

CAMOUFLAGED KILLER KILLER

**The Shocking Double Life of
Colonel Russell Williams**

DAVID A. GIBB



BERKLEY BOOKS, NEW YORK

“[A] study of one of the darkest figures of contemporary crime, Colonel Russell Williams...Gibb manages, with enormous skill, to capture the stealth of this murderous rapist against the upstanding life he led...It is a testament to Williams’s skill as a deceiver that no one knew what lurked beneath the responsible, even sympathetic exterior, and it is a testament to David A. Gibb’s skill as a writer and storyteller that we have both sides before us, in all their chilling detail.”

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—*Web Newswatch*

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**Dedicated to all of those who spend their lives
in pursuit of truth and justice...**

**and especially to my two most special heroes,
Brad and Michael**

The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.

ALBERT EINSTEIN, 1879–19

To the following brave people who stepped forward and accompanied me along various steps of my journey, I will remain eternally grateful.

Thank you first and foremost to all of those who agreed to speak candidly with me and share their personal stories as well as insight into the background and character of Russell Williams—information that was of vital importance for this study. There are far too many of you to thank individually, but your names are recited throughout the book, and I appreciate the contribution made by each and every one of you.

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To my writing mentors, Joe Kertes and Ann Douglas, I owe a fortune of gratitude. You have both inspired me greatly.

And of course none of this would have been possible without the guidance offered by both my agent, Bob Diforio, and Penguin executive editor Tom Colgan. A special thanks to both of you for supporting and nurturing my project.

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To each and every one of you, I owe a debt of gratitude. Thank you all so very much.

**Unfortunately there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he
imagines himself or wants to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied
in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is.**

CARL JUNG, SWISS PSYCHIATRIST, 1875–19

It's the horrifying truth we cannot admit, even to ourselves: Russell Williams was not a monster. He was one of us.

To label him a monster is to deny the inherent human connection to his atrocious acts. The nature of Williams's behavior is plainly, simply, and tragically human.

While I had never before knowingly encountered a serial killer during my twenty-five years as an investigator, I had learned a lot about human nature through firsthand experience. Over the years, I worked undercover in religious cults and satanic groups, tracked down dozens of abducted children, helped women who were being stalked, provided personal protection services, and exposed thousands of frauds. I also tracked down over forty-eight hundred missing people, the likes of whom included con men and other types of deviant criminals who didn't want to be found.

Many times I found myself in the company of evil, and often my very survival was dependent upon my ability to recognize it—even when its presence was not obvious. However, when I came face-to-face with Russell Williams, I felt no such threat. I found the meeting extremely unnerving because his camouflage had enabled him to fly under my cleverly developed radar, in spite of my years of training and experience.

I was left wondering how many people were capable of such dangerous deception. Immediately I felt a need to explore the phenomenon, and to learn more about Williams and what made him so inherently different from—and more dangerous than—the many other criminals who walk amongst us every day. That decision is what led me to write the book you're now reading.

I believe that before you can identify and catch bad guys you must first strive to understand them: what motivates them, what created them, and what can stop them. That has been the focus of my diligent efforts to investigate, gather facts, and provide thought-provoking analyses of my findings.

I invite you to join me on my journey of discovery. As you progress through the pages, you may wish to do your own analysis and form your own opinions, then compare them to the expert comments provided in the final chapter. But please be aware that the details provided are graphic and the subject matter very disturbing. However, I believe it is vital to disclose the true essence of his crimes in order to present the thoughtful behavioral insights and analyses that follow. As Elliott Leyton, noted Canadian anthropologist, serial killer expert, and author of *Hunting Humans*, so succinctly noted, "To struggle to understand a killer is neither to forgive him nor to justify his actions."¹

I suggest that when you finish the book you go back and reread earlier chapters that detail Williams's crimes. I guarantee that you'll gain more insight having learned from the comments provided by some of North America's leading experts in forensic psychology and criminal profiling.

Join me now as I act as your guide on a quest to gain a better understanding of the mind of a most dangerous and vile predator; one who was able to fly under the radar of an entire nation, including prime ministers, generals, and members of the British royal family, as well as those nearest and dearest to him. To do so, we'll have to voyage to the depths of human depravity. But my hope is that, in the process, we'll be able to gain a better understanding of the evil that hides amongst us in plain sight...

...the "camouflaged killer."

1. Elliott Leyton, *Hunting Humans: The Rise of the Modern Multiple Murderer* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 2005), 236.

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THE BACK OF THE MOON

Five serene minutes passed as the large shadowy figure towered motionless, looming over the bed of his chosen prey: a pretty young blonde. He admired her petite frame as she slept peacefully, clad only in a pink camisole and pajama bottoms, and was quickly aroused by his own vivid imagery of what was about to occur. His mind raced as his heart pumped furiously.

He didn't understand his compulsion, his need to act out the fantasies that had enslaved him. He just knew that his deviant urges owned him. It was, plain and simple, something he had to do. He was merely a puppet to his perverse sexual desires.

But his choice of victim was easier to explain. She had to be attractive, and she had to live alone. Males were not part of the equation; they were a risk he'd sooner avoid.

Contemplating his next move, as he had done countless times before, he imagined his tender victim's terrified response. He'd enjoy asserting his dominance over his vulnerable prey; her forced submission and eventual surrender to his goal.

He struck her hard on the left side of her head, jolting her awake. The struggle began instantaneously.

I must be dreaming, she thought at first. But the pressure, the pain, and the god-awful smell were all too real to just be a mirage.

She soon realized that she was no match for the intruder's merciless strength as he continued to press her head down firmly while lying on top of her. After taking control of her hands, he covered her small face with his right palm to ensure that she wouldn't look up at him. His only fear, after all, was being identified—and having to suffer the consequences of his sex-fueled rampage.

In the next room, the young woman's eight-week-old daughter was fast asleep in her crib. Deciding that, for her baby's sake, she mustn't aggravate him any further, the young mother decided to try a different approach.

"How did you get in?" she asked, her mind quickly scanning the doors and windows. "I locked the door."

He remained silent.

"What time is it?" she tried. "The baby is sure to wake up crying at four A.M."

"It's only one A.M. Don't worry." Carefully he tucked a chain that she had torn from around his neck while struggling into his pants pocket.

"Are you going to kill me afterward?"

"No," he promptly assured her.

"Promise and everything?" she pleaded softly, using one of her familiar phrases. "I'll do whatever you want, just please don't hurt me or the baby."

She wiggled and reached down with her hands, trying to lower her pajama bottoms. But he quickly slapped her hands away; compliance would be strictly on his terms. He expected her to follow his orders; this was his fantasy, not hers, to direct.

"We can just talk, if you like," she said. "You really don't seem like a bad person. Not like the type of person who would do something like this." She struggled, trying to elicit some sort of human response from the intruder.

"Do you work?"

“No.” His tone was firm and dismissive.

“Do you get bored like me? I get pretty bored looking after the baby around here all day. You must live around here, right?”

But her questions were ignored.

“Roll over onto your tummy,” he commanded as he climbed on top of her buttocks. Pressing down on her back, he struck her hard on her head three times while warning her to be quiet.

“And don’t ever try to look at my face,” he told her.

He’s purposefully deepening his voice, she thought. Maybe the intruder was somebody she knew.

“Where’s ‘Dad’?” he asked, his voice returning to a calmer demeanor.

“How do you know there’s a dad?” she replied cheekily. “I could be a single mother.”

He ignored her attempt to turn the question back on him. Predators don’t answer to their prey, and he certainly wasn’t about to cede such control to somebody half his size.

“How long have you lived here?” he asked, calmly reasserting himself as her inquisitor.

She strained to lift her chin from the mattress. “Just a month,” she said.

Her boyfriend’s family was from the area, she confided to him, but she really didn’t like Tweed. The town was too small, and everyone considered her an outsider.

“I hardly know anyone around here.”

“What’s your name?” he asked.

“Allison,” she replied untruthfully, hoping he would not know that her name was actually Jane.¹

His long fingers gently brushed against her temples, weaving their way into the strands of her long blond hair before dropping down to caress her slender shoulders. She flinched in response, abruptly ending his fleeting tenderness.

“I need to control you better.”

Grabbing some nearby baby blankets and pillowcases, he demanded she put her arms behind her back.

Jane realized that she was about to surrender any chance of escape. She knew instinctively that she mustn’t allow that to happen.

“I won’t let you tie me up!” she said firmly.

But her assertiveness was merely a facade; her stomach was in knots. She knew that she was at his mercy and not in any position to call the shots.

And so did he.

A narrow and winding gravel-covered road leads into the tiny community. Comprising several dozen rural homes, mostly cottages converted to year-round use, Cosy Cove is nestled on the shore of a picturesque, heart-shaped bay. Hidden amongst soaring evergreens, it’s the kind of place one normally passes while out on a country drive without ever realizing that it’s just steps away from the main thoroughfare. Were it not for the ramshackle hand-painted wooden sign that read “Cozy Cove” (crafted by a now-deceased resident who had mistakenly used the American spelling of the word *cosy*), even those from neighboring townships would be challenged to find it. Nicknamed “Geritol Lane” by sarcastic youths of days past, its demographics have changed in recent years. While there are still many retired residents, today it is also home to an eclectic blend of blue-collar workers and well-to-do cottagers. Nearby Tweed, the village hub, boasts a teeming population of 1,564—a number that includes those who live in this isolated hinterland just to the east of town.

Separated from the twenty-one homes along Cosy Cove Lane by a dirt footpath that passes through a small wooded area at the end of the road, the other residences in the neighborhood—including the home rented by Jane and her boyfriend—are collectively referred to by locals as “the back of the

moon.” Nobody really understands why.

Jane had moved to the quiet street with her boyfriend and infant daughter just a month before the horrific late-night home invasion occurred. Recently separated from the baby’s father, she agreed to move to the area of her new boyfriend’s childhood home, where they would be close to his friends and family. It was a safe and friendly community, he had assured her. Aside from the highly publicized and well-spun Elvis sighting twenty years earlier, nothing ever happened in Tweed, much less in tranquil Cosy Cove. The recent opening of a retirement home was one of the biggest news items of the past year in the sleepy town. Most residents here felt safe enough to leave their doors unlocked at night, and alarm systems weren’t even on their radar.

Jane was cautious, however. A former bakery worker from the city, the stay-at-home mom found herself lonely and bored during the week, when her boyfriend left town to work on the road with a utilities company. When she was alone with the baby, the days seemed to stretch endlessly. Jane did not associate much with her neighbors, instead focusing her attention squarely on the center of her universe: her newborn baby, and the pride of new motherhood that accompanied the child.

After all, unlike most people on her street, Jane remained an outsider. A territorial sense of ownership exists in these small communities; one that is difficult to explain in less than abstract ways. But any city slicker who leaves the skyscrapers for a simpler life is soon aware of the unspoken coldness offered to those whose family names have not adorned local mailboxes for at least a couple of generations. Newcomers are inherently distrusted, and to many, their new community can seem impermeable on the best of days. Jane was still such a stranger—and it had nothing to do with her personality or living arrangements. It was simply her lack of tenure.

And so Jane took care of herself. She locked her doors, and routinely checked them before peeking in on her daughter and retiring to her bedroom at night.

But she did not lock her windows, an oversight that would prove to have some dire consequences, since only a flimsy window screen prevented access to her home and its intrinsically prized possessions.

On the night of her assault, Jane had returned from a visit with her mother around 9:30 P.M. After tucking the baby in her crib and tidying up, she retired to her bedroom about an hour and a half later. Unbeknownst to her, she had earlier caught the eye of a man as he boated past her house on Stoco Lake. A dangerous man, who would soon be paying her a most unwelcome visit.

And only an aluminum-framed window screen stood in his way.

PLAYFUL lambs adorned the soft baby blanket that the intruder used to tie Jane’s arms securely behind her back. He then grabbed a white pillowcase and cut it into ties, wrapping them around her tiny wrists, and placed another full pillowcase across her eyes, using a rubber band that he had taken from her ponytail to secure it.

After she was firmly led into the living room, Jane heard him take something from a bag.

“What is that? What’s happening?” Her voice trembled.

“You’ll see,” the intruder replied as he led her back to her bedroom. “But don’t worry, I’m not going to rape you and I won’t hurt you either.”

He yanked another pillowcase over her head, but quickly removed it when it caused her to hyperventilate, tying it around the existing blindfold instead.

“I’ve got a camera here,” the intruder explained as its digital range finder lit up.

“You’ve taken my picture?” she asked.

But the words had just left her mouth when the flash fired for the first time.

“I’m not really, um, very attractive since having my baby. The pregnancy packed on a lot of fat,”

she said, hoping to discourage him. But instead his response was flattering and dismissive of her self-deprecating comment.

“I think you’re perfect, and sweet,” he told her.

After exposing her left breast for one picture and then her right breast for the next, the intruder rolled her camisole top down to her waist to take more photos. He fondled her breasts and continued photograph his topless captive, before commanding her to stand up and pull down her pants.

“You promised you weren’t going to rape me,” she protested.

“I’m not. Just do as I say,” he demanded, his tone suddenly much firmer.

She offered no resistance as he yanked her pajama pants down, and dutifully kicked them from her ankles to appease him.

The intruder lifted her back onto the bed and forced her to spread her legs slightly. She felt exposed and humiliated as the camera strap scraped against her inner thigh, but dared not resist him.

He took a few more photos and then abruptly left the room. Paralyzed and unable to move, Jane was terrified that the intruder had gone into the baby’s room.

Am I doing anything wrong? Should I be doing anything differently? she wondered as she began to worry that fear was affecting her judgment and preventing her from making sound decisions.

The intruder returned a few minutes later and began rifling through her dresser drawers. The rattling of the brass handles stopped as he reached her underwear drawer, and all became suddenly quiet. After a few minutes, Jane was told to stand up. She could feel the sheets being torn from her back as he wrapped them together with the two baby blankets that he had handled as well as one of the white tops with which he had tried to bind her.

Jane knew what he was doing. He didn’t want to be leaving any evidence behind, so he was fastidiously gathering any items that could have his prints or DNA on them.

“Just don’t leave me without any clothes on,” she pleaded to her captor.

The intruder told her to stand against the bedroom wall and began to dress her. After kneeling down to help pull her pajama bottoms back on, he rose to his feet and stretched her camisole up from where it had gathered around her waist. He lifted it over her breasts, delicately placing the thin straps back over her shoulders.

“May I go check on my baby?” she asked.

Without answering verbally, the intruder clenched her arm firmly with his hand and led her into the baby’s room with her arms still tightly bound behind her back.

As she entered the room, the fresh scent of baby powder immediately soothed her.

Jane leaned over the crib to listen for her baby’s breath, and the intruder brushed his face gently against hers, once again fondling her breasts. He asked her the age of the child, seeming to be genuinely interested in the answer.

Jane was soon given what would be her final instructions: count to three hundred before removing her blindfold.

Jane began counting, anxious for her ordeal to be over. She stopped at the count of seventy as she began to grow impatient.

“Keep going!”

His voice was stern and he sounded annoyed.

When she reached two hundred, Jane again tempted fate by stopping. She called out, but this time heard nothing back. Anxiously ripping off her blindfold, she quickly checked on the baby before running to grab her cordless phone.

Despite almost two hours having passed since she was brutally awakened by the unknown intruder, Jane’s heart continued to race as feverishly as when the first blow was delivered to the side of her head.

Jane panicked as her jittering fingers struggled to key in the phone number. She fought to catch her breath while frantically recounting to her boyfriend's mother what had just happened. Then, assured that family members were on their way, she called 9-1-1 to report the incident.

Ten minutes later, a car came screeching up Jane's driveway. Her boyfriend's mother and brother jumped out along with a male friend. While the two men checked the fields and yards around the house, Jane was comforted by her boyfriend's mother. The men found nothing in the area, but did discover that the rear patio door was unlocked—likely the intruder's point of departure.

It wasn't long before the police arrived. Officers Young and Sharpe from the Central Hastings detachment of the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) promptly searched the surrounding area, even checking the lake for boats, but were also unable to find anything. Jane told the police that she had heard neither motor vehicles nor boats following the intruder's departure. And, strangely, despite the close proximity of neighboring homes, spaced only thirty to forty feet apart, none of her neighbors had heard a thing, either.

At 7:35 A.M., Constables Jane Pellerin and Nicole Burley of the OPP Forensic Identification Services (FIS) unit arrived at the house and began searching for evidence. Two pillowcases that had been used to tie Jane's hands and blindfold her during the assault were taken from the baby's room. Swabs were taken from Jane, as were several items from her bedroom, in hopes of finding traces of the intruder's DNA. One of these samples, taken from the back of her neck, later proved suitable for analysis. Meanwhile, a police canine unit that had been dispatched to the area failed to uncover any leads following a search of surrounding properties and woodlands.

Despite having been blindfolded throughout her attack, Jane was still able to provide the police with a fairly comprehensive description. She told them that he was likely between the ages of thirty and fifty (to her, he had "seemed like a dad"). Mistakenly, she reported that he was not very tall (perhaps a head taller than her five feet two, she said) and of average build. She did not feel any facial hair, and he did not wear eyeglasses or have anything covering his face. He wore a tight sweater, which she ripped at one point during her struggles, and hiking boots. There was a ring on his finger, although she couldn't recall on which hand, and he smelled dirty.

While Jane was relieved that she and her baby were safely back in the caring and protective arms of friends and family, she knew that her life would never be the same again.

The following day she left Cosy Cove forever, returning to the nearby city of Belleville to take refuge amongst the city lights and noises, and to find comfort amongst its constant hustle and bustle. Her boyfriend would return to collect their belongings, but Jane would not set foot into Cosy Cove's hidden solitude ever again. Their rented house would soon be listed for sale.

Jane fought to put the experience behind her and pretend as though it never happened, but she prayed that her tormentor would be captured quickly...before he struck again.

1. Jane is a pseudonym, as the name of this victim has been protected by court order. Throughout the criminal proceedings, she was referred to only as Jane Doe, and that name is also used throughout this book.

PARADISE LOST

A brilliant light flashed, followed by an explosive cascade of sparks. Her eyes were shut, yet the images were wildly vivid. Violently awakened from her peaceful slumber, Laurie struggled to catch her breath and take ownership of her surroundings. A cloak of darkness met her unfocused gaze as she felt a blunt and forceful strike to the side of her head. *Fire*, she thought. Surely the house is burning down, and she's trapped amongst the smoke and falling debris.

If only.

Fighting to collect her faculties, Laurie realized that she was trapped underneath her daughter's purple and white Barbie comforter and pinned against the couch where she had fallen asleep watching *Law & Order*. Three, then four abrupt blows landed on the side of her head as she panicked, trying to free herself from her enveloping restraints as she continued to gasp for air.

"What's happening?" she cried out loud, not expecting her words to be heard, much less answered.

"Don't you realize what's going on?" replied a deep, authoritative voice flavored with a condescending hint of sarcasm. A merciless grip tightened around the petite woman's throat, threatening to tear through the soft fabric of the comforter that remained tightly secured around her face.

"You're being cleaned out!" bragged the intruder. Others were busy collecting her valuables, he said, while his task was simply to ensure her compliance and submission.

"Shhh...I need you to be quiet. Don't make a sound."

While the blows subsided, the pressure around her neck grew much more intense. The weight of the man as he leaned forward and pressed his strong forearm against her throat caused Laurie to gag. She could feel her face warm as each pulse of blood was refused passage, and she struggled fiercely against the constriction.

"Please don't...I can't breathe," she choked out while gasping for air. Tears rolled down her flushed cheeks, soaking into the damp cloth that concealed her. "I have children. They can't find me like this! Please don't do this to me...pleeeaaase..."

Then, inexplicably, her panic suddenly abated. An inner voice assured her that if she remained calm, she'd be all right. Moments later, the pressure against her jugular relaxed.

The assailant's calm voice coached her to breathe. However, the relief was only temporary, exacerbated by the fear of what was to come. She knew the story was only just beginning. And she hadn't a clue how it was going to end.

LAURIE Massicotte moved to Cosy Cove in 1999 with her husband and three young daughters from previous marriage, taking possession of a three-bedroom mobile home-style bungalow. It was a quaint but pleasant residence, and although she bragged to people that they paid \$300,000 for the property, the claim revealed more about her occasional tendency to exaggerate than it did her financial wherewithal. Settling into the area came easily for the family. From their back door, they enjoyed a panoramic view of Stoco Lake, which was named after Chief Stougcong, an avenging Mississauga Indian who, in much earlier times, had returned to wrestle ownership of the surrounding land from the Mohawks, who had driven his people from the area. After Stougcong killed the Mohawk chief and se

his warriors packing, the area was finally blessed with a peaceful existence that is still enjoyed today

Laurie and her family eagerly surrendered themselves to a leisurely lifestyle in the quiet and safe surroundings. It was a welcome refuge from the constant challenges and tribulations that Laurie had faced while living a life that had been anything but a walk in the park.

Laurie's journey had taken her down some challenging and difficult paths. A history of unfortunate decisions had burdened her with some unrelenting consequences that, unfortunately, didn't end for her after moving to tranquil Cosy Cove.

Laurie suffered the breakdown of her second marriage, a split that was acrimonious and rife with emotion. And while she had managed to navigate her three daughters through two troubled marriages that hadn't stopped some people from criticizing her parenting skills, which caused her even further grief.

Formerly employed as an accountant for a manufacturing firm, Laurie had surrendered her position to become a homemaker. But now, at forty-seven years of age, with one of her daughters grown and her twins living with their father while attending high school, Laurie was unable to revive her career. She lived alone and found it difficult adjusting to what she felt was the unnatural quietness of an empty nest. With woodlands at her front door and a lake at her back, Laurie felt like a child abandoned alone in the wilderness.

What was once a bustling home was now reduced to treasured but fading memories. Family photos displayed in dusty picture frames served as painful reminders of its former glory. Feeling victimized by her loneliness, Laurie often reached out for human contact whenever the opportunity presented itself. She had few visitors and yearned for more company.

But certainly not of the kind that came calling at 1 A.M. on September 30, 2009.

■ ■ ■

LAURIE had finally caught her breath, but was told by the intruder not to sit up or remove the comforter from around her head. Lying facedown on the couch, she felt a sustained pressure on the back of her head.

"It's my job to control you. Don't dare challenge my authority," he commanded. "This is going to take a while, so just relax."

Laurie had left her television on while falling asleep and recognized the music playing in the background: It was the closing theme for *Without a Trace*, a show she watched most evenings at midnight.

The stranger revealed that the robbery had been planned for the previous night, but somebody had shown up and derailed their plans. He demanded that she tell him who had visited her the night before.

"Nobody," Laurie answered truthfully, her voice trembling at the realization that she had been stalked. "I was here alone."

Anxious to speed up their pillage, Laurie offered the locations of some of her most valued possessions—some jewelry items and "little medals." But her willingness to part with these treasures did not appease her captor.

"They'll take whatever they're going to take. Where's your family? Is anyone going to show up here?" the intruder demanded.

"Oh God, no," said Laurie, trying her damndest to keep him at ease. "Nobody can stand me. I don't have a family...even my boyfriend can't stand me."

"Will you promise to give us half an hour to get away?"

"Yes, of course I will," Laurie replied, more than willing to exchange the freedom of her captors for her own survival. "You're not as bad as those other guys," she said somewhat sympathetically,

continuing to speak in muffled tones through the comforter. “At least you’re not stealing...like *them*.” She was shocked by her own words, unsure why she had even offered such benevolent support to her tormentor.

The house was strangely quiet, she thought, for one that was being ransacked. She heard no noises or voices other than the one to whom she had surrendered control. It was a voice that sounded very familiar, despite what she thought was a deliberate effort to deepen its tone. Images of men flashed in her mind, as though she were flipping through a deck of playing cards, but none of the faces matched the voice of her antagonist.

Desperate for a cigarette to help cope with her agitation, Laurie pleaded with her captor to let her sit up.

“I don’t think I can let you do that,” he insisted. “They wouldn’t like that.”

“Do you smoke?” she asked politely.

“No,” he answered firmly in a dismissive tone.

Sensing his disapproval, she backed off, fearful of provoking him. A few minutes later, he cautiously relented.

“I’ll let you sit up,” he said. “But trust me, you *don’t* want to see me!”

Taking the warning seriously, Laurie sat up, but carefully held the moist comforter tightly around her perspiring face.

“Maybe you could blindfold me instead?” Her voice trembled, fearful of the consequences of accidentally laying her eyes upon him. Aware of the fates suffered by Paul Bernardo’s young captive when they disregarded his similar commands, she did not want to repeat their fatal mistakes.¹

“Here, you can use some of *this* material,” Laurie offered, struggling to tear the fabric of the Winnie-the-Pooh body pillow that she had earlier snuggled against.

“I’ll take care of that,” he said, firmly grabbing the pillow away from her. The unmistakable sound of material being sliced and torn filled the air.

It was the benign sound of a sheet tearing, yet Laurie was keenly aware of the veiled threat. Her captor—whose warm breath she could feel upon her forehead—was armed with a very sharp knife.

IT had been a moist and breezy fall day. As with most days, Laurie had spent it alone. Bothered by the cluttered furniture in her unfinished basement, she decided to spend some time rearranging it. It gave her something to do. Besides, she had been spending more time than usual down there recently, since her boyfriend slept there when he stopped by for his infrequent visits and they’d cuddle up on a basement sofa to watch movies together.

Often, as they snuggled in front of the television, Laurie and her boyfriend would hear odd noises coming from upstairs: footsteps, banging doors, cupboard doors opening and closing, knocking on the walls. A spiritual person, Laurie chalked it up to the visiting spirits of her ancestors, whom she believed were watching out for her and keeping her company. She felt no threat, so neither she nor her boyfriend ever bothered to investigate the source of the questionable sounds.

Back on a winter evening in 2008, Laurie and her boyfriend had noticed some little red lights glowing outside her basement window, as they cuddled while watching television. Like the strange noises, however, Laurie simply dismissed the lights as ancestral spirits.

No forces—spiritual or otherwise—were going to drive her from her little fortress of solitude; a place that she was certain her daughters would one day return to—and with them, her grandchildren. She dreamed of spending the winters of her twilight years in sunny Mexico, while Cosy Cove would always remain her summer hideaway.

Later in the afternoon, Laurie had spent time bringing some of her seasonal plants indoors. With

winter approaching, it was time to batten down the hatches.

Unfortunately, for the tiny hamlet of Cosy Cove, blizzards and ice storms were about to become the least of their concerns.

LAURIE could feel his presence behind her as he reached up under the comforter to tie the strip of material securely around her head. She clamped her eyes tightly shut as he adjusted the makeshift blindfold with the dexterity of a man who had accomplished the same task many times before.

Laurie started to cry as he pulled the fabric so tightly that clumps of her long blond hair were forced into her eyes. She begged him to release some of the pressure.

“Okay, well, let me see if I can fix it for you,” he said with a note of sympathy. The large, firm hands that had earlier smashed against her head suddenly became gentle, as his fingers tenderly lifted her hair from behind the blindfold and adjusted it with care on her temples.

“Is this better?” he asked.

“Yes, thank you,” she replied, again surprised by his compassion. She began to feel an odd but respectful bond developing with her captor.

With her eyes sufficiently shielded, the intruder took another strip from the body pillow to bind her wrists behind her back.

“Can’t have your hands loose,” he said. “That would just give you too much control. And the others wouldn’t like that very much.”

Laurie offered no resistance. She repeatedly reassured her captor that she wouldn’t make any attempt to escape, or to try to call for help.

Feeling the weight of her captor rise from the couch, Laurie tensed.

“I have to go check on the others,” he said, referring again to his phantom accomplices.

Moments later, from across the room, his stern voice asked accusingly, “Are you looking at me?”

“God, no,” said Laurie, instantly bowing her head. Her inner voice told her not even to attempt to peek out from behind the blindfold. She had pledged her unfettered obedience to the guiding voice.

Although Laurie’s legs remained untied, she dared not try to flee. She kept facing straight ahead and made no effort to follow the intruder’s footsteps as he walked down her hallway.

The man returned a couple of minutes later but offered no explanation as to what he had just done. The house remained dead quiet, without a hint of the noise that one would expect during a looting. Laurie could hear only the howling winds resonating over Stoco Lake behind her home; the same familiar sounds that often lulled her to sleep on many lonely nights.

She began to fear that the purpose of his visit was actually much more nefarious than simple property theft. Why would he lie to her about having consorts if he was acting alone? A cold sweat suddenly washed over her, and she felt as though she was lapsing into a state of shock.

“I have a really, really bad pounding headache,” she complained to her captor, tears streaming down her cheeks. “Do you think you could get me some Tylenol?”

Surprisingly, he agreed, and asked where he could find them. Laurie told him that the capsules were in the medicine cupboard in the bathroom at the end of her hallway.

“Well, how are you going to take them?” he asked. “You’ll need some water.”

Without explanation, her abusive captor continued to show compassion toward his hapless victim. But she was grateful for his mercy, and in turn continued to show him the kindness and respect that she was sure he must have been denied by others. Surely he was a man who had not gone far in life and was simply lashing out due to the frustration of his failures.

“There’s a coffee cup right there on the end table. It’s got an apple core in it,” Laurie said, recalling her bedtime snack. “But you can just throw it in the waste bin in the first bathroom and use

that cup.”

“All right, but I’m going to have to take you along to get this water,” he said, his acquiescence still surprising her. She felt she could trust him, but wasn’t sure why.

Laurie was then pulled to her feet and escorted down the hallway to the bathroom. As she stood with her back to the sink, he directed her to reach back to turn on the tap. After allowing her a drink from the cup, he refilled it and asked her if she needed to use the toilet.

“That’s all right,” she told him, hesitantly admitting, “I’ve already gone.” Laurie gestured down to her pajama bottoms, revealing to him how she had lost control of her bladder while he was choking her.

The intruder led her back to the couch and paused to rub her temples after she sat down. “Sorry about that,” he said.

He left to fetch the Tylenol and “check on the others,” and Laurie sensed that he was genuinely remorseful for the cruelty he had earlier inflicted upon her.

Laurie was convinced that her strategy was working. Show her attacker some respect, and he will reciprocate in kind. She would not deviate from this promising path, she vowed to herself.

And for a woman with an unfortunate history of poor choices, this was probably one of the wisest decisions that Laurie had ever made.

LIKE many other star-crossed lonely hearts, Laurie would sometimes try to find solace at the bottom of a tinted glass bottle. According to neighbors, on some afternoons she’d surrender to the joy of her favorite alcoholic beverage, red wine, occasionally overindulging in the delight. However, while it provided a sense of comfort and escape, the wine would sometimes summon the worst of Laurie’s demons. Normally a peaceful and agreeable woman, Laurie showed a tendency to become irrational, emotionally volatile, and even verbally combative while under the influence of alcohol. She had distanced friends as a result; so her loneliness and the apparent attempts to numb its effects had become nothing more than a vicious and unfortunate cycle.

This evening, she had fallen asleep on the couch in her family room while watching television. Following a day of household chores, she was exhausted. The knees of her pajama bottoms were still soiled from working in her flower garden earlier in the day, and her favorite black Orange County Choppers T-shirt, with its sleeves pushed up to her elbows, was equally sullied.

Despite her solitary existence, however, Laurie enjoyed the comforts of a home environment that provided her with a much-needed sense of stability as well as feelings of personal peace and serenity.

It was a serenity, however, that was destined to be shattered and forever stolen from her grasp.

THE assailant soon returned with some Tylenol and offered them to his victim along with the mug of water. Holding the tablets and the cup against her thin lips, he assured her, “These are them, trust me.”

The water tasted funny, she thought, not like the water he had poured for her minutes earlier. But she decided to accept his kindness obediently.

The sponge of the seat cushions sank lower as the intruder sat back onto the couch beside Laurie. She could feel the presence of his body, although she made no effort to look his way.

“Here, take another drink,” he suggested as he pressed the cup against her lips. Laurie took another sip before confronting him with her concern.

“This water tastes funny.”

But her grievance was met with only silence.

Having taken note of the intruder’s sympathetic response to her tears, Laurie attempted to gain his

favor that way again.

~~“Please, can I just have my arms free?” she whimpered as tears streamed down her cheeks. “These ties are really hurting me, and my wrists are throbbing.”~~

Despite his immediate assertion that his comrades would object to her having too much control, her captor relented and granted her request. “I can’t untie you, but maybe I can do something to loosen them up. But I’d need some more material.”

“My bedroom’s right behind you. You’ll find whatever you need in there—sheets, pillowcases, whatever.”

Laurie heard the distinctive soft squeak of the hinges on her bedroom door as he went in search of supplies. He returned to the seat beside her a minute later and pivoted her torso so that her bound wrists faced him.

“Now stay still, so I don’t cut either of us,” he said as he sawed through her bindings with his large knife.

Unbeknownst to her, he had also used some cable ties and wire to ensure her complete restraint. As her arms broke free, the assailant quickly grabbed hold of her, his rough fingers scraping against the softness of her wrists. Using an entire pillowcase, along with some large cable ties, he fashioned a makeshift harness. This time he used much less tension while securing her wrists behind her back.

“I’m trying to make this as comfortable as possible for you,” he said. “Is this okay?”

Laurie nodded and whispered her approval.

Suddenly the intruder leapt to his feet, becoming very quiet and focused. “I thought you said that nobody was here,” he said, looking around the room. “What’s that I hear?”

“I’ve got two cats,” Laurie quickly explained. Her heart beat furiously. “It must be one of them.” She wondered how he was so quickly sure that it wasn’t just one of his own assistants.

She heard him exhale and shared his relief, now cognizant of the fact that, despite his calm and relaxed demeanor, he was excitable when threatened. *Be careful not to give him any cause for unpredictable behavior*, the voice in her head advised.

The intruder lowered himself to the seat beside Laurie again. Reaching out to the large, square coffee table in front of the sofa, he picked up the cup of water and insisted that she drink some more. She obliged, taking two more sips before telling him that she’d had enough.

A whining noise emanated from the basement, causing the intruder to leap to his feet once more. “What’s that?” he asked in a calm but concerned tone.

“That’s another one of my cats. He’s just upset because I must have locked him in the basement by accident earlier today. Would you mind letting him out?”

“I’m allergic to cats,” he said, glancing down at the other cat that was feeding from the small dish beside the couch.

As Laurie began to plead for the safety of her pets, she quickly realized that he had already opened the basement door. The newly freed cat immediately jumped into her lap, and the intruder sat back down beside her. Concerned that its presence would agitate him, Laurie shimmied her body, knocking the cat to the floor. But needful of her attention, it sprang back onto her knees.

“Sorry, honey, you’re going to have to get off my lap because this gentleman is allergic to cats,” she said, again surprising herself by her choice of words.

“That’s okay,” he said.

Laurie was mystified. Here was a man who had beaten her senseless and tied her up suddenly displaying a kinder side of himself. His contradictions confused her, but she continued to hope that he was developing sympathy for her. Perhaps the acceptance and respect she was showing to him was reaching him on a human level, she mused.

Her subconscious notes began to serve as a beacon in the very dangerous waters through which she

was struggling to navigate. She must stay on this course, she thought. On some level it was working.

“This is a pretty nice house. How do you pay for it?” he asked.

“Borrowed money.” Laurie answered honestly, feeling no need for pretense.

Sensing that he was trying to make conversation with her, however, she thought it wise to keep him talking.

“So do you have a wife or children?” she asked, hoping to guide his thoughts toward those he cared about.

“No,” he answered abruptly.

“So, why not?”

“I’m too young.”

Quickly removing himself from the conversation, he left to allegedly check on “the others” once again.

WHILE her intent had been inherently manipulative, Laurie was also hoping to strike a chord with her captor that would encourage him to confront his demons and perhaps choose a righteous path. Over the years, Laurie had come to see herself as a skillful manipulator, although she believed her skills were used only for honorable purposes.

Laurie strongly believed that everything that occurred along one’s life journey happened for a reason; that the greater good called for lessons to be learned and people to be served. She was beginning to wonder whether this damaged soul had somehow been guided to her for help and understanding. Perhaps it was her destiny to share some of the inner strength she had developed while on her own path with someone who was clearly in need of some spiritual cleansing of his own.

She identified with her inner voice as her guardian angel, and thought it important to listen to the guidance that it was providing to her. During the brief and quiet moments when her captor left her alone, Laurie fantasized that perhaps they had previously known each other on “the other side.” Maybe, having chosen to return for another attempt at achieving Heaven on Earth, both of them had made a pact with each other in advance? Maybe there was a life lesson she was obligated to learn, and he had agreed to be her instructor? Would this experience perchance change both of their souls for all eternity? Many thoughts rambled through her head as she fought to make sense of it all.

Only one thing was certain. She would keep listening to her guardian angel.

Laurie could sense his presence as the intruder returned and stood in front of her. The rhythm of his breathing began to change, becoming very heavy and rapid.

“What’s wrong?” she asked, failing to conceal her fear.

“Nothing,” he replied, his voice breathless. He seemed unable—or perhaps unwilling—to conceal the change in his tone.

Laurie grew concerned that something had gone seriously awry. Maybe he’d been *made* to do this and it really wasn’t something he wanted to be a part of; he’d just gotten involved with some really awful people and had been assigned this god-awful task. *Maybe he’s as much a victim as I am*, Laurie thought as the intruder seemed to be preparing for some degree of escalation.

In the back of her mind throughout the ordeal, Laurie had wondered if her ex-husband had any hand in what was happening. He wanted possession of the family home, but Laurie had refused to leave. According to Laurie, he warned her that he’d do whatever was necessary to get her out. From what she had come to know of him, Laurie believed his threats were not to be taken lightly. And she felt that a scare tactic like this was just his style of ruthless revenge.

Even more incriminating were his actions two years earlier. Laurie had reportedly learned that he had tried to hire a mutual friend to scare her from the house by doing exactly what was now happening.

to her. The friend had declined, considering it simply the incensed ramblings of a man recently scorned and whose anger was still branding-iron hot. But he had warned Laurie just in case. Now she found herself wondering whether he had found some sort of mercenary—perhaps an ex-cop, or someone equally as skilled—to pull off the attack for him.

Her attacker struggled with the push-button control of her decade-old television, and Laurie prayed that the effort to shut it off would not frustrate him. Powering itself back on a couple of times, the TV finally faded to black. She then heard the bamboo blinds begin to rattle, as each was individually lowered and shut.

The intruder returned and quickly sat back down beside her. Laurie heard a zipper.

“What are you doing?” she asked nervously. “Do you have a gun? Oh my God, you’re going to kill me, aren’t you?”

“No, Laurie, I’m not going to kill you.” His response seemed sincere and his tone reassuring, but nonetheless failed to allay her anxiety.

“I’ve got a camera. I just want to take a couple pictures of you.”

“Take pictures? *Why?*” she asked. “Why would you want to take pictures of *me?*”

“So that you know we have pictures of you.”

“Is that honestly all you have—a camera?” Laurie asked, thinking it odd that she’d even consider trusting him. “Is there a gun? I know you’re going to kill me, aren’t you?”

He rubbed the camera strap against her cheek. “See, it’s just a camera,” he explained in a relaxed tone. He held the camera down near her hands so she could feel its shape. “Calm down, okay?”

Laurie could see the red glow of a camera light through her blindfold as her assailant took three, maybe four pictures of her as she sat passively in her restraints. It reminded her of the same red glow that she and her boyfriend had seen shining through her basement window many nights before.

As he sat back onto the couch beside her, his breathing again grew heavy and fast. Laurie asked what was wrong, but her queries were met only by the breathless pants that sent chills running down her spine.

“I want to take some more pictures. But we’ll need to pull this shirt up first.” His hand reached out and began to caress the black fabric of her T-shirt. Laurie felt the shirt being lifted from her midsection until it gathered around the base of her neck. He stood up and took some more pictures of her as she squirmed uncomfortably in her seat.

Laurie sensed his presence as he again sat down beside her. The roughness of his hand scraped against her soft skin as it slid across her chest and underneath her bra, his fingers eagerly cupping one of her breasts.

“Oh my God, please don’t…”

He immediately removed his hand.

“You’ve got very nice breasts.”

Laurie disagreed, but he insisted. “Yes, you do. You’re beautiful.”

He again tried to gain her approval, sliding his hand back underneath her brown bra cup. But when told to stop, he again obliged her request.

“Here, you can pull your shirt back down now,” he said as he helped to lower it back to her waist. Laurie felt relieved and hoped that would be the end of his sexual advances.

Snickt!

Without warning, the front of Laurie’s T-shirt was sliced into two pieces, cleanly down the middle. The torn shirt pieces fell to her sides. The cut had been made with a single instantaneous stroke of the intruder’s blade, without inflicting so much as a hairline scratch on Laurie’s body.

Whoa! He could have filleted me, her inner voice gasped.

The precipitous movement had rattled Laurie’s nerves so badly that she found it difficult to

maintain the facade of her calm composure. She was now visibly shaking.

After taking a couple more pictures, the intruder sat down on the couch and firmly twisted Laurie's torso so that her back was facing him. With agile hands, he unhooked her brassiere and began to slash the back of her shirt with his knife—exposing her back, but leaving cloth covering her shoulders and arms.

His hands quickly moved down to her stomach, and he immediately took notice of his captive's belly button rings. One depicted the Virgin Mary and the other was Saint Elizabeth of Portugal, a Catholic saint who represents victory over hardship.

As she felt his rough fingers rub across the figurine, Laurie prayed, hoping she could invoke the spirit of the deity.

“Oh, *that's* nice,” he exclaimed as he played with the amulet of Saint Elizabeth, rubbing the flap Laurie's belly button.

Feeling his touch becoming increasingly more intimate, she reacted spontaneously. “I've gone through some stuff lately, and I'm not sure if I'm pregnant or what...,” she concocted.

“How could *that* be?” he replied in exaggerated disbelief. “You're forty-seven.”

She felt slightly insulted and regretted sharing her age with him.

“I'm not sure what's going on. Maybe it's menopause, but something funky is happening anyway.” Laurie felt his large hand beginning to force its way into her pajama bottoms. “Oh, please don't do that. Please don't!”

He complied, immediately removing his hand. But a few moments later he decided to test her resolve again.

“Please don't. This isn't good. I told you I had an accident.”

Laurie heard his knife being unsheathed and instinctively froze. He held the knife firmly, pressing the blade lightly against her stomach, as she quickly began to remove her pajama bottoms.

The intruder rose to his feet again. Laurie could see the red glow of his camera light as he began taking more pictures of her. She reached down with her tied and trembling hands, struggling to conceal her most private parts. But he wasn't about to allow that.

“Move your hands!”

Naked and dehumanized, Laurie politely protested, hoping he would again respect her wishes.

“C'mon,” he said. “Just move your hands, okay?”

She relented and removed her hands. Another flurry of photos was snapped, the little red light leaving Laurie feeling all the more violated and humiliated. What would become of these photos? She pleaded with him not to put them on the Internet.

His purposeful hand firmly gripped her thigh as he ordered her to strike a pose. “Come on, put your leg up on the couch.”

“Why are you doing this?” she whined. Her protests contrasted with her dutiful compliance.

“Because it has to be done,” he said.

He continued taking explicit photos of her genitals, raping her dignity with his invading camera lens.

“I'm running out of time,” the intruder complained. Laurie didn't realize he meant only that his camera batteries required recharging.

“I'll be right back,” he said as he left the room to check on “the others” again, with the tone of a parent cautiously warning a toddler to behave while he was away.

A short time later, Laurie heard what she thought was the sound of bullets being loaded into the chambers of a revolver.

“What's that? What's going on?” she asked, her voice quivering.

“It's just the batteries. I had to recharge them a bit.”

She felt a temporary sense of relief.

“I have one more thing for you to do. Stand up,” he said.

“I can’t stand up. You’re going to kill me if I do.”

“Laurie, I’m *not* going to kill you,” he replied in a friendly yet firm tone.

“Why are you doing this?” she asked as she rose to her feet.

“So that I can get on with my life, and you can get on with yours.”

Laurie didn’t understand what he meant, but chose not to question him any further. She stood trembling, resigned to the fact that her life could end at any moment. Briefly she considered trying to sneak a peek at her captor, but her inner voice urged her to abandon the thought. *Stay strong*, the voice told her, *and you’ll survive. After all, God only gives people what they’re capable of handling.*

If only I could astral project myself, she fantasized. *Lift my spirit from my body and assess my surroundings without his knowledge.* But again her inner voice advised her not to attempt such a difficult spiritual maneuver, despite her adamant belief in this form of out-of-body consciousness.

The intruder instructed Laurie to turn slowly in a circular motion as he continued to take more photographs. As she did, her tiny frame trembled with apprehension. To Laurie, the revolving motion seemed to last an eternity.

Finally, she was told that she could sit back down. As she resumed her place on the couch, the intruder gently covered her with the soft Barbie comforter, then told her that he was going back to check on “the others.”

Once again, all grew deathly quiet for the few minutes that he was absent. Oddly, Laurie thought, she’d prefer to have heard the sounds of people ransacking her home. She found the silence much more disturbing, and would have preferred not having the idle time to reflect on what was yet to come.

The wait, however, was not long. He soon returned with another demand.

“There’s just one more thing I need from you, Laurie.”

Laurie’s frustration was trumped only by her despair. “You promised when you made me stand up that those would be the last pictures you were going to take.”

But he remained steadfast. He needed one more thing before it would all be over.

“I want you to get up on the couch on your hands and knees and put your head down on the armrest right there.”

Laurie began to panic. “*Whyyy?*” Her voice shook, feeling that her fate was now sealed. She offered him no chance to reply. “I can’t do that. There’s no way. I *can’t*.”

“You’ve been cooperative so far, Laurie. You can do it, I know you can.”

His tone became sterner when she continued to protest. “Don’t make me make you.”

Laurie relented, with only one simple caveat: “I’m going to need some help getting into that position. I can’t do it by myself.”

The intruder helped her assume the position that he had demanded. With her head leaning forward into the armrest, Laurie was certain that it was a death stance. She began weeping, expecting to be shoved in the back of the head at any moment.

“God, now I know you have a gun and you’re going to kill me.” Her eyes welled with hidden tears behind her tight blindfold.

“Laurie,” said her captor in a calm and soothing voice. “I told you there would be no need for that. I...don’t...have...a...gun.” He spoke slowly, pausing between words for added emphasis.

Once he was convinced that she had relaxed, the intruder walked around the couch, continuing to take several more demeaning photographs of his female prey. She felt his presence as he raised a foot up onto the armrest nearest her feet, and could feel his warmth as he leaned forward, invading her most personal of zones, capturing the explicit detail with his camera.

The intruder helped her return to a seated position and gently tucked the comforter back around

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