

Lies. Jealousy. Rage. **MURDER.**

a spectator true crime story by jon wells

photography by gary yokoyama | design by william vipond tait

about the story:

To *The Grave* is written in a novelistic style, but all of the detail, dialogue and thoughts of the characters are based on reportage. Writer Jon Wells interviewed relatives of victims and more than a dozen police officers and forensic investigators and studied hundreds of pages of court documents.

Story has graphic content

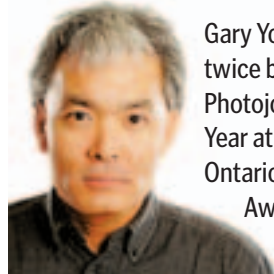
the writer:

Jon Wells has won multiple honours, including a National Newspaper Award, for his previous series: *Emergency*, *Post Mortem*, *Heat*, *Sniper* and *Poison*.



the photographer:

Gary Yokoyama has twice been named Photojournalist of the Year at the Western Ontario Newspaper Awards.



chapter one

'You're not going anywhere'

April 1999
Gage Park, Hamilton

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

The words were spoken under a bottomless blue sky, sun shining, air bone dry. A perfect day in late April 1999, a day that otherwise might have offered a chance to contemplate renewal, the annual deliverance from winter's grip.

The season had been unusual, shifting between extremes. Warm December, flowers bloomed, snapdragons poked up; a month later, winter erupted but the fury lasted just two weeks. Tundra swans flew through Hamilton in March, spring arrived early.

About 15 people gathered for the informal memorial service in Gage Park. They had all known the murder victim. They stood near the children's play area, holding hands, joining in to speak the words to a prayer they all knew.

"Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us."

Kids played on the swings. Plainclothes Hamilton police officers stood at a respectful distance from the gathering.

In one sense the nightmare was over. In another, it was just beginning. The epilogue would be little better than the bloody and unspeakable end.

"Lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever.

"Amen."

Forensic psychologists, criminal profilers say that when a killer tries to hide what he has done, fool police, friends, family, he is engaged in a defensive action — a rational act. In domestic homicides, defensive manoeuvres are common, "scene staging" attempted by the perp after the fact in 10 per cent of the cases. Try to make it look like someone

else is responsible, or that you were engaged in self-defence.

But then there is a different kind of defensive action. In very rare cases, a killer driven to cover up will descend to an especially dark place. It does not mean they are crazy, not a monster, the profilers believe.

Yet no standard psychological profile exists for these killers, no explanation why these few have it in their souls to follow the rationality across a Rubicon into the coldest and bloodiest of places.

There is something else going on inside the person who is capable of methodically, clinically cutting a victim into pieces to conceal what he has done.

Saturday afternoon
April 3, 1999
12 Burns Place, Hamilton

He grabbed another dish. Smash. And another. Smash. Pieces littering the kitchen floor, plates, bowls. Smash. Smash. The cupboard bare. The furniture. Baseball bat in his hands, slamming it into furniture, chair legs splintering, a mirror shattered.

This is what he had done at times over the years, his anger exploding in a red-black fury, raging. Was he unravelling, "decompensating" as the psychologists put it, unable to keep his head when faced with acute stress?

See him huddled alone in the dark, upstairs in his own house, behind the trap door in the attic, the crawl space among the roof insulation, hiding. Alone with his past, present and future.

Saturday afternoon, in his living room, his body quivering. Lying on the couch, curled into a fetal position, as though shrinking himself back to the beginning.

He had been playing the song, over and over and over again, seared on his mind, the folksy rhythms of Alannah Myles's song belying the violence of the words.

*I'm bad for you, I'll hurt your pride
I'll put a hole in your heart
Ten foot wide; I make you feel*

See him huddled alone in the dark, upstairs in his own house, behind the trap door in the attic, the crawl space among the roof insulation, hiding. Alone with his past, present and future.

Like you wanna die.

Even with everything he was feeling, whatever ripped at his insides, the stone cold still would not leave him. He had come this far. Get rid of the body.

I'm bad for you I'll skin your hide

What you're left with

You won't recognize

If you run away now you'd be wise

Even I'd run from me if I could.

Her last breath had come in that house, in the basement. She had wanted to leave the house on Burns Place, get away from him.

She was just like the others. Women, he thought. They keep f---n' leaving me.

You think you know all about me

'Cause you spent the night

Yeah right, not quite.

She told him she wanted to go.

Keep f---n' leaving me.

"You're not going anywhere."

Saturday, April 3, 1999
5:30 p.m.

Rookie Hamilton police Constable Kathy Stewart pulled the cruiser into her favourite variety store on Upper Wellington at Bruce Dale. She was working an 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. shift on Easter weekend.

She had just finished a sparse brown-bag lunch at the old Mountain police station, a building that had all the charm of an elementary school portable. A new station would soon be finished farther south off Rymal Road.

She felt a bit guilty about the junk food, but the bag of Doritos and bottled water would help address the growling in her stomach.

She lived with her husband common law, he was at home in Selkirk. Formal marriage wasn't far off, she would change her name from her maiden Czemerynski, which would save her fellow officers the challenge of wrestling with the pronunciation.

Continued on second-last page: WR3



On a sunny day in April 1999, about 15 people gathered in Gage Park for an informal memorial service. As plainclothes officers watched, the mourners joined hands and spoke the words of a familiar prayer.

