern owner never paid any attention to a customer until he had to.

When the proprietor finally shuffled over to the girl’s table, she was breathing on the frosted window, clearing a spot so she could look out.

“What is it you want, mademoiselle?” he asked.

“Black coffee,” she replied. “My last one.” When she saw the puzzled expression in his face, she added, “It’s that kind of day.”

He was in no mood to solve puzzles. This girl was probably crazy. She had to be to come to a dump like this. While he was drawing some brackish liquid from a tarnished coffee urn, the girl took a gun from her handbag and slid it into her coat pocket. She released the safety-catch as the proprietor brought her the cup of coffee.
close it behind him and disappear into the courtyard.

The girl dropped some money on the table and left the tavern. She crossed the street, opened the lattice gate and entered the house behind it. That was the last anybody saw of her.

Half an hour later a cab pulled up before the gate and a young man leaped out and raced into the house. In a matter of minutes Paris police headquarters heard from him.

Phoning in a breathless voice, he gave his name: Bernard Marsan. That morning, he said, his friend Felix Bailly called him on the phone, urging him to come over right away.

By the time Marsan had dressed, hunted up a cab and travelled across town, nearly an hour had passed. He rang Felix’s bell, pounded on the door, but got no answer. “I know Felix had reason to fear someone,” Marsan told the officer at headquarters.

“That was why he wanted me to be with him. And now I fear something has happened to him. He doesn’t answer the door and there’s a strong smell of gas coming from the apartment.”

The police sent the fire brigade and two detectives. The firemen battered down the door. The gas was thick, and on the floor of the kitchen, where gas
poured from the stove, sprawled the form of a beautiful girl. In the living-room, doubled up between an armchair and a table, slumped the body of a young man. There were two bullet holes in his left temple and one in the back of his neck.

The detectives, Inspectors Louis Poirier and George Dubois, turned to Marsan, who told them what he knew. The man was his friend Felix Bailly. The girl was Pauline Dubuisson. Felix had gone out with Pauline when both were in medical school in Lille.

They parted a year and a half ago. Felix enrolled in a Paris university while Pauline continued her studies in Lille. A few days ago Pauline had suddenly popped up in Paris.

Somebody, Marsan continued, had warned Felix's father that the girl was armed. And his mother had urged him not to stay alone in the apartment. So he had asked one friend or another to be with him. But Felix couldn't believe, Marsan said, that Pauline meant him any harm.

Why should she even be after him, let alone want to kill him, after that 18-month separation? Still, to ease his parents' minds, he tried to have someone with him at the flat.

While the detectives were questioning Marsan, firemen were administering oxygen to Pauline. They succeeded in restoring her faint heartbeat and a few whimpered words crossed her lips before she slipped into a coma.

Marsan, his voice taut with rage, said, “She’s a wild, perverse creature. She knows only one law – her body. She wanted to pull Felix down into the cesspool of her own depravity. He resisted so she shot him in cold blood.

That suicide attempt – it’s just a fake. If she'd wanted to die, she'd have used the gun."

Felix didn’t mean to keep the rendezvous, Godet said. Nor, apparently, did Pauline. That became clear later when detectives spoke to the owner of the tavern across the street, where Pauline had sipped her “last” cup of coffee.

Godet was upset about what followed. He had been unable to stay with Felix after Pauline called there. The two men had both gone to a nearby café for breakfast. There Felix phoned Bernard Marsan to come over. The two finished their breakfast then Godet caught a bus and Felix returned to his flat alone.

“He must have opened the door to Pauline thinking it was Marsan,” Godet speculated. “He was a plucky fellow, Felix. He didn’t like all these sissy precautions, but his mother made him promise not to spend a moment alone till Pauline was out of town again. Or maybe he let her in to settle things. She’s a viper! He never should have trusted her.”

Why had this rumpus with Pauline started up again? the police asked. Godet suggested that the officers talk to Fernand Wagner, who had “baby-sat” Felix the night before and was his closest friend.

Wagner was shattered when he heard the news. “Somebody else is guilty of a crime here that’s almost as bad as the murder,” he declared. “And that was to give Pauline Dubuisson Felix’s address. When he left Lille he made a point of keeping his Paris address a secret, even from most of his new friends.”

At any rate, Pauline had got it. Ten days ago, just before midnight on March 8th, Felix's doorbell rang. There stood Pauline in a friendly mood, so he asked her in. She curled up in a chair and spoke of old times. Felix eased her out of the place under the pretense of wanting to have a late snack. And he put another damper on her passion by telling her he was now happily engaged to be married.

“Pauline took the train back to Lille,” Wagner finished. “She’s the kind of woman who is happy only when she can put her claws into a man. She must have been very unhappy that night.”

The city morgue sent the detectives a bloodstained telegram that had been found in one of Felix’s pockets. Signed “Madame Gerard,” the four-day-old message asked Felix to phone her at a Lille number “regarding a matter of the greatest urgency.”

Who was Madame Gerard? Felix’s friends couldn’t help and Pauline was still in a coma. So next morning detectives made the three-hour trip to Lille and dropped in on Madame Gerard.

“I’m Pauline’s landlady,” the elderly woman said. “Poor girl.” She was the first person so far to express any sympathy for the suspect.

Asked what sort of girl Pauline was, Madame Gerard said, “I think I know Pauline better than most people. She’s been staying with me for over two years. Some say she’s wild. I wouldn’t know. To me she’s always seemed a warm-hearted, generous girl. She loves animals and is always helping people.”

“She shoots them too,” Inspector Poirier said. “In the past couple of weeks something made her go off her head. Do you know what it was?”

The landlady shook her head. Strange things had been happening. There was Pauline’s first trip to Paris. She had left suddenly on March 8th. On returning to Lille two days later, Pauline said she had seen Felix. He was going to marry Monique Lombard, she said. Obviously it was a marriage of convenience from what she had heard, she told her landlady, and added, “Somebody once told me I was a tigress. It wasn’t nice what I did to Felix when he still wanted me.”

It sounded involved, but the detectives weighed every word. If Pauline recovered she would have to answer for the murder. “Was she jealous of his fiancée?” Inspector Dubois asked. The landlady
 remembered a remark Pauline had made. “I don’t want Felix to be happy with another woman – I don’t love him enough for that.”

The detectives shook their heads. It was beginning to look as though Pauline had murdered Felix Bailly out of jealousy or possessiveness.

“Did she ever say what she would do?” Inspector Dubois asked.

“She told me she felt like finishing it all. I didn’t take the remark seriously, but a couple of days later, when I was cleaning her room, I saw a gun. I asked her about it. She said it was a toy. For a few days she seemed to take things lightly again. Then she brooded in bed for forty-eight hours.”

Towards the end of the second day the landlady suddenly heard Pauline’s voice in the hallway: “Goodbye, Madame Gerard.” And Pauline was gone. She had taken her best clothes. On the table she had left a note.

“I wish my personal belongings be disposed of in the following manner,” Pauline had written. Then she went on to distribute her medical books, her two cats, what jewellery she had, keepsakes and clothes among various friends.

Madame Gerard knew Felix’s father was a physician and she knew where he lived. Over the phone she got Felix’s address from him – Felix had no phone, his father said. He had to call from outside. So Madame Gerard sent a wire to Felix saying, “Pauline in Paris. Avoid any meeting. Telephone urgently. Signed, E. Gerard.”

“So Pauline is back in Paris again,” he said when he finally called her. “I had dinner with her the other night.”

Felix gasped when she told him that Pauline was carrying a gun. “Thanks,” Felix said. “I won’t let her in any more.”

The detectives wound up their visit at Madame Gerard’s after searching Pauline’s room. They took back to Paris one item only, but that packed as much fire as any gun. It was Pauline’s diary.

It was a kind of catalogue of vice. The lists of lovers read like a telephone directory. It spoke of them as though they were guinea pigs and it went into the ecstasies of her embraces, some of them rather unusual.

“A guidebook to orgies,” a detective called it. Aside from its sexual revelations the diary was invaluable in trying to assess what made the strange, intelligent girl become a murderess.

The diary started in 1942 when Pauline was 14. The place was Dunkirk, the war-wrecked town on the Channel, then under Nazi occupation. One night in May, Pauline missed dinner. Her father went on the hunt for her among the ruins of the city. He found her in a dugout in a passionate clinch with a German soldier.

In school she soon became a disruptive influence. The principal called her father in and asked him to remove her. She inflamed the adolescent imaginations of her classmates with tales of orgies in which she took part, the school principal said.

Occasionally, in her diary, she reflected on her early depravity and blamed her parents for it. “They are made of ice,” she wrote. “They don’t know what feeling is. I’ve always been lonely and unhappy because of it. Now I seek love where I can find it – even if it’s only for an hour.”

By the time she was 16, Pauline began to fear that the Germans might stick her into a slave-labour battalion, as they did millions of other girls. Nazi recruiters used to roam the streets and snatch all healthy-looking boys and girls, who were never seen again.

Those who could took to the hills. Pauline picked a different type of protection: she shared German Colonel Busch Dominick, commanding medical officer of the Wehrmacht hospital in Dunkirk. “He is tall, handsome and 55,” she recorded in her diary. “I make him a delicious mistress.”

In May 1945 when Colonel Dominick, along with all the other Germans, was chased from Dunkirk, Pauline was in trouble. Mademoiselles who had blatantly fraternised with the hated occupiers had their heads shorn and were chased naked through the streets by fervent patriots. To spare her this fate, Pauline’s parents put some mileage between their daughter and the scene of her wartime conduct.

So she went to Lyons where nobody knew her. But soon many would – intimately. She enrolled in medical school – Colonel Dominick’s influence – and besides being top in her grades, she was also the female Casanova of the campus.

The following year, 1946, her parents made her enrol in the university at Lille, where she would be nearer their residence in Malo. The first time she went to a lecture she spotted Felix Bailly. At the end of the lecture she turned her baby eyes on him and asked him to lend her his notes.

“He was breathing heavily when he handed them to me,” she wrote in her diary. “From that moment on I owned him. He makes a nice pet. Everyone on the campus is green with envy.”

Three fantastic years of lovemaking, torment and hatred followed. It wasn’t planned that way, but Pauline found herself straining at the leash. She never stopped chasing adventures elsewhere.

At the same time she wouldn’t let go of Felix, who was an idealistic young man, deeply in love with her. She two-timed him not only with her fellow-students, but also with her professors.

Why did Felix put up with it all? He probably didn’t understand it himself. At any rate, her diary noted: “He never stops telling me he is sticking with me only because he wants to save me from my terrible instincts. He thinks I would be a lost soul without him. Maybe he is right.”

Above: Pauline’s sister and mother look sadly on at her trial
In September 1949, things came to a head. For the 100th time Felix asked her to marry him. But she laughed in his face. “Do you think I’m crazy enough to abandon my freedom?”

Felix’s reply was, “You’ll never see me again.” She didn’t believe a word of it. But for once she was wrong. Felix’s bags were packed and within the hour he left Lille for parts unknown.

When she found out, Pauline hit the bottom of despair. Or was she playing a role in a drama which she herself finally believed? She swallowed cyanide – even inhaling its dust can be deadly. Pauline supposedly took quite a dose of it, but it failed to end her life. Some people held that, being a medical student, she knew exactly how to stage the perfect fake suicide. Others said she owed her life to the fact that the chemical had decomposed during the years she had kept it untouched in her chemistry lab.

The diary touched briefly on the suicide attempt and from then on it didn’t mention Felix again. The tears were dry. Many new honeymoons took the place of her old love. In June 1950 she flew off to Austria with a young man who, like all the others, wanted to marry her. She deserted him in Vienna and en route back to Lille stopped off at Utra in Germany, Colonel Dominick’s peacetime residence, to rehash old bliss.

Two more professors entered the picture. One, aged 49, wanted to marry her. “Too old,” recorded the diary. The other, an eminent member of the staff, was a vulgar blackmailer. He threatened to fail her unless...

She sailed through his course with flying colours.

On March 5th, 1951, the diary came to an abrupt end with the first mention of Felix in a year and a half. “Jeanne L. back from Paris,” Pauline wrote. “She saw Felix and they talked about me. I must see him again.”

On March 8th, 1951, Pauline Dubuisson went to Paris. She returned to Lille in an unhappy mood. On March 10th she bought a gun. Once more she went to Paris, this time to settle things in a final way.

Who was Jeanne L., the detectives wondered? What news could she have brought that led to the tragedy? Oxygen and antibiotics had saved Pauline’s life and the investigators were now able to talk to her. Jeanne – Jeanne Labousse – was a friend of hers, Pauline revealed. When Jeanne went to Paris she chanced to run into Felix Bailly. He had spoken to Jeanne of his impending marriage to Monique Lombard. He didn’t seem happy about it; called it a marriage of convenience. Monique was wealthy. On the other
Pauline hered the court. She did not plead the crime of passion, that still might have set her free.

Nor did she try to keep up the fiction of an accident. She admitted deliberate, premeditated murder, thus asking for the death penalty.

She said that after Felix left her she realised that, as he had said, only he could save her from her own vices. If she could not be saved she wanted to die and take with her the only man who could have given her life some meaning.

“She is a desperate woman,” her attorney Paul Baudet declared, rejecting the suggestion of the prosecution that her suicide attempts were merely simulated.

He referred to her as “a pathetic creature who cannot face the humiliation of disclosing before a jury of six men and one woman and a courtroom full of curious spectators the most intimate details of an agitated, confused private life.”

Before her last suicide attempt in prison she had, Baudet said, written him a letter, “the most moving document I have ever read.” He did not, however, quote from the letter.

The life of Felix Bailly followed the pattern of all boys who are good and who fall prey to perverse women. For two years he knew no peace. Baffled, ridiculed, humiliated, his passion forced him back to this woman, who accepted his pleas triumphantly. But as soon as his back is turned she laughs at him, glories in her power over him and turns to another lover.

Prosecutor Lindon shook before Pauline her red-bound diary. With true Gallic frenzy, he shouted, “She is a monster, a personality from hell, a kind of hyena!”

“She has no words to bring her as a woman of unspeakable depravity. I don’t hesitate to call her the most perverse woman I have encountered in my career.”

A single witness testified in Pauline’s favour. This was Jeanne Labousse – the Jeanne L. of the diary – a pretty woman I have encountered in my life.

She said a few nice words about Pauline, which Jeanne reported to her. “I must have exaggerated a bit,” Jeanne admitted. “Or Pauline put more meaning into my words. I did not know that she was still in love with Felix.”

Prosecutor Lindon asked for the guillotine, but the jury proved to be more merciful. They were satisfied with a life sentence for the “personality from hell,” who thus once again cheated death.

On September 19th, 1963, during an unguarded moment, Pauline Dubuisson committed suicide in her prison cell.
JOSEPH DEANS made a point of letting it be known well in advance that murder was on his mind. He told his intended victim he was going to kill her and he told his friends about it too.

The intended victim, Catherine Convery, a 51-year-old widow who had been Deans’ lover, merely shrugged. The friends were more alarmed, but there wasn’t a great deal they could do about it. They shook their heads in disbelief as Deans showed them his murder weapons, an axe and a razor, and discussed what he was going to do. There probably hasn’t been a murderer who has better made known his intentions than Joseph Deans...

It is difficult to reconcile Deans, the premeditating killer in middle age, with the Deans who, at the age of 25, set out from his native Sunderland to make his fortune in South Africa. His well-to-do family had connections in that country and Deans, young and fancy free, was tired of life in England.

And in South Africa there was the lure of gold. For 17 years, punctuated only by a short break as a soldier in the South African Army, he toiled away in the gold minds on the Rand. He didn’t exactly make a fortune, but he did make some money and unlike many an unmarried gold miner, he was prudent with it.

But gold mining in the first decades of the 20th century was an unhealthy occupation. The dust in the mines wasn’t extracted, and in that hot, dry climate it had nowhere to settle except in the lungs of the miners.

Deans, frequently gasping for breath, guessed that the rigour of gold mining was shortening his life. If he hadn’t much longer to live, he decided, it would be better to go home and die in his own country.

So it was that in 1914, as Britain stood on the brink of the First World War, he bade farewell to the sunny shores of South Africa and set sail for rather less than sunny Sunderland.

The reward for his sacrifice was that he would never again have to work for his living if he chose not to. He had savings of more than £600, a South African Government pension of £2 a week for life, and a South African Army pension of 10 shillings a week for life. By today’s standards, therefore, he was had enough for a single man with modest aspirations to live on.

The country in which Deans disembarked was much different from the Victorian country he had left towards the end of the previous century. The streets were bustling with men waving their call-up papers, the stations and the ports were ringing with farewell cries from wives and sweethearts.

Deans stood and stared at it all. The Great War was to marginalise him because of his respiratory trouble and because of his age – he was 42 when he arrived back in Sunderland. As the town emptied of men gone off to the war, Deans, who was good-looking and who liked to dress in the best style, was quickly noticed by the women left behind. They must have thought that not all was entirely lost as they eyed the former gold miner, now a gentleman of leisure, up and down.

Certainly Catherine Convery thought so. Her eye alighted on Deans at the very same moment that his eye alighted upon her. Soon they were going out together. By day they walked the town arm in arm, in the evenings he wined and dined her, at night he slept with her.

Catherine cooed over her good luck. She had two teenage children living with her at her tenaced house in Devonshire Street who still needed her support, and she was desperately hard up. In a town suddenly bereft of eligible men she had
door, where he stopped, turned about
face, and looked at the trembling Cathy.

“I haven’t long to live,” he said softly.

“But before I die I will kill you.” He

slammed the door so hard behind him

that a picture fell from the wall.

In the weeks that followed that row
Deans kept away from Cathy and
Devonshire Street, although he always
made sure he was at the same pubs she
was in. Across the rows of chattering
drinkers he would watch her, talking
to this miner and that miner, her face
lighting up and relaxing into laughter.

Deans was simmering. The rage
within him was burning away as he

sensed that she had used him, that she

had picked him out for his money, that

her interest had faded because it was

spent and he’d become a working man

again.

The weeks slipped by. Then, on
Wednesday, October 4th, Cathy’s son
William was coming home from work
when he heard the unmistakable sound
of his mother screaming. He ran up
Devonshire Street just in time to see her
flee from the house and run down the
pavement towards him. Deans, carrying
a long piece of string, was close behind
her.

As she saw William, Cathy screamed
out, “He’s going to choke me!” Like a
flash William stepped in between them.

Deans, whose respiratory problem
militated against such exertion, was
panting for breath; even so, he tried
desperately to push William out of the
way. The youngster stood his ground
and, frustrated, Deans snarled at Cathy,

“I’ll shoot you!”

William laughed. Like Cathy and
his sister Norah, he too had heard it
all before from Joe Deans. Leaving the
gasping miner standing impotently on
the pavement, he ushered his mother
back indoors.

Two death threats from a man with an
uncontrollable temper and a reputation
for violence might have been more than
enough for anyone to put themselves
on the alert. Cathy Convery, however,
simply refused to take Deans seriously.
She might have thought more about it
if she had known that Deans’ post that
morning had brought him a licence to
hold a gun, an application for which he
had made a week previously.

Next day Deans was out and
alone near his home in Southwick,
Sunderland, when he spotted a friend,
Thomas Thompson, also a miner, at
Wheatsheaf Corner.

The two men passed a few minutes
in conversation. As they talked Deans

not only found one, but one with money.

And if two people intent on having
a good time didn’t live quite so
comfortably on today’s equivalent of Joe
Deans’ weekly pension, Deans, who was
hopelessly in love with his Cathy, was
past noticing it. It seemed indeed that as
the cash dwindled, Deans became more
and more infatuated with his widow. As
the cash dwindled, too, it seemed that
Cathy became rather less interested in
him.

One day, a couple of years after his
return to England, Deans woke up to
the realisation that the £600 he had
brought back with him from South
Africa was all gone. He had now only
his two pensions, and while they might
have been enough to keep him, they
were not enough to keep him and Cathy
in the style to which he had accustomed
her. So to improve his cash flow, he got
a job as a coal miner.

The work was bad for his health and
his bad health preyed on his mind. He

became moody. From time to time he
had threatened Cathy, now, in place of
the threats, he became uncontrollably
violent. Her reaction was to become
increasingly hostile towards him.

Coming from his shift at the mine to
Devonshire Street on Monday August
7th, 1916, he accused her of seeing
another man while he was at work. She
had heard all this before and she was
tired of it. She flared up, hotly denying
the accusation, and there was a bitter
argument. Deans grabbed a knife from
the kitchen table. “I’ll do it now!” he

yelled.

Fortunately, Cathy’s daughter Norah
was also in the room. She too had heard
it all before from Joe Deans. Now she
rushed between the two protagonists.

Deans stood back, glaring at Norah.
Silently he put the knife back on the
kitchen table and walked towards the

Sunderland during the
First World War
reached into his pocket, brought out his pocket-watch and slid two rings from his fingers.

“These are no good to me now,” he said, holding them out to Thompson. “Would you like to buy them?”

Thompson shook his head. As much as he would have liked to buy the watch and the rings, he didn’t have any money. Deans threw the watch back in his pocket and slipped the rings back on his finger. Then he took off his hat and, pointing to the inside lining where he had pasted a picture of Cathy, he said, “See that, Tommy?” Thompson nodded. “I love every hair of her head,” Deans said. “But I have to kill Cathy tonight.”

Thompson, who knew all about the feud between the ex-lovers, was aghast. “Don’t be silly, man,” he said. “It’s not worth it, just leave her alone.”

Shaking his head, Deans replied, “It’s not as simple as that, Tommy,” and walked off.

The following day the two met again, this time at midday in the Grey Horse Inn. Deans bought Thompson a drink, then once more took a ring off his finger and handing it over to his friend said, “There’s a keepsake for you.”

Thompson looked at his friend inquisitively, and looked away hurriedly when he saw tears coursing down Deans’ cheeks.

“Why should I need a keepsake from you, Joe?” Thompson asked softly. “I can’t stand it any longer,” Deans replied. “I will have to do away with her tonight.” Again he walked off, with Thompson’s gaze following him through the double doors.

Thompson bought himself another beer and looked around the pub. As he had half-guessed, Catherine Convery was there, over the other side of the bar surrounded by a group of miners. He elbowed his way through the crowd, took hold of her arm and gently steadied her to a quiet corner.

“Joe’s just given me this ring,” he said, showing her the keepsake. “He seems to think he won’t be needing anything like this any longer. He told me he was going to kill you tonight. I thought I’d better let you know.”

Cathy smiled and pointed to a large burly man propping up the bar counter. “That man will put Joe Deans through his drills if he comes to me,” she said. Thompson shrugged. He felt he had done all he could. He went back to his pint, drank it up, and left the pub.

When Deans left Thompson in the Grey Horse Inn that day he went straight to Garrick’s, a nearby gunshop. He examined several revolvers and after choosing one he balanced it in his hand and asked the shop owner, Mr. Garrick, “Will it kill a man?”

Mr. Garrick didn’t like the sound of that question. He hurriedly took the gun away from Deans and thrust a form in his hands, telling him to get it signed by the Chief Constable before he brought it back. Deans took the form but never returned to the shop.

Later that day he called round at Cathy’s house. The door was opened by her daughter Norah.

“Is your mother at home?” Deans asked and without saying anything Norah slammed the door in his face. Deans walked away and someone in a next-door house saw tears streaming down his face.

He went next to Carrs, a local ironmongers, and bought an axe and a razor. The shop assistant wrapped them both up for him in a brown paper parcel which he stuffed into his coat pocket.

From Carrs he drifted aimlessly back to Cathy’s house. This time he didn’t knock; instead, he waited in the street. In any event he would have found no one at home, because presently he saw Cathy coming up the street with Norah and William.

She saw Deans the moment she saw her, but she took no notice. Deans was not to be put off. “You won’t be alive tonight!” he screamed at her across the road. Catherine and her entourage quickened their pace.

“I won’t do it when they are there,” Deans yelled after them. “I’ll do it when no one’s there.”

Cathy hurried into her house and breathed a sigh of relief as she closed the front door behind her.

A little after 6 o’clock that night Cathy was back at the Grey Horse Inn, surrounded, as usual, by a large group of men. And as usual Deans was there too, watching her every move from a corner of the bar.

Another customer there that evening was a miner from Barnsley named Albert Saunders. He had been with Cathy at the pub during the afternoon and now he was back with her again.

Saunders had met Joseph Deans during the afternoon. Deans had walked up to him in the pub when, taking off his hat and pointing to Cathy’s picture inside it, he had announced gruffly, “I love that woman; Saunders had turned away ignoring him.

Saunders had been drinking with the other miners and with Cathy when, at about 7 o’clock, he noticed that Cathy had disappeared from their group. Stepping outside, he saw her at once in the back lane, deep in conversation with Joseph Deans. He stood watching for a few minutes before deciding that they seemed on friendly terms and that there was nothing to worry about. He went back inside the pub.

He might of course have been much more concerned had he known of Deans’ constant death threats. In that case he might have wondered why Cathy had left the pub alone to talk in a deserted place to the very man who was threatening to take her life.

Had he known this, Albert Saunders would have sensed danger. For danger there undoubtedly was...

Ten minutes after Saunders retreated back into the Grey Horse, the pub doors burst open. Cathy was on the threshold on her knees. Her face and clothes were covered with blood and she was groaning.

“He’s murdered me this time!” she shouted and then fell to the floor unconscious.

Some of the customers rushed to her side, tearing up bits of cloth in a united effort to stem the flow of blood. They stretched her out on a seat, gave her brandy, and made makeshift bandages to apply to copiously bleeding wounds. They stepped back to give her air as she began to come round. To anxious cries of, “How are you feeling, love?” she replied that she was dizzy. Even so, she managed to get off the seat and stand up.

The blood, though, continued to flow through the bandages, and sensing that she was fighting a losing battle someone suggested that it might be wiser to take her to the hospital. Everyone thought that was a good idea.

Then occurred what must surely be the strangest of tales as a result of the killing of Cathy Convery. Surrounded by six helpers who appeared to be present only to give her moral support, she walked the half mile to the hospital.

By the time she got there she was able to climb on to a hospital bed. But almost at once she lost consciousness. The police were called but Cathy couldn’t tell them what had happened. She just stared back at her questioners through glazed, uncomprehending eyes, as if she were already on her way to another world.

The police questioned the miners, and in particular Albert Saunders. As a result of his information, they went to Deans’ house in Colliery Square, Southwick, on Monday, October 9th, two days after the attack on Cathy.

With the police hammering on his front door Deans realised that his time had come. He took the razor from his pocket and slashed violently at his throat. When the police finally broke down the front door he was lying on the bed with blood spurting from his
neck. He was told he was under arrest and was taken at once to Sunderland Infirmary, where his self-inflicted wounds were stitched.

On the way Deans asked his police escort if Cathy was dead. The policeman remained silent, but Deans persisted.

“It’s all that woman’s fault,” he said. “She’s had hundreds of pounds from me and now she wants to toss me over.”

Cathy Convery’s battle for life ended four days later, six days after she was attacked. She died in hospital on Friday October 13th. Joseph Deans was immediately charged with her murder.

The inquest on Cathy was adjourned twice because Deans had to stay in hospital and wasn’t fit enough to be present. And in the end, when he was fit enough, he flatly refused to attend, instructing his solicitor to watch the proceedings for him.

All manner of Sunderland men came to give evidence. One of them was John Donkin, a cartman. He told the coroner’s jury that he had often lent money pointing inside to the picture of Cathy, he said, “This is the last night for that lady, I have to kill Cathy tonight.”

Albert Saunders told the coroner of Cathy’s last hours in the pub. He had seen a shaft poking out from Deans’ pocket, but he hadn’t given it any thought.

When he went to look for Cathy after she was missing, and found her talking to Deans at the back of the pub, he couldn’t hear what was being said, but he was certain they were being friendly towards each other. The next he knew was when Cathy came crawling, covered in blood, into the pub. He then rushed outside, but there was no sign of Deans, who had completely disappeared.

Another miner who was in the pub that evening, Thomas McDonald, 23, said he had helped to bandage Cathy’s wounds. He didn’t know Joseph Deans but he had distinctly heard Cathy cry out, “He’s murdered me this time.”

The jury brought in a verdict of wilful murder against Deans, who was ordered to stand trial at the next assizes.

Sunderland Royal Infirmary. Cathy made her way here despite the mortal wounds inflicted upon her by Deans

to Deans, who always paid it back. About 4 o’clock on the afternoon of October 4th – this was three days before the attack on Cathy – Deans called at his house, and as Donkin let him in Deans said, “Now, John, I owe you a few shillings and I want to pay you back now because I mean to die tonight.”

Donkin was flabbergasted and just stood looking at his friend open-mouthed. Then Deans showed him an axe and a razor, and said the axe was for her and the razor was for himself.

Donkin pressed him to stay for tea, which Deans gratefully accepted, and throughout the tea he tried to put Deans off the idea. But Deans waved aside all protest and refused to listen. “It’s only wasting time,” he said. “Nobody can put me off.”

Deans passed over the pound he had borrowed from Donkin a week previously then, taking his hat and with the other two wounds. The only reason the doctor could give for her being able to walk to the hospital was that she was drunk.

The defence called no witnesses and maintained that Deans was mad. His counsel, Mr. J. Cambier, told the jury, “The repeated threats the prisoner made to Catherine Convery were those of a jealous man and were never intended to be carried out.”

If, then, they came to the conclusion that Deans had committed the murder, they should find him guilty but insane.

But Mr. Justice Low in his summng-up told the jury that the passion of jealousy was not necessarily insanity.

“It has also been said that Deans acted under an uncontrollable impulse;”

the judge went on. “However, when a man provides himself with a weapon, and there is evidence to show that he did provide himself with one, for a particular purpose, it is difficult to say that there is a sudden impulse.”

It took the jury a mere six minutes to decide that Deans was perfectly sane and guilty of murder.

Asked if he had anything to say Deans shook his head, then suddenly shouted out, “All I’ve got to say is that I killed the woman, and I’m pleased I killed her.”

The judge appeared to be somewhat taken aback by this outburst. He sat silently for a few moments while Deans stood staring at him defiantly. Finally the judge told him, “What you have just said, if anything further was required, is sufficient proof of the justice of the verdict which the jury has found.”

Nodding, Deans appeared to agree.

“Yes, sir,” he replied.

The judge described the murder as “cruel and premeditated.” Deans stood totally unmoved as he listened to the death sentence.

Two warders, one on each side of Deans, moved in closer to him, but the prisoner waved them back. He turned and walked down the steps unaided.

Dean appealed and the long journey he had to make in custody from Durham Prison to the Appeal Court in London caused some discussion before he set off.

A warden suggested that if they handcuffed Deans’ wrists together, which was then standard procedure, the prisoner would be left a little too free to throw himself under a train or commit suicide in some other way.

So Deans was handcuffed instead by one wrist to a junior warden, leaving the senior warden travelling with them to keep an eye on him.

The senior warden afterwards recounted what happened. He bought Deans a packet of cigarettes and chatted to him throughout the journey. When they got to London the warden bought his charge a pipe and some tobacco to smoke on the way to Pentonville Prison, where he was to stay.
At Pentonville Deans was served with roast beef and potatoes, and all his other meals there were on a similar generous scale, which appeared to impress the condemned man. When the appeal judge told the defence counsel that the prisoner had no grounds for a reduction of sentence – “after all,” the judge pointed out, “he did say in court that he had killed the woman and was glad he’d done it” – Deans looked very disappointed.

Deans was escorted back to Durham to await execution, but it seems that the excellent bill of fare he had enjoyed at Pentonville, far superior to that which was served up in Durham, had now gone to his head. He wanted bacon for breakfast every day and better dinners, and when he was told he couldn’t have them he shouted, “Tell the doctor I want to see him!”

When the doctor arrived Deans told him, “I ate well in Pentonville and I mean to eat well here, too.”

The doctor apparently agreed that he should, for after that Deans ate like a king in Durham Prison.

Arriving at the prison on December 19th ready for the next day’s execution, hangman John Ellis at once expressed his concern over a problem with the mechanism on the scaffold. Ellis said afterwards, “To prevent the possibility of the lever being pulled at the wrong moment, a cotter pin is inserted, which I generally get my assistant to pull out the moment he has pinioned the condemned man’s ankles on the scaffold.

“I found the cotter pin at Durham fitted rather too tightly, so I called an engineer and asked him if he would mind knocking it out in the morning when I gave the signal.

“The engineer was absurdly superstitious. ‘I’ll have nothing to do with that!’ he declared.

“I dared not risk having to struggle with the cotter pin in the morning, so I pulled it out now and inserted a smaller piece of metal that served the same purpose but would come out more easily when required.

“If I hadn’t discovered this fault in good time I might have had a nasty scene when the final moment came.”

As it happened, there was still to be a “scene” on the morning of the execution, but it had nothing to do with the scaffold. Ellis had to collect Deans from a room which was 70 yards from the scaffold – far too far away for a man’s last walk, in Ellis’s view.

After pinioning Deans’ wrists Ellis left the prisoner in the charge of his assistant and set off for the scaffold.

“As I went I was puzzled by the sound of clattering feet behind me, and looking round I had the surprise of my life. Deans had set off on his own and was running so fast that it was as much as my assistant could do to keep up with him.”

Fortunately, the chaplain, an old man who would have been quite incapable of maintaining that pace, had arranged to meet the procession half-way, and seeing Deans’ great hurry he stepped in front of him. He put his hand gently on Deans’ shoulder. “Take your time,” he enjoined him in a kindly tone.

As Ellis watched from the scaffold the procession, led by the dreadfully slow chaplain, now moved at a snail’s pace. Ellis thought they would never arrive – and probably Deans, in his hurry to die, thought so too.

After putting a cap over the prisoner’s head on the scaffold, Ellis recalled, “The last view I had of his face gave me a swift glimpse of his eyes shining with excitement and a look of contented anticipation in his face.”

Then the executioner removed the makeshift cotter pin, pulled the lever, and sent Joseph Deans to the death he so desired.
Don’t Miss This Year’s
TRUE DETECTIVE SPRING SPECIAL
On sale from February 7th with cases that include...

NECROPHILIAC PREACHER’S FATAL FANTASY
WHO THREW LISA FROM THE 15TH FLOOR?

SOHO’S PORN SHOP MURDER
DOUBLE-KILLER’S 25-YEAR WAIT FOR THE CHAIR
GRANDAD GOES ON SHOOTING SPREE IN NURSING HOME
LOVE-STRUCK NURSE STRANGLED IN A SOUTHPORT PARK

SERIAL KILLER A DAY AWAY FROM EXECUTION
WELSH SHOCKER: AFTER 21 YEARS IN PRISON – HE KILLED AGAIN
WHO SHOT “MICHIGAN’S OWN ELVIS”?
DON’T SLEEP, DON’T EAT... WE’RE COMING AFTER YOU!

ORDER TODAY – HERE’S HOW:
• Ask your newsagent to save one for you – this is a free service they will be pleased to provide
• Order direct from Forum Press by sending a cheque or postal order for £4.50 to PO Box 735, London SE26 5NQ, UK (post-free in UK; Europe €9/rest of world $12 including postage)
• Call our order hotline on 020 8778 0514 to order by credit/debit card
• Order worldwide via our website: www.truecrimelibrary.com

84-PAGE NOT TO BE MISSED ISSUE!
Missed an issue of MURDER MOST FOUL?
Snap up these bargain back issues NOW for just £4.90 each, POST-FREE in the UK!