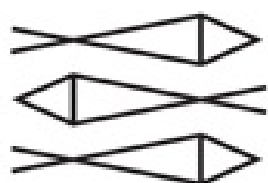


# RUNNING WILD

J. G. BALLARD

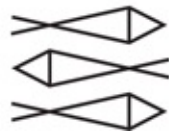


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# RUNNING WILD

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J. G. BALLARD



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From the Forensic Diaries of Dr. Richard Greville, Deputy Psychiatric Adviser, Metropolitan Police

Postscript, December 8, 1993

By the Same Author

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ADVISED, METROPOLITAN POLICE

**August 25, 1988.** Where to start? So much has been written about the Pangbourne Massacre, as it is now known in the popular press throughout the world, that I find it difficult to see this tragic event with a clear eye. In the past two months there have been so many television programs about the thirty-two murdered residents of this exclusive estate to the west of London, and so much speculation about the abduction of their thirteen children, that there scarcely seems room for even a single fresh hypothesis.

However, as the Permanent Secretary impressed upon me at the Home Office this morning, virtually nothing is known about the motives and identity of the assassins.

"I say 'assassins,' Doctor Greville, but there may have been only one of them. I'm told that some sort of martial arts fanatic could have got away with it." Sitting beneath the portrait of his most illustrious predecessor, he gestured gloomily. "And as for the whereabouts of the orphaned children—they've vanished through some window in time and space. Not a ransom demand, or even a simple threat to kill them..."

He sounded almost aggrieved, and I commented: "All the same, I think we should assume that they're still alive."

"Should we? To be honest, Doctor, I'd rather you didn't assume anything. That's why I've asked you here."

He stared at me without hope, already regretting the decision. As we both well knew, the fact that I had been called in by the Home Office, after my unpopular minority report on the Hungerford killing, was less a compliment to me than a comment on the failure of the police, the CID and the intelligence services to come up with even a solitary clue to the sources of this horrific crime.

As baffled as the Permanent Secretary, I could only think of asking his permission to visit the murder site at Pangbourne Village. The luxury housing estate was still sealed off from the press and public, but had been tramped over by an army of heavy-footed investigators. I waited as he scribbled my *laissez-passer*, my arms burdened by two Home Office briefcases loaded with their probably useless files. Then I remembered the comfortable seats of the viewing theater in the Whitehall basement, and as an afterthought asked if I could see the police video recorded at Pangbourne within a few hours of the crime.

"The police video? All right, but it's pretty grim stuff. Though after Hungerford, I daresay you might have the stomach for this sort of thing, Doctor..."

Irritated by his tone, I almost declined. The senior people at both the Home Office and Scotland Yard regarded me as a dangerous maverick, overly prone to lateral thinking and liable to come up with one embarrassing discovery after another. Later, looking back as I revise these diaries for publication,

I realize that it was there, in the deserted viewing theater, that I was given my first glimpse into the real causes of the Pangbourne Massacre. If I failed to recognize what I saw, and if over the course of my investigation I seem unduly slow to identify the culprits, I can only plead that what now appears self-evident scarcely seemed so at the time. My failure to recognize the obvious, in common with almost everyone else concerned, is a measure of the true mystery of the Pangbourne Massacre.

## **The Police Video**

Like millions of other television viewers, I had already seen selected extracts from the film and numerous documentaries about the massacre, and I hardly expected any sudden revelation. But as I relaxed in the viewing theater, I soon realized what a remarkable film this was, and how well it conveyed the curious atmosphere of Pangbourne Village—in its elegant and civilized way a scene-of-the-crime waiting for its murder.

The twenty-eight-minute film was taken by officers of Reading CID soon after eleven o'clock on the morning of June 25, 1988, some three hours after the murders. Thankfully, there is no sound track and one is glad that none is necessary, unlike the TV programs with their hectoring commentaries full of lurid speculation. This minimalist style of camera work exactly suits the subject matter, the shadowless summer sunlight and the almost blank façades of the expensive houses—everything strangely blanched, drained of all emotion, and one seems to be visiting a set of laboratories in a high-tech science park where no human operatives are employed.

The film opens by the gatehouse that controlled access to the ten mansions, the recreation club and gymnasium which made up the estate. The medallion of the private security firm is visible beside the visitors' microphone, but there is no sign of the uniformed security guard who usually sat at the window.

The camera turns to show the delivery van of the local wine merchants which the police have parked among the ornamental trees on the grass verge. The driver, a pallid young man in his early twenties, is staring in a despondent way at the deep ruts left in the finely trimmed grass, as if the cost of restoring this once-immaculate surface will have to be met from his wages. It was he who gave the alarm, after discovering the first of the bodies as he delivered a case of white burgundy to the Garfield house (No. 3, The Avenue).

The camera fixes on him, and like a badly trained actor he steps forward to the gatehouse, a tinge of jumping across his sallow cheek. He points to the door, and a uniformed constable opens the armored glass panel to reveal the interior of the office.

A security guard is lying on the floor below the row of television monitors, their screens a blizzard of snow. Someone has cut the cable running from the surveillance cameras mounted all over the estate, but clearly Officer Turner had no time to reach for the telephone whose scissored cord hangs from the desk above his head. Arms pinioned, he lies within a bizarre contraption of rope and bamboo sticks, his neck gripped by a pair of spring-loaded steel calipers, as if in his bored moments he had been constructing a box kite for one of the pampered children of the estate and had been trapped inside.

it.

In fact, as I can see from the livid contusions on his throat, he has strangled himself after blundering into this lethal cat's cradle which his murderer dropped over his shoulders, its double nooses tightening around his neck as he struggled to free his arms and legs.

The camera leaves the gatehouse and sets off along The Avenue, the tree-lined central drive of the estate. The handsome mansions sit above their ample front lawns, separated from each other by screens of ornamental shrubs and dry-stone walls. The light is flat but remarkably even, a consequence of the generous zoning densities (approx. two acres per house) and the absence of those cheap silver fir trees which cast their bleak shadows across the mock-Tudor façades of so many executive estates in the Thames Valley.

As well, though, there is an antiseptic quality about Pangbourne Village, as if these comparative directors, financiers and television tycoons have succeeded in ridding their private Parnassus of every strain of dirt and untidiness. Here, even the drifting leaves look as if they have too much freedom. Thirteen children once lived in these houses, but it is hard to visualize them at play.

For once, unhappily, the pale green slopes of Parnassus are marked with a darker dye. The police camera turns to examine the Garfield family's Mercedes in the driveway of No. 3. Roger Garfield, a merchant banker in his mid-fifties, sits in the rear seat, head leaning against the off-side stereo speaker as if to catch some fleeting grace note. He is a large-chested man with a well-lunched midriff and strong legs that have spent agonizing hours on an exercise cycle. He has been shot twice through the chest with a small-caliber handgun. Almost as surprising, he is wearing no trousers, and bloodstained footprints emerging from the house indicate that he was shot while dressing after his morning shower. He somehow managed to walk downstairs and take refuge in his car. Perhaps his clouding mind still assumed that he would be driven to his office in the City of London.

But the Mercedes was going nowhere. Garfield's chauffeur had been shot dead a few moments after his employer. A white-haired man in a black uniform, Mr. Poole lies face down in the bed of orange-tipped cannas beside the front door, cap still held in his right hand.

The camera pauses over him and then enters the house, following the bloody footprints through the open door. Garfield and his wife had made numerous trips to Hong Kong, and the rooms are filled with pieces of chinoiserie—large porcelain vases stand on the blackwood furniture, and there are pairs of Ming horses and jade figurines. Surprisingly, none have been disturbed, suggesting that the murderers had approached their victims without surprise. The housekeeper, Mrs. West, lies shot below the marble mantelpiece in the drawing room, interrupted while doing her dusting. In an upstairs bathroom the camera finds Mrs. Garfield, a handsome woman in her late forties, slumped against the glass door of the shower stall, her yellow toothbrush still in her hand.

All trace of the Garfields' sixteen-year-old son, Alexander, had vanished. His bedroom, study and bathroom were undisturbed. Only in his mother's blood flowing across the bathroom tiles could be seen the smeared prints of Alexander's rubber-cleated shoes, left behind as he was seized and swept away by his abductors.

The police video continues on its grim and matter-of-fact way. The camera leaves Garfield seated in his Mercedes and gazes across the tranquil lawns at the next macabre tableau. As the two constables outside the Reade house (No. 1, The Avenue) step back from the colonnaded porch, the camera reveals the lavish interior of the property tycoon's home, so filled with French furniture and objets d'art that it resembles one of the larger rooms at the Wallace Collection. Yet not a glass cabinet has been rifled, not a Sevres plate shattered, not an ormolu clock toppled from its pedestal.

Indeed, Mr. and Mrs. Reade sit at their breakfast table in the dining room, lying back in the chairs at opposite ends of the lacquered oblong as if momentarily overwhelmed by the calm and richness of the life they have arranged for themselves. Both have been efficiently shot by assailants who have crept so close to them that the cutlery beside their napkins is undisturbed. Only the place settings of the Reades' daughters, Annabel and Gail, have been scattered to the floor as these orphaned children made a desperate attempt to resist their kidnappers.

The camera resumes its melancholy tour. By the time it reaches the third house, the Gropius-inspired home of a distinguished concert pianist, the sequence of entrances, deaths and exits begins to resemble a nightmare exhibition that will never end. House by house, the assassins had moved swiftly through the estate on that quiet June morning, killing the owners, their chauffeurs and servants, before abducting the thirteen children. Husbands and wives were shot down across their still-warm beds, stabbed in their shower stalls, electrocuted in their baths or crushed against their garage doors by their own cars. In a period generally agreed to be no more than twenty minutes, some thirty-two people were savagely but efficiently done to death.

However, as the film ended, with a visit to the perimeter guard post where the second security officer had been killed by a single bolt from a crossbow, I was struck by the way in which Pangbourne Village remained aloof from this day of death. The owners of these elegant houses had been dispatched with the least damage to the fabric of their homes, as if the façades of professional and upper-middle-class life were their most solid and lasting substance.

Indifferent to the lives, and deaths, negotiated within its walls, Pangbourne Village would endure. Once the mystery of this mass murder and kidnapping had been solved, a seemingly impossible task with which I had now been charged, a new cast of tenants would soon be recruited to fill these calm drawing rooms. For some reason, as I left the viewing theater and stepped into the traffic-filled clamor of a Whitehall evening, I gave a small shudder for those new arrivals.

## **Pangbourne Village**

Having exhausted my central nervous system with the police video, I returned to my office at the Institute of Psychiatry and tried to calm myself by looking at the origins and creation of Pangbourne Village.

The small Berkshire town of Pangbourne lies five miles to the northwest of Reading and approximately thirty miles to the west of London. Despite its title, the Pangbourne Village estate was not built near the site of any former or existing village. Like the numerous executive housing estates



built in the 1980s in areas of deregulated farmland between Reading and the Thames River. Pangbourne Village has no connections, social, historical or civic, with Pangbourne itself.

The chief attraction for Camelot Holdings Ltd, the architects and property developers, was the proximity of the M4 motorway, and the ready access it offers to Heathrow Airport and central London—an ease of access that might well have benefited the assassins and kidnappers. All the residents of Pangbourne Village worked either in central London or in the silicon valley of high-technology computer firms along the M4 corridor. Pangbourne Village is only the newest (completed 1985) and most expensive (the ten houses, all with swimming pools, projection theaters and optional stable) of a number of similar estates in Berkshire which house thousands of senior professionals—lawyers, stockbrokers, bankers—and their families.

Secure behind their high walls and surveillance cameras, these estates in effect constitute a chain of closed communities whose lifelines run directly along the M4 to the offices and consulting rooms, restaurants and private clinics of central London. They remain completely apart from their local communities, except for a small and carefully selected underclass of chauffeurs, housekeepers and gardeners who maintain the estates in their pristine condition. Their children mix only with each other at exclusive fee-paying schools or in the lavishly equipped sports clubs sited on the estates.

Pangbourne Village is remarkable only for having advanced these general trends toward almost total self-sufficiency. The entire estate, covering some thirty-two acres, is ringed by a steel-mesh fence fitted with electrical alarms, and until the tragic murders was regularly patrolled by guard dogs and radio-equipped handlers. Entry to the estate was by appointment only, and the avenues and drives were swept by remote-controlled TV cameras. All police officers concerned in the investigation agreed that the penetration of these defenses by a large group of assassins was a remarkable and, as yet, inexplicable event.

## The Residents

I turned to the list of victims, going through the detailed dossiers which the Special Branch had compiled, in the hope that the identities of the murdered residents might suggest some elusive clue. The sets of photographs, entries from *Who's Who*, the photostats of birth and marriage certificates, share portfolios and bank statements, academic qualifications and honorary degrees passed between my hands, the records of gifted lives so brutally ended.

- 1 The Avenue. *Julian Reade*, 43, chairman, Reade Investments. *Dr. Miriam Reade*, 41, ear, nose and throat specialist, Wimpole Street. *Shot*.  
2 daughters: Annabel, 16, and Gail, 15.
- 2 The Avenue. *Charles Ogilvy*, 47, Lloyds underwriter; hon. secretary, Pangbourne Polo Club. *Margaret Ogilvy*, 42. *Shot*.  
1 son: Jasper, 17.
- 3 The Avenue. *Roger Garfield*, 52, merchant banker. *Helen Garfield*, 47, proprietor, Pedigree Kennels, Windsor. *Shot*.

1 son: Alexander, 16.

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4 The Avenue. *David Miller*, 49, stockbroker. *Elizabeth Miller*, 46. *Electrocuted*.

1 son: Robin, 13. 1 daughter: Marion, 8.

5 The Avenue. *Dr. Harold Maxted*, 54, psychiatrist, Harley Street. *Dr. Edwina Maxted*, 48, psychiatrist, High Street, Kensington. *Crushed by car*.

1 son: Jeremy, 17.

6 The Avenue. *Margot Winterton*, 48, concert pianist. *Richard Winterton*, 57, director, Winterton Arrangements Ltd. *Shot*.

No children.

1 The Hill. *Richard Sterling*, 49, chief executive, EduCable, Oxford-area TV franchise. *Carole Sterling*, 42, former ITN newsreader. *Suffocated*.

1 son: Roger, 15.

2 The Hill. *Andrew Lymington*, 38, chairman, Leisure Marine Ltd. Ex-racing driver, 1982 Western Australia powerboat champion. *Sheila Lymington*, 37, former professional ice-dance skater. *Shot*.

1 son: Graham, 15. 1 daughter: Amanda, 14.

3 The Hill. *Ernest Sanger*, 57, chairman, Sanger Finance. Proprietor, Windsor World Theme Park, Slough. *Deirdre Sanger*, 54, managing director, She-She Fashions, Brent Cross. *Shot*.

1 son: Mark, 16.

4 The Hill. *Graham Zest*, 46, chairman, Zest Health Foods. *Beverly Zest*, 42, company secretary, Zest Health Foods. *Shot with crossbow*.

1 son: Andrew, 16. 1 daughter: Emma, 15.

The most careful research into the backgrounds of these murdered men and women has failed to reveal any common factor that might prompt a wholesale attack. The responsible character of the parents and the generous quality of family life have been reconstructed from the abundant testimony of those domestic servants who fortunately were absent on June 25 (a Saturday, and their day off for most of the staff). All testify that the murder victims were enlightened and loving parents, who shared liberal and humane values which they displayed almost to a fault. The children attended exclusively private day schools near Reading, and their successful academic records reveal a complete absence of stress in their home lives. The parents (all of whom, untypically for their professional class, seem to have objected to boarding schools) devoted long hours to their offspring, even to the extent of sacrificing their own social lives. They joined the children in various activities at the recreation club, organized discotheques and bridge contests in which they took full part, and in the best sense were guiding their sons and daughters toward fulfilled and happy lives when they themselves were cut down so tragically.

## The Murdered Staff

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In addition to the residents of the ten houses, the following members of staff were also killed.

*Mrs. Margaret West, Mrs. Jane Mercier, Miss Iris Neame,* housekeepers. *John Collis, David Taylor, James Poole,* chauffeurs. *Krystal Werther, Olga Norden,* au pairs. *Arnold Wentworth, David Lodge,* tutors. *George Burnett, David Turner,* security guards.

All investigation into the Pangbourne Massacre confirms that not a single adult present in the estate on the morning of June 25 survived the murderous half hour which began at approximately 8:20 a.m.

## The Missing Children

I looked at the photographs of the thirteen children, a group of thoughtful and pleasant adolescents smiling out of their school speech-day portraits and holiday snapshots. All attempts to trace their whereabouts have failed, despite computerized searches of their dental records, blood groups and medical histories. Four of the thirteen were on courses of prescribed drugs (for hay fever, asthma and tinnitus), five were receiving orthodontic treatment and one was under nominal psychiatric care (Jeremy Maxted, seventeen, for bed-wetting). Despite what was clearly overzealous prescription by their physicians, the latter willingly confirmed that the thirteen children were well nourished and enjoyed robust good health.

Extensive scuff marks, bloody handprints and shoe impressions that match the children's known shoe sizes indicate that almost all the children were present at the scenes of their parents' murder. However, no traces of their own blood were found, and the children do not seem to have been harmed.

I closed the files, trying to believe that the children were still alive. Given the task faced by the assassins, and the often complex and ingenious ways in which they had murdered their victims, the fact that they had apparently inflicted no harm on a large group of probably hysterical children suggested that hopes for them, however desperate, might well be justified.

## The Massacre: Various Theories

After this melancholy parade of murder and kidnap victims, I turned to the various theories suggested by the senior Home Office committee charged with the investigation of the killings.

**(1) The Lone Assassin** Michael Ryan and the Hungerford tragedy come immediately to mind, like the many similar multiple murders in Japan, the United States and elsewhere. These motiveless killings, in which solitary psychopaths run amok, shooting at unknown passersby, offer an explanation for the Pangbourne Massacre. It seems remotely conceivable that a solitary assassin, perhaps with specialist SAS training in murder by strangulation, trip wire and crossbow, might have entered the estate, killed the security guards and then moved through the ten houses, restraining the children before killing the adult occupants. He may then have returned to collect the children, perhaps driving them away to some secret

destination where they remain at his mercy to this day.

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Comment: all the evidence collected, from a shattered video in the Lymingtons' house recording an early morning film transmission, to the clock in the Maxteds' Porsche which stopped when the car was driven into the garage door, indicates that the murders were carried out almost simultaneously, within a period of time lasting as little as ten minutes. Several of the victims were killed by gunshots fired in the open air, and it is inconceivable that the intended victims did not flee the estate at the first sign of danger.

**(2) Thrill Killers** An extension of theory 1, which answers some of the objections to the single-killer hypothesis. Is it possible that a group of Michael Ryans, perhaps five or six deranged members of a local rifle club, strayed into the Pangbourne estate, perhaps after an all-night drug-taking orgy? Challenged by the guards, they were then provoked into a chain reaction of violence and murder.

Comment: all the investigating teams (CID, Special Branch, Army Intelligence and secret services) agree that the murders were carried out by a band of assassins numbering at least half a dozen and more probably ten to twelve, working skillfully together to a tightly planned schedule. It is unlikely that a group of psychopaths could have collaborated to this degree, given their customary impulsive behavior and taste for random brutality. Although several of the victims were killed in ingenious ways, none was subjected to gratuitous cruelty. Indeed, the deaths have the clear hallmark of deliberate and careful executions.

**(3) A Misdirected Military Exercise** The suggestion has been made in the tabloid press and by backbench Members of Parliament that the Pangbourne Massacre was the tragic outcome of an unofficial military exercise, in which a group of inexperienced SAS trainees were directed to the wrong target. They may have believed that they had been parachuted into a Warsaw Pact country, lost their heads and then murdered the adult residents of the estate before taking pity on the children.

Comment: inquiries at the highest level within the War Office and the secret services fail to substantiate this theory. A large area surrounding Pangbourne Village was minutely searched, but there is no trace of military vehicles, tire tracks or helicopter exhaust on grass or foliage. None of the residents of the nearby estates reports any sightings of military units. The lawns and soft ground within the estate show no footmarks of athletic men or any signs of their equipment.

**(4) The Political Dimension: Foreign Powers** The scale of the Pangbourne Massacre, the number of victims and the daunting task of controlling a large group of children together suggest the deployment of resources that only a foreign power could muster. Many of the murdered parents held senior positions in professions that brought them into frequent contact with foreign governments. The possibility exists of an elaborate act of revenge for unpaid

debts or “consultancy fees.”

Comment: exhaustive inquiries confirm that none of the victims was politically involved in any way. Their only contacts were with U.S. and EEC governments, and the latter’s willing collaboration in the police investigation rules out this possibility.

**(5) International Terrorism** Ballistics analysis of the spent bullets and the curious collection of weapons used point to the possible involvement of an international terrorist group, perhaps the IRA or a disaffected assassination squad of Libyan professionals. But the absence of any trace left by such a group, as well as the abduction of the children, rules out this option. However, the example of Patty Hearst suggests that one of the older children may have been brainwashed by a maverick group, perhaps a successor to the Baader-Meinhof gang, the French Action Directe, or the Italian Red Brigades. This remains an outside but remote possibility.

**(6) Organized Crime** At least two criminal gangs in the East End of London and one in Glasgow are capable of mounting the large-scale operation involved in the Pangbourne Massacre. The abduction of the children may be part of a mass kidnapping attempt that misfired. Alternatively, the massacre may have been a revenge killing by an international drug syndicate. But there is no suggestion that even one of the parents was involved in drug dealing, in the laundering of syndicate revenues through the London money markets, or in any other activities connected with organized crime.

**(7) The Parents as Killers** Could one or more parents have killed the others, and then committed suicide? Possible motives include sexual jealousy, professional rivalry or individual psychopathy. Could the appalled children, in a state of shock that has still not lifted, have then fled the estate, taking refuge in a remote property owned by one of the families? Curiously, for all their participation in group activities at the recreation club, the parents themselves did not mix socially, never invited each other into their homes, and seem to have known one another only as casual acquaintances. All the domestic staff agree that in the three years of the estate’s existence there was not a single example of marital infidelity between fellow residents, a remarkable tribute to the concepts of social engineering built into the estate’s design.

**(8) The Domestic Staff** Could disaffected members of the domestic staff—the chauffeurs, housekeepers, cooks and tutors—have turned against their employers? All the servants on leave (one, an elderly gardener, died of a heart attack on hearing of the massacre) were repeatedly interrogated, and far from showing resentment they all seem to have sincerely admired their employers, and were clearly happy to work for them.

**(9) Bizarre Theories** There remain a few outlandish possibilities.

(a) A unit of Soviet Spetnaz commandos, targeted on the residential quarters of the NATO

headquarters staff at Northwood, received an incorrect war alert order and were parachuted by error into the Pangbourne estate during the night of June 24. They slaughtered the adult residents, assuming they were senior military personnel, then realized their error and abducted the children.

(b) An experimental nerve-gas projectile fell from an RAF or USAF military aircraft into the Pangbourne area and deranged a group of nearby residents, who committed the murders. They then destroyed all traces of the children before suffering retroactive amnesia that erased any memory of the crime. Unaware of the murders they carried out, they have now returned to ordinary domestic life.

(c) The murdered residents and their children were, unknown to themselves, deep-cover agents of a foreign power. Their mission accomplished, the parents were “instructed” to murder each other, and the children disappeared into the cellars of the foreign embassy before being spirited abroad.

(d) The parents were murdered by visitors from outer space seeking young human specimens.

(e) The parents were murdered by their own children.

Looking through this list, it struck me that all were as fanciful as each other. Some uniquely strange event had taken place at Pangbourne Village, and to find its source I needed to visit the estate myself.

## **A Visit to Pangbourne: August 29, 1988**

Needless to say, the visit proved more difficult to accomplish than I imagined. Two months may have elapsed since the murders, but popular interest in the tragedy seems even greater now than it was the days immediately after June 25, fanned by the popular press and by a series of sensational TV documentaries. Last night the BBC’s *Panorama* program even speculated that a group of long-term unemployed from the north of England had come down to the leafy Thames Valley in search of jobs and had been provoked by the ostentatious display of privilege and prosperity into a spasmodic murderous rage.

Farfetched, perhaps, but seeing the large crowd around the entrance to Pangbourne Village I felt that the theory was almost plausible. The murders have attracted an army of sightseers, most content merely to gaze at the houses from the surrounding lanes or any convenient high ground. Scores of people, many equipped with binoculars and cine-cameras, are trudging across the front lawns of the estates, much to the annoyance of the residents. I even saw one man, with a tripod and telescopic lens, clambering onto a garage roof and being pelted with gravel by the outraged chatelaine, a ferocious blonde in her dressing gown.

The police try to disperse the public—all this must be a field day for burglars out on reconnaissance—but most of their manpower is needed to protect Pangbourne Village. A crowd of some two hundred sightseers was packed into the tree-lined avenue leading to the estate, and the

were people actually perched among the branches of the poplars, some with sheets around them, while others shouted abuse at the police below.

As I edged my car through this mêlée an overexcited young constable pounded on the roof and almost broke the windscreen with his fist. Despite my written authorization from the Chief Superintendent at Reading he was extremely reluctant to let me through.

I was rescued by a Sergeant Payne of Reading CID, a polite but rather taciturn character who was stationed permanently at the estate, and I suspect is working off some minor penance. He is well informed about the case, in an offhand and sardonic way, but most of his energies are devoted to controlling the spectators. When I parked my car by the gatehouse I noticed that the police were making full use of the closed-circuit TV system, whose severed cables they had replaced. A shirtsleeved officer scanned the monitors, sitting at the chair where his predecessor, the murdered security guard David Turner, was strangled in a strange cat's cradle of wire and bamboo (a device used by the Viet Cong to trap and kill American soldiers, so Sergeant Payne informed me).

Seeing the lawns, drives and front porches on the screens, I queasily remembered the police video I had watched in the Home Office theater. As I stepped out along the well-bred gravel of The Avenue into the silent estate, surrounded by the impassive mansions, I half-expected to come across the Mercedes with a trouserless Roger Garfield in its backseat. Fortunately, the forensic teams have long since removed all evidence, and virtually erased every grim trace of the murders. The broken windowpanes have been replaced, bloodstains chemically lifted, bullet holes plugged and replastered. Even the lawns have been cut, on the instructions of the firms of solicitors representing the next of kin.

Walking around the estate, a bored Sergeant Payne twenty paces behind me, I found it easy to imagine that I was one of the prospective buyers visiting Pangbourne Village soon after its completion. The noise of the distant crowd was lost behind the high screens of rhododendrons, and the fine houses gave off the unmistakable scent of oversleek contentment that comes from the combination of money and taste.

Selecting it at random, I walked up the drive to the Millers' house, No. 4, The Avenue. David Miller, a stockbroker, had been killed in his bath, his wife Elizabeth electrocuted on her booby-trapped exercise cycle. Their daughter, Marion, aged eight, and their son, Robin, aged thirteen, were the youngest of the Pangbourne children. While Sergeant Payne searched through his keys, I noticed the remote-control camera mounted on an art nouveau lamp standard in the center of The Avenue. It turned toward us, the officer in the gatehouse keeping an eye on our comings and goings, and then swung away to scan the silent pathways between the houses.

I pointed to the camera. "I must get one of those for my cottage at Pagham. They're useful things to have around."

"Not useful enough." Payne pushed the door open for me, unimpressed by the cameras. "As you know, anything happens..."

"Of course, Sergeant. I only meant that they help to keep out intruders. Though constantly living

under those lenses must have been a little unnerving. The security is cleverly done, but the estate does seem designed like a fortress.”

“Or a prison...” Payne lit a cigarette and deliberately exhaled a coarse blue smoke at the white-on-white interior of the Millers’ home. Its deep-pile white carpets, chromium and leather furniture seemed to aggravate him in some way. “The dogs and cameras keep people out, but they also keep them in, Doctor.”

“A pretty comfortable prison, all the same,” I rejoined. His tone irritated me, like the ash he scattered on the carpet. “Who on earth would want to escape? There’s space for the imagination to breathe here, Sergeant. Young imaginations—I’m thinking of those children.”

And trying not to think of the Millers’ two children, I began a brief tour of the house. As I gazed at the pleasantly furnished bedrooms, the boy’s with his bathroom and personal computer room en suite, I visualized the civilized and contented lives that the stockbroker and his family had led. There was nothing museumlike about this home—the skirting boards in the boy’s bedroom were scored by the heel marks of a healthy teenager. Sections of the striped wallpaper were pockmarked with old sticky tape from which a gallery of posters had hung. A wide range of interests was on display—there were a chessboard, shelves of intelligent paperbacks, the computer room and its video library of classic films like *Citizen Kane* and *Battleship Potemkin*.

“A bright lad,” I commented as we looked back from the doorway. “This was a happy child.”

“Happy? It was practically compulsory.” Payne smiled through a set of tobacco-stained teeth. “With all this gear, anything else would have been a crime.”

“Perhaps, but it’s not that lavish, Sergeant. It’s just that there are no rubbishy toys here. Tennis racquets, skis, home computer projects—it’s all very sensible.”

“Oh, it’s sensible.” Payne steered me down the corridor to the parents’ bedroom. “That’s one thing you can say about Pangbourne Village. It’s all very sensible ... and very, very civilized.”

At the time I thought this an odd choice of words, with the peculiar emphasis that Payne gave them. We were staring at the Millers’ bathtub, where a man had been put to death before his own children, first stunned by the hair dryer thrown into the water and then stabbed with a kitchen knife. I tried not to visualize the seething explosion of bloody water. This civilized mansion was a modern House of Atreus. I remembered the photograph of the Millers in the dossier, which showed a thoughtful, friendly man and his cheerful, good-looking wife. In the downstairs gymnasium where she died on the booby-trapped Exercycle there had been a wall diary marking out the various activities shared with the children—the school reading assignments to be talked over, the hour set aside after dinner to discuss television programs of mutual interest, the social events at the sports club in which the parents were taking part, the next round of the Pangbourne Village fathers-and-daughters mothers-and-sons junior bridge tournament. Scarcely a minute of the children’s lives had not been intelligently planned.

Without thinking, I reached out and held the electric plug of a hair dryer that hung beside the washstand (its double, the actual murder weapon, had been removed). The floor-to-ceiling mirrors the



lined the walls multiplied the images of myself and Sergeant Payne. He watched me in his brooding way, like a teacher patiently waiting for a dull pupil to catch up with him.

I realized that he wanted me to imitate the assassin's actions. Refusing to let him outstare me, I pressed the plug into the childproof socket. The spring-loaded pins required a double flick of the wrist, forcing me to lean across the washstand. I switched on the hair dryer, feeling the rush of warm air across my face and forehead, ruffling my hair. I listened to its whir, and watched the smoke from Payne's cigarette swirl and dance around us, as the water vapor must have swirled and danced on the June morning two months earlier. The mirrors had been spattered with blood, and whoever had pushed Miller out of his misery had seen endless reflections of himself receding to infinity down aisles speckled with red confetti, a true blood wedding.

"Satisfied, Sergeant?" Annoyed with myself, I switched off the dryer and led the way from the house.

## **The Psychiatrists' Home**

We crossed the silent avenue, watched by the monitor camera mounted on its ornate stand, and continued on our inspection. Sergeant Payne rattled his keys, like the jailer of a luxury prison for the miscreant superrich. I felt that he disapproved of the people who had once lived in these houses, resenting them not merely for their wealth but for the humane way they displayed it.

All the same, I was glad of the company of this bored policeman puffing on his sour cigarette, nodding at my comments without listening. Already I knew that he would not confide in me directly, and I needed to find some way of provoking him.

Fortunately, the Maxteds' house provided the opportunity.

By chance, the Maxteds were the two murder victims whom I had actually met, at a Stockholm conference in 1986. I remembered an elegant and professional couple, almost too self-controlled with their silk suits and hand-tooled personal pagers. Their smooth, downplayed Gestalt and Humanistic Potential jargon reminded me uncannily of the Scientologists, with the same reassuring pattern concealing a hard-nosed, evangelical sell.

But their home seemed pleasant enough, furnished in the comfortably oak-paneled way still favored by the more controversial psychiatrists. Avoiding the garage, where the Maxteds had been crushed to death under the wheels of their own Porsche, Payne and I set off on a tour of the ground-floor rooms, through the well-equipped gymnasium to the indoor swimming pool beside the tennis court. The bulletin boards displayed the same obvious pride in their son's academic and sporting achievements that the Millers' had shown, the same friendly homework reminders, the same recommended TV programs and suggestions for further reading.

I noticed in the Maxteds' study that none of my own books had a place on the shelves, an A-Z of once-modish names from Althusser and Barthes to Husserl and Perls. Whether to soften, or to emphasize, this rigorously fashionable image, there was a small television set on the desk beside the inkstand, placed there like the ultimate adult toy.

“And this is the son’s room?” I asked as we entered the bedroom of the seventeen-year-old Jeremy. “You know, Sergeant, other people’s homes always seem a bit strange, but these are rather odd houses.”

“No more than some I’ve seen.” Payne ignored my obvious ploy, well aware that I wanted to get him rolling, but he glanced at me with mild curiosity. “In what way, Doctor?”

“I mean that they’re so very alike. Not the furniture and fittings, though even they aren’t that dissimilar. It’s the atmosphere, the sense of very ordered lives being lived here ... almost too ordered.”

I strolled around Jeremy’s bedroom, noting the desktop computer, the surfboard and swimming trophies, a line of cups that packed the mantelpiece.

“He must have swum miles in that pool downstairs. Jeremy was the bed wetter, if I remember—perhaps the parents didn’t appreciate all the effort?”

“Oh, they appreciated it ... never stopped, in fact.” Payne pressed the computer keyboard, tapping out a simple code. The screen lit up with a message dated May 17, 1988:

*47 lengths today!*

There was a pause, and then:

*Well done, Jeremy!*

I stared at this message from the parents as it glimmered on the screen, a brief show of electronic affection, all that remained of parents and child in this deserted house.

“My God ... you mean the parents were wired up to the children’s bedrooms? There’s something unnerving about that, Sergeant.”

“Isn’t there, Doctor? You’re sitting here after finishing your homework, and suddenly the computer blips, ‘Well done, Jeremy!’”

“Talk about surveillance of the heart. It’s not just those cameras out there. Still, he must have been happy.”

A pair of water skis protruded from a closet. I drew back the door and glanced through the drawers which were filled with music cassettes, paperbacks and sportswear.

Then, under a pile of diving caps in the bottom drawer, I found a stack of glossy magazines, well-thumbed copies of *Playboy* and *Penthouse*. I showed the top copy to Payne.

“*Playboy*, Sergeant—the first crack in the façade?”

Payne barely glanced at the magazine. “I wouldn’t say so, sir.”

“Of course not. What could be more normal for a seventeen-year-old still prone to bed-wetting? The Maxteds were enlightened people.”

Payne nodded sagely. “I’m sure Jeremy knew that too, Doctor. The copies of *Playboy* made good camouflage. If you want to find the real porn have a look underneath.”

I pushed back the diving caps and lifted out the top three magazines. Below them were a dozen copies of various gun and rifle publications, *Guns and Ammo*, *Commando Small Arms*, *The Rifleman* and *Combat Weapons of the Waffen SS*. I flipped through them, noticing that the pages were carefully marked, appreciative comments written in the margins. Mail-order coupons were missing from many of the pages.

“The real porn? I agree.” I pushed the magazines back into the drawer, covering them with the diving caps as if to preserve Jeremy Maxted’s secret. “He probably belonged to a local rifle club. But don’t suppose his parents would have approved.”

“You can bet your pension they wouldn’t.” Sergeant Payne was smirking to himself. “Handling a firearm? To the people in Pangbourne Village that would be worse than molesting a child.”

“A bit extreme, Sergeant. In a way they could be right. Hold on a second...”

I switched on the cupboard light. Around the skirting board and the interior panels of the door were a series of curious notches, apparently left by a gnawing mammal with powerful incisors.

“Have you seen these marks, Sergeant? It looks as if a small creature was trying to get out. Did the Maxteds keep some kind of exotic pet?”

“Only in a manner of speaking.” Payne ambled to the door and held it open for me as we left the son’s room. “Those marks are quite common on the estate.”

“What are they caused by? The forensic people must have some idea.”

“Well ... they haven’t been able to agree.” We had entered Dr. Edwina’s bedroom. Payne pointed to the wooden frame of the headboard, where I saw a similar pattern of fretwork. “You’ll find them all over the place, a kind of dry ... rot.”

He emphasized the words with cryptic pleasure, then sat on the bare mattress and switched on the bedside TV set.

I said, sharply: “Sergeant, I must be getting on—you’ll have to miss the local race meeting.”

“This is their own private program, Doctor. There’s no gambling on the Pangbourne channel.” Payne pointed to the screen, which revealed the road outside the window. The camera tracked to and fro, as if searching for a fallen leaf, tirelessly hunting a panorama as silent as a stage set.

I shrugged at the screen. “Security was important here, they were obviously obsessed by it. So the house has an input from the monitors at the gate?”

“Every house in Pangbourne Village.” Payne spoke in a droll but meaningful way. “Upstairs and downstairs. At least we know why there were no infidelities here. But think of the children, Doctor—they were being watched every hour of the day and night. This was a warm, friendly, junior Alcatraz. Swimming at eight, breakfast eight-thirty, archery classes, origami, do this, do that, watch the Horizon repeat on the video together, well done, Jeremy...” Payne blew his coarse cigarette smoke at Dr. Edwina’s dressing-table mirror. “The only surprise about these people is that they found time to get themselves murdered!”

“Well, they were murdered. Let’s not forget that.” I let Payne’s outburst subside. He was still holding something back, and I waited to draw him out. “But they certainly led very busy and well-

organized lives. In fact, it's remarkable that the killers found them all in."

"Perhaps they made an appointment."

"By staging some pretext? It's hard to visualize what, exactly. Remember, this was a Saturday morning in June. It's quite a coincidence that no one was on holiday. Between them these people owned about fifteen properties, in the South of France..."

"... Cortina, Corsica and Tuscany."

"All those places you hate, Sergeant. Yet everyone was here, every adult and every child. One of the children—Roger Sterling, the fifteen-year-old—was due to have his wisdom teeth out and was brought home for the weekend from the London Clinic."

"Brought home?" Payne beckoned me into the ground-floor study as we spoke, still leading me on in all senses. "Or did he volunteer, Doctor?"

"Volunteer? Maybe. But for what? The diaries and appointment books show nothing—there were the usual Saturday activities—gymnasium work, the next round in the bridge contest, swimming..."

"... Forty-seven lengths today! Well done, Jeremy!"

Ignoring Payne, I pressed on, reciting from memory. "There was a visit by a TV producer planning a film about Pangbourne Village, a repeat of the *Panorama* program on the Eritrean famine, which a lot of the parents were watching with their children, and the disco in the evening. Nothing out of the ordinary..."

"But the boy, Roger Sterling, made a real effort to be here. The London Clinic wasn't keen to let him go."

"Right—he made up some story about a visiting friend from Canada who didn't exist. But why? Could the children have been planning a surprise?"

I was standing with my back to Payne, glancing at the books on the Maxteds' shelves, and waiting for the sergeant to reply. When I turned, a volume of Piaget in my hand, he was smiling primly, like a prudish man forced to enjoy the point of a vulgar joke.

"Yes, there's no doubt in my mind, Doctor. The children were planning a surprise."

"It's possible ... and whatever their motive, the killers got wind of this. Correct?"

"I would say so."

"Which suggests that they could plan the murders down to the last detail, confident where everyone would be. One thing is plain to me, Sergeant. The killers knew their way around."

"Oh, intimately." Payne sat back expansively in Dr. Maxted's leather armchair, as if resting after work well done. "The killers knew everything about the place, every staircase and Jacuzzi and diving board, every alarm switch and electric socket. But then they'd been here for years."

"Years? But who, Sergeant? The servants?"

"No, not the servants."

"Then who else? You sound as if you know."

I gestured with the book in my hand, and it fell open awkwardly to reveal a broken spine. I started down at the pages, many of which had been stabbed with the same doweling tool that had damaged the

skirting board in Jeremy Maxted's bedroom. Someone had gone through the book systematically, mutilating its pages. Suddenly I guessed whose fingerprints would be found on the bruised end board

"Sergeant, are you saying...?"

"What do you think, Doctor?"

"I've no ideas—but you obviously have."

"One or two. I can tell you, they aren't popular."

"Let's have them. I can cope with unpopularity."

Payne stood up, composing his reply to me, but then strode to the window. A speeding police car swerved across the road and pulled up at the bottom of the drive, scattering the gravel. A uniformed inspector hurried across the grass. He pushed through the door, a look of triumph on his face.

"Sergeant, get back to Reading—you won't find anything here." He turned to me. "Doctor Greville, we have the Miller girl! The first of the children has escaped!"

### **Marion Miller, the First "Hostage"**

During the next week I remained at my consulting rooms at the Institute of Psychiatry. I saw those patients whom I had briefly neglected, and tried to keep my head down as an immense barrage of publicity greeted the discovery of Marion Miller. This tragically orphaned eight-year-old had been found in the early hours of August 29, hiding in a skip loaded with overnight mail on Platform 7 of Waterloo Railway Station. A ticket inspector coming on duty (Frank Evans, eighteen years' service with British Rail, already a national hero) had heard what seemed to be a cat hissing among the mailbags in the skip. Trying to rescue the stray, he found the shivering and grimy form of a barely-conscious child with matted blond hair, wearing a bedraggled cotton frock and a single shoe.

The British Rail police were called, but the child, who was seven or eight years old and well-nourished, was unable to give her name. Exhausted by her ordeal, she was sunk in a state of speechless immobility, now and then emitting a strange hissing noise, as if she were imitating a pet cat. She was then handed over to officers of the local Metropolitan Police. They assumed that she was either a runaway or had been abandoned by her parents. A close inspection of the girl's clothing revealed a Harrods label in her cotton dress and the monogram of an exclusive Beauchamp Place outfitters in her single brogue.

A more significant finding was the series of stains of organic origin, in the approximate pattern of the girl's left and right hands, on the waist of the dress. An attempt had been made to wash the stains from the fabric, but analysis soon showed them to be blood. The girl herself bore no injuries, and by eight o'clock that morning speedy identification revealed the blood to be that of David Miller, one of the victims of the Pangbourne Village Massacre. Shortly afterward, dental and photographic evidence, and the visual confirmation of both grandmothers, established that the girl was Marion Miller, one of the thirteen abducted children.

During the next few days the discovery of this orphaned child swept all other news from the media, which became a vast pressure cooker of speculation fueled by the uncertainty over the circumstances

of the girl's release. Had she escaped, or was she the first of the children to be set free by the kidnappers? All the 1980s love of "hostages" soon transformed the twelve remaining children into pawns in a sinister game played with their lives and hearts by the unknown kidnappers. Seven national newspapers established ransom funds, which received millions in public donations.

The child herself was unable to help, lying in her closely guarded ward at the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital, and in an irreversible state of catatonic seizure. She was sedated and fed by tube but on meeting her grandmothers during her brief conscious moments she would merely hiss and make a strange movement of the left hand, as if unlocking a door, while touching her forehead with her right hand, presumably to ward off a blow.

This seemed to confirm that the child had escaped. The skip in which she had been found contained mailbags from the Canterbury area—had a fanatical religious order seized the children perhaps a group of deranged high churchmen opposed to the liberal archepiscopal establishment. Marion's dress had been washed with a popular brand of detergent retailed for a soft-water area in Wales—Welsh nationalists came under immediate suspicion, and holiday cottages in the principality were sold off by the score. Meanwhile her single brogue contained soil traces from Kensington Gardens, which were ruthlessly scoured as if Peter Pan, now grown into an Ian Brady-like psychopath had returned from never-never land and beguiled the children into his evil dream.

However, all these speculations soon faded into the air. There was no word from the kidnappers and Marion Miller remained locked in her deep withdrawal. I requested permission to see the child and attached a brief report of my visit to Pangbourne, in which I described certain curious features such as the mutilated copy of Piaget's classic text on the rearing of children. The Home Office turned me down, asking me to discontinue my investigation and hold myself indefinitely in reserve.

Left alone, I was able to think again about my visit to Pangbourne Village and my talk with the cryptic Sergeant Payne, who had now been redeployed to one of the task forces roaming the country. He had seemed to point to the complicity, deliberate or otherwise, of Jeremy Maxted in the abduction of the children and even, perhaps, in the murders themselves. Had Jeremy's secret passion for military weapons led him to purchase a rifle or handgun, which had then provoked the kidnappers into killing the parents?

Meanwhile, the eight-year-old Marion Miller remained the only key to the tragedy, but she showed no signs of recovery. My own interest waned, and I returned to my work with my patients.

Then, wholly by chance, in one of the TV documentaries that I liked to despise, I saw a brief film of the child. This rekindled all my interest in the case and settled in my mind, for once and for all, the mystery of who had killed the thirty-two victims of the Pangbourne Massacre.

## **The Television Film**

The TV film, yet another *Newsnight* recapitulation of the tragedy, introduced a short sequence recorded at the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital. The police had allowed the cameras into the ward for the first time, as part of their now desperate appeal for witnesses of the child's escape.

Marion lay in her bed, her clenched fists pulling the sheet to her pursed lips. Her head rested to one side, torpid eyes apparently staring at the vase of irises on the nearby table. An elderly woman, the maternal grandmother, dressed in a Persian lamb coat and carrying a patent leather handbag, was guided to the bed by a nursing sister. She smiled hesitantly at her granddaughter, as the sister moved the flowers on which the child had fixed her gaze and urged her to turn her head.

My hall telephone rang while I was watching this affecting scene on the television screen. I paused at the door of the living room, as Marion Miller stared at the imposing figure of her grandmother. In a now famous gesture, endlessly repeated on TV and even mimicked by alternative comedians, the child raised her left hand from the safety of the sheet. She seemed to press a key into a lock and then turned it with a difficult double motion of her small hand—exactly the sequence of wrist movements, according to the experts, that would release a spring-loaded mortise lock. At the same time her right hand rose to her forehead, as if warding off the blow of one of the kidnappers, probably on the other side of the door and between whose legs she had made her brave and miraculous escape.

Confirming this theory, the child's mouth was set in a frightening rictus. She exposed her clenched teeth, parting her lips in an ugly grimace as her incisors gleamed against the camera lights. Although there was no sound track, every one of the millions of viewers must have heard the hiss.

While the telephone continued its weary ringing, I walked to my TV set and turned down the reporter's commentary. I stared at the orphaned child's wounded and desperate eyes, and at her pinched little face under the lovingly brushed blond hair, knowing that I had identified at least one of the Pangbourne murderers.

## **Return to Pangbourne Village: October 17, 1988**

Sergeant Payne was waiting for me at the gatehouse, when I arrived at eleven o'clock the next morning. He gave a patient salute, but showed no emotion on seeing me. Even on the telephone he had been noncommittal, as if unsurprised by my urgent call. The keys to the Millers' house in his hand, he steered me through the onlookers who still gathered at the gate.

Together we strode through the silent estate, past the handsome mansions which I already saw in a very different light. The familiar interior of the Millers' house greeted us, yet every perspective had subtly changed. Payne stood aside, waiting to see which way I would turn.

"The parents' bathroom," I told him. "That's all we need to see."

"Very good, Doctor..." Payne spoke encouragingly, an instructor guiding a promising recruit through an obstacle course. But when we reached the bathroom I was at last able to surprise him.

"Let me set the stage, Sergeant." I pulled open the shower curtain and turned on the bath taps. "We need one or two props..."

Payne stepped back, trying to avoid his multiplying images in the mirror walls. "If you're thinking of taking a bath, Doctor, the heating's been turned off."

"Don't worry, I won't embarrass you." When there were two inches of cold water in the tub I turned off the taps, then took Mrs. Miller's hair dryer from its stand above her washbasin. Holding

in my hands, I turned to Payne.

“Now, Sergeant, you saw the television film of Marion Miller, apparently unlocking a door as she made her escape. She was certainly escaping, but not by turning a key...”

For the first time I was ahead of Payne. He watched me cautiously, an unlit cigarette between his lips, as I transferred the hair dryer to my right hand and held the plug in my left.

“So, let’s assume that Miller was taking a bath that Saturday morning. At about 8:15 Marion and her brother come into the bathroom. Perhaps they ask a special favor, the answer to which they already know, a last chance for their father to save his life.”

“Doctor...” Payne was shaking his head, clearly disappointed in me. “That’s pure speculation.”

“All right, I’m guessing there. But of this bit I’m sure.” I placed the hair dryer on its stand above Miller’s washbasin. “Marion picks up the hair dryer and plugs it into the socket. To do this she has to step around the edge of the basin and reach forward with her left hand. Sadly for the father, the childproof sockets aren’t quite childproof enough...”

I pushed the plug into the socket, then made the familiar turn, press, turn again motion which the stricken child in the TV film had made so memorable. The hair dryer whirred into life, blowing hot air across my face.

“She’s now holding the dryer in her left hand by the pistol grip—it’s difficult to hold the thing any other way—and there’s a rush of air that blows her fringe into her eyes. She pushes it away with her right hand...” I made the second gesture that we had seen in the film, smoothing down the few hairs that danced across my forehead.

Then I stepped back and tossed the hair dryer into the bath. There was a violent hiss, and a muffled flash that jolted the sides of the bath, lighting up the mirrors around us. Scalded water spat across Payne and myself, spraying fine drops across the ceiling.

Its fuse blown, the hair dryer lay inertly below the seething water. I switched it off at the socket and disconnected the plug. Payne was drying his jacket with one of Mrs. Miller’s face towels.

“You heard the hiss, Sergeant—something that poor child will never forget. In fact, it’s probably the last thing she remembers.”

“I won’t forget it either, Doctor.” Payne gingerly lifted the hair dryer by its cord from the bath. “To be honest, I hadn’t worked out the plug business, but I knew she wasn’t opening a lock.”

“Of course not. Why should that have traumatized her? Only an overwhelming crisis would have buried itself so deep in her mind, something that involved matters of life and death, or beyond life and death.”

“Like deciding to kill her father?”

“Exactly—though I don’t think she did kill him, and she may well know it. She stunned him with the hair dryer, and her brother then killed him with the kitchen knife.”

Payne leaned over the bath taps and released the water from the tub. “So you think they planned it. The brother and sister together?”

“Yes, they planned it, just as all the murders at Pangbourne Village were planned. You know that



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