

# **TWO LITTLE DICKY BIRDS**

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# **TWO LITTLE DICKY BIRDS**

## Dedication

*In memory of Sally, Doris and Ivy.*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In bringing “Two Little Dicky Birds” to its final state, the contributions of a number of individuals must not be forgotten. They are:

Rob Eldridge for the hours spent tirelessly and painstakingly proof reading and editing the 88,000 words, and the constructive criticism he has offered all along the way.

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To my dear wife, Lynn, once again, for listening and showing patience through all the writing and rewriting.

## PROLOGUE

*Two little dicky birds sitting on a wall  
One named Peter, one named Paul.*

### **Psychopath**

*A person suffering from chronic mental disorder with abnormal or violent social behaviour.*

### **Serial Killer**

*Someone who murders three or more people with a 'cooling off' period between each act (largely psychological gratification). All serial killers suffer from some form of Antisocial Personality Disorder, but rarely psychopathy. They are usually not psychotic, and thus appear to be quite normal and often even charming, a state of adaptation which is referred to as the "mask of sanity." There is sometimes a sexual element to the murders. These may have been completed/attempted in a similar fashion, and the victims may have had something in common, for example occupation, race, sex, etc. Also, the victims of a serial killer generally belong to the same race as the killer.*



The classic depiction of the psychopath in Alfred Hitchcock's *'Psycho'* in 1960 as a man, Norman Bates, suffering from the mental disorder schizophrenia, allows us to suppose that the criminal's behaviour pattern will inevitably lead him to commit the crucial mistake which results in his downfall. A serial killer is not necessarily a psychopath, although the terms have been entwined by the media in modern times.

The serial killer also, typically, leaves a pattern for the forces of law and order to follow, and ultimately rid society of the menace. But what if such a killer existed who did not fit any known criteria? What if the only pattern were the complete lack of one as revealed by the facts surrounding each killing? What then?

Past members of this 'fellowship' have performed their acts on sections of society. They have included Peter Sutcliffe (prostitutes), Donald Nielson (young white males) and Fred West (young females).

A 'volume' killer who varied the location of each kill, the method of despatch, the *modus operandi* and the weapon involved, would be extremely hard to track down and apprehend. If such an individual was also one of the millions of anonymous citizens who walk our streets and go about their daily lives

unnoticed, the task becomes even more difficult. If that person was also a member of the very forces of law and order which are set up to protect the rest of us, he then simply turns invisible.

Such a person would need to commit the most monumental of blunders in order to be caught, or come up against an opponent possessing a level of skill and determination which he could not have reasonably foreseen. This is the story of two such people.

# 1

*Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> April 1975*

Paul Townley was twenty. How he had survived to that age he wasn't really sure, but it had been a hard struggle. From the age of about six, he and his mother had been subjected to a reign of terror inflicted by his alcoholic father, which culminated in regular weekend beatings after daylong sessions at one of the local pubs in the East End of London. By the time he was eight, it had become the accepted way of life in the Townley household, and regular visits to the doctor, with a range of injuries from broken arms due to 'falling from walls', to bruises acquired as a result of 'fights at school', were commonplace. His mother, Rose, suffered the worst and, despite regular advice from neighbours to leave the area, she stuck it out. Where would she go? She had no family of her own apart from Paul and his father, and the man would only track her down, doing who knows what damage as a result.

Harold Townley was a bully, and a physically big one at that. As the years passed however, overindulgence in alcohol together with a voracious appetite was slowing him down, and it was becoming easier for Paul and his mother to evade the worst of his violent temper and fists. When they did connect though, the results were alarming, and by the time he had reached his nineteenth birthday the boy decided that enough was enough. It was, nevertheless, twelve months later before he summoned up enough courage to take his father on. Harold had returned home from one of his regular binge sessions to find dinner waiting for him on the table. He turned and locked the front door. Rose could do nothing right it seemed; throwing the steaming plate full of food at the wall, he launched into a tirade of abuse and grabbed her by the hair.

Loosening the broad brown leather belt from underneath his ample stomach, he brandished it like a whip as he bent her across the table in preparation for a particularly brutal thrashing. It was the last time he ever did



it. Paul brought the poker down on the back of his head with a sickening thud. Reeling backwards in surprise, Harold turned to face his son with a face full of savage fury. He was just in time to see the weapon descend across the bridge of his nose. Blood and bone sprayed outwards from the middle of his face and, screaming in pain, he released his grip on the now hysterical Rose to launch himself at the boy. If Paul had lost his nerve at this point, the man would surely have killed him. Stepping smartly to one side, he caught Harold a third time on the side of his head as he stumbled past on his way to the floor, followed the fall across the room, and as his father turned once more, rained four more bone-splintering blows onto the man's face. It was questionable which of those blows it was that killed Harold Townley, but by the time he had ceased to move, his face was a bloody, unrecognisable pulp of flesh and bone.

Paul stood over him, breathing heavily, with the poker poised in case the job was not finished. His attention was only drawn away when he heard the soft, plaintive whimpering coming from the corner of the room where Rose had retreated for cover. She was shaking uncontrollably, eyes wide in horror at what she had just witnessed. As her son approached, she automatically shrank away behind one of the chairs, and he pulled back in surprise.

"Mum, it's only me. He's gone now, he can't hurt us anymore and I won't let anyone do anything like that to you ever again. Come on; don't be scared, I'm not going to hurt you."

Slowly, Rose Townley was coaxed out of the corner of the room and into Paul's arms.

"You have to ring the police, Paul. We've got to let them know; they can't lock us up, it was self-defence."

"No, Mum. I killed him, and I meant it. You must tell them the truth. I'll go to prison."

This argument swung backwards and forwards for a quarter of an hour, as the body of Harold Townley lay where it had fallen. A total of thirty minutes had elapsed since his fateful entrance.

A banging at the front door brought them both back to the stark reality of the situation. It became frantic and louder when they didn't answer. Harold was well known locally as a bruiser, and all their neighbours had witnessed the results of his domestic activities on a number of occasions. The door crashed inwards, and two friends accompanied by a uniformed police officer rushed into the room. The sight which greeted them stopped all three in their tracks, and an ambulance was summoned immediately. It was all academic – Harold was pronounced dead at the scene; Paul and Rose were taken to the local police station for questioning.

That Paul was responsible for the death of his father was beyond doubt, and he never tried to deny it - a fact which hung heavily in his favour when the case came to trial. Enough evidence was gathered from the neighbourhood to ensure that there was no likelihood of a custodial sentence, but in his summing up the judge went to great lengths to labour the point that a life had been taken, and that the jury's only concern should relate to the facts of the case. They were not to make any inference as to the state of Paul's mind when he committed the act, but should restrict themselves to a question of his guilt beyond reasonable doubt. He was acquitted on the charge of manslaughter, on the grounds of self-defence and the protection of his mother.

He was released to uproarious congratulations from the crowds of friends and neighbours who had thronged the courtroom. Over the course of the next three to four weeks he relived that evening of carnage many times. He had taken the life of another human being, and he had got away with it. People questioned neither his motives nor the intent which had been building inside him for years. He was a free man, and there would now be nothing to prevent him removing from society more of those like Harold Townley - dregs floating on a sea of humanity and riding on the backs of ordinary men and women, sucking the lifeblood from decent living people. He would look forward to that, but in the meantime there was his mother to take care of, and as they walked away from court that day, Rose had no idea that her son's name was destined to strike fear into the hearts of so many people.

# 2

*Friday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2002*

*"Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May 2002*

<i>Shelley Rouse</i>	<i>25<sup>th</sup> October 1975</i>	<i>Leicester</i>
<i>John Harper</i>	<i>14<sup>th</sup> April 1976</i>	<i>Birmingham</i>
<i>Roger Potts</i>	<i>18<sup>th</sup> September 1976</i>	<i>Liverpool</i>
<i>Julia Charlesworth</i>	<i>8<sup>th</sup> April 1977</i>	<i>Cardiff</i>
<i>James Colley</i>	<i>14<sup>th</sup> January 1978</i>	<i>Nottingham</i>
<i>Stephanie Wilde</i>	<i>15<sup>th</sup> April 1978</i>	<i>Brighton</i>
<i>Gladys Griffin</i>	<i>16<sup>th</sup> September 1978</i>	<i>Leeds</i>
<i>William Bold</i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup> November 1978</i>	<i>Norwich</i>
<i>Walter Colledge</i>	<i>15<sup>th</sup> January 1983</i>	<i>Luton</i>
<i>Carol Harris</i>	<i>5<sup>th</sup> February 1983</i>	<i>Manchester</i>
<i>Jane Hughton</i>	<i>23<sup>rd</sup> April 1983</i>	<i>Birmingham</i>
<i>Max Brand</i>	<i>15<sup>th</sup> October 1983</i>	<i>Wolverhampton</i>
<i>Gregory Charles</i>	<i>4<sup>th</sup> February 1984</i>	<i>Nottingham</i>
<i>Gillian Staines</i>	<i>7<sup>th</sup> April 1984</i>	<i>Sunderland</i>
<i>Barry Stimson</i>	<i>20<sup>th</sup> January 1990</i>	<i>Derby</i>
<i>Pauline Trent</i>	<i>15<sup>th</sup> September 1990</i>	<i>Leeds</i>
<i>Lianne Peters</i>	<i>18<sup>th</sup> November 1990</i>	<i>Liverpool</i>
<i>David Hollis</i>	<i>15<sup>th</sup> December 1990</i>	<i>Manchester</i>

*Couldn't catch me then, won't get me now. Back in business and raring to go.*

*Petey"*

The letter was delivered, along with all the rest of the mail, to New Scotland Yard at 9am. There was nothing remarkable about the envelope to attract the attention of anyone opening that day's post, beyond the fact that it was addressed to 'The Chief Constable' and marked 'Private and Confidential'. This was enough however to ensure that it landed on the desk of his private secretary. It lay there for a further two hours until it was opened. Things then moved with alarming speed from his office to that of the head of CID. The text of the contents sent an uneasy feeling down the spine of Detective Chief Inspector Colin Barnes.

The names sounded chillingly familiar, and he despatched a DC to the records department to dig out the unsolved case files from around England bearing those names. The letter itself was sent to forensics to extract any identifying marks which might lead to its author. Two hours later, those files were delivered to Barnes' desk, and the letter came back with a single unidentified fingerprint in the exact centre of the paper – it was almost as if the writer was laying down a challenge. All of the names were those of the victims of unsolved murder cases going back over a period of fifteen years, and from as far north as Sunderland. The entire letter had been meticulously written in block capitals using some kind of stencil set, so there was no possibility of obtaining any form of detailed profile from the way in which it had been composed.

There was a hushed atmosphere at the emergency briefing hastily scheduled for that afternoon, and the DCI made the position crystal clear.

"By now, you will all have received a copy of the letter which arrived on the desk of the Chief Constable this morning. This takes priority over anything else, and it looks like we're dealing with one hell of a serial killer. The case files on my desk are those referred to in the letter, and I want them computer checked, and cross-referenced to each other. We're searching for anything that can tie them together, but look at the gaps in the timelines. There are two big ones until it stops in 1990, so check all prison records for arrivals and departures of anyone with the name 'Petey', 'Peter', 'Pete' or anything like it around those dates, and also for anyone coming out up to one month ago, then two months, then three. Get the idea? I want progress updates this time tomorrow. OK, let's go."