

She Smiled:

Two Women, Two Crimes, Two Exercises in Justice

By Jamie Kamlet

[To be published as a BleakHouse Chapbook, Fall 2009)

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General University Honors

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He has witnessed this scene too many times. Then again, one time would've been too many.

Detective David Daniel McCormick ducks under the freshly draped yellow caution tape and sets foot onto a parched lawn, browned by dehydration and summer heat waves. He stares for a moment at the unkempt home in front of him, and the wide-open door, no longer locking a family's secrets inside. He slowly climbs the front stairs and enters the house's interior world, instantly sensing the chaos and feeling the dank, heavy air of death. The floorboards creak beneath his size twelve shoes as he glances at the pictures on the wall of the entranceway and makes his first snap observations: the family (two parents, one child—no, make that two children) are working-class Americans, getting along but not living in luxury. The walls are covered with a faint pattern of yellow daisies, and sunshine is streaming through the window on the back wall of the room. A weathered grandfather clock is the most obvious sign of life in the room, faithfully ticking away the time and making its presence known at the top of every hour.

Detective McCormick is scribbling thoughts in a worn notebook when another officer descends the stairs and beckons McCormick with a curl of his finger. McCormick draws in a breath and begins climbing to the second floor. He reaches the top of the stairs

and slowly turns his head to the right. He gets his first sight of her—the woman from the picture, the mother. She looks as pale as the white sheets of the unmade bed on which she sits. She is staring blankly straight ahead into, and through, the eyes of the officer crouched down in front of her. The officer is speaking at her, fists clenched with frustration, in what is obviously a one-sided sequence of questions with few answers. The woman slowly turns her head and her eyes lock with McCormick's for a moment, a moment that seemed to last forever. Her eyes felt like ice, McCormick noted. He broke away from her spell and once again turned to the hallway ahead of him.

He moves more quickly now toward his destination, the room at the end of the hall, the one already saturated with officers, medics, and photographers. These personnel make room for McCormick, and as the surface beneath his feet changes from carpet to tile, McCormick tries one more time to brace himself for what is about to come into his direct line of vision. With each step, the scene comes into focus a bit more. With each step, the bathtub ceases to impede his vision a bit more. And with each step, the horror becomes a bit more real. Finally, everything was clear, exposed, and McCormick felt an instant pang of sympathy for the victim, a mere child, a stolen life. She killed her own child, McCormick thought. McCormick took a mental picture of the scene: off-white bathtub that looked overdue for a cleaning, silver faucets decorated with lime and rust, and the now cold water which looked as clean and pure as the life it had just taken.

He has learned from his twenty years on the job that jumping to conclusions is rarely appropriate or productive. But he has also learned to trust his instincts and at this moment, his gut is screaming with rage. She killed her own child. She drowned him.

McCormick glances at the purple towel resting on the edge of the bathtub simply monogrammed “Sam,” and grimaces at the object’s new-found uselessness.

McCormick turns back toward the door and with a flip of his hand, the crime scene personnel jerk back to action, creating an instant storm of camera flashes and chatter. McCormick walks back to the bedroom, this time entering, and moves toward the suspect. She looks up at him blankly and smiles. She smiled. McCormick could feel his body temperature rise five degrees as he tries to process the monster in front of him. There is no category for her in his mind, no rationale, no explanations much less excuses. McCormick grabbed her fleshy upper arm and with little effort lifted her from the bed to her feet. McCormick instructed the officer next to him to handcuff her and bring her to the station. The diligent officer wastes no time following the instructions and quickly shuffles the suspect downstairs. McCormick hadn’t asked her a question, hadn’t heard her voice, hadn’t heard a defense, but he had looked into her icy eyes and had seen a smile, a wicked smile. And for McCormick, that was enough.

He has witnessed this scene too many times. Then again, one time would’ve been too many.

The sound of the woman’s high-pitched screams could easily be heard as McCormick approached the iron-gated compound. The gold plaque arched across the gate read “Williamson,” serving as a not-so-subtle territory claimer, as if McCormick needed a reminder of the residents’ surname. Everyone in town knew the Williamsons,

everyone in the county even. They were local socialites, clean-cut country club members, and their visibly loving family relations might even make the Brady Bunch jealous. He frequented the golf course while she cheered on their son's soccer team. McCormick did not need to scan the pictures on the wall of the front atrium to get a sense of the home's inhabitants.

The screams had quieted down to periodic sniffles and heavy breaths by the time McCormick made his way to the woman-of-the-house. McCormick enters the master bedroom and sees an officer sitting next a woman on a love seat in the corner of the room. The woman had a fleece blanket draped across her shoulders and McCormick could hear the officer whispering soft words of comfort. Before McCormick could address the woman, he feels a tug on his uniform. He turns to see another officer who gently informs McCormick that the horror scene will not be found on this floor. Instead, the officer displays his pointer finger pointed downward and directs McCormick toward the kitchen.

McCormick could not immediately see the body—the pristine marble island in the middle of the room obscured his view. But as angles began to shift, the bloody scene became increasingly clear: two black Gucci shoes that still maintained their luster, two crisply pleated Armani pant legs, and a work-shirt. McCormick could not guess the original color of the shirt, but would now describe it as blood red. McCormick instantly recognizes Barry Williamson, and almost as quickly acknowledges the butcher knife just feet away from Mr. Williamson's left ear. Only an autopsy will reveal exactly how many times this object successfully entered its target, but from the amount of blood,

McCormick guesses no less than six. McCormick notices a blood soaked dishtowel wadded-up in an evidence bag on the floor. When he inquires about the towel, a crime-scene photographer informs him that the towel was originally found placed over Williamson's face.

McCormick feels numb, though he's not sure why. The country-club status of the victim made the crime a bit unusual, though McCormick had seen it before. He knows that appearances are far from being everything, and no one fully understands what goes on behind closed doors. Money doesn't buy you happiness, or so he had been told.

McCormick pivots on his heels and retraces his steps back upstairs to the master bedroom. The woman turns her head to look at McCormick as he gets increasingly closer. McCormick can hear her whimpering from feet away and secretly pleads to himself that she is able to hold her composure until he is finished with his questions. But questions are not necessary. Before McCormick can open his mouth, the fleece blanket once covering the woman's shoulders is dropped like a curtain opening to reveal a grand Broadway stage. McCormick drew in a breath as his eyes began to scan what has been revealed to him: scratches, bruises, cuts are covering every inch of the woman's arms. She is wearing a thin t-shirt, but McCormick can clearly see that the scratches reach up her neck and are beginning to invade her face. This was an unfair fight, McCormick thought. His perception of Mr. Williamson as the clean-shaven gentleman quickly shifted to a dark coward, the kind of twisted soul that feeds on the fear of the vulnerable.

McCormick moves quickly toward the hallway and motioned a medic into the room. He gives instructions to address this victim's wounds and then escort her to the

ambulance where she can be given due medical attention. McCormick sighs, looks around the room again and then heads back to his car. Observing the scene is the first piece of this deadly puzzle.

Guilty! The juror's voice is confident and assured as he delivers the verdict. The jury deliberated, more like discussed, the verdict for just short of two hours before announcing their decision. The prosecution had painted a fairly clear and cold picture filled with dark images of a cruel mother and the wicked intentions of a monster. The Assistant District Attorney's opening statement was inundated with colorful phrases that sounded like it had been ripped from a thesaurus with the page turned to "villain." It didn't take much on his part to explain that a woman who kills is awful, a woman who kills her own child is heartless. An innocent life was stolen and this terrible woman, this malicious human, this evil creature is responsible. In an act that disturbed the natural progression of life, the defendant showed neither mercy nor compassion for her victim, a child whose only mistake was trusting his mother with his life. This defendant, the prosecution argues, deserves no consideration, no clemency.

In an attempt to appear more human, the defendant took the stand early in the trial but was far from helpful to her case. Make-up failed to make her up into something appealing. Her shabby appearance did little to evoke positive emotions. Her hair was knotty and untamed, the dark circles under her eyes kept others at bay, her perfume -- Hypnotic Poison -- accented by the scent of fear easily crept into the jury box, and the shackles around her feet and wrists were the perfectly condemning accessories. A soft-

spoken woman already, her quiet tone made her seem distant and disconnected from the grave circumstances around her. With simple and direct words, she answered her own attorney's questions, claiming she had no idea what happened that day; her fuzzy memory left bits and pieces of her story blank, and left the jury unconvinced and unsympathetic. Aside from a few deep breaths, the woman's voice stayed steadily plain.

The Assistant District Attorney, captain of the offensive team in this adversarial game, salivates as he approaches the witness stand. He places his hands shoulder-length apart on the cool, wooden bar separating his witness from the rest of the room; she is a caged animal and he is ready to pounce. He demands answers from her and tells her that the victim deserves better than "I don't know" and "I don't remember." He dances around the courtroom showing little restraint, barely even taking a moment to hear her answers. And then he does what her lawyers had hoped he wouldn't: he presents her with a copy of the police report filled out by Detective McCormick. He places it on the bar in front of her and instructs her to read aloud the lines that he had highlighted. Nearly blinded by the golden yellow color, she clears her throat and stares at the words printed clearly on the paper. She inhales, knowing that when the next breath escapes her mouth it will be accompanied by words that will seal her fate. Her mouth opens and she reads, *"I approached the bed and looked at the suspect. She looked at me and then completely unprompted, she smiled."* The Assistant District Attorney's next question was not directed at her, but rather to the jury. He questions what kind of mother kills her own child and then smiles? What sort of cold-blooded creature takes an innocent life and is proud? The prosecution rests.

The defendant, in a daze, fearful and timid, shuffles off the witness stand, her movements constrained by the security chains on her ankles. The bailiff has a tight grip around her elbow and is moving her at a quicker pace than she would like. The world is moving slowly for her and the silence in the courtroom is far too loud for her ears to process. The courtroom is nearly empty, it seems as though few care to bear witness to her fate. The initial local shock and outrage over the event faded as time wore on. She is yesterday's bad news.

Her frantic eyes scan the courtroom looking for his face. She wanted to find comfort in his eyes, consolation in his presence, but her husband wasn't there and all she could feel was the deep ache of loneliness in his absence. He had yet to visit her new concrete residence, he wouldn't answer her phone calls, and the only bit of mail he sent her came in a large manila envelope, the pages inside neatly declaring that the reason for the divorce was "irreconcilable differences." The post-it note stuck on the first page read, "Please sign and return at your earliest convenience," as if her daily schedule of twenty three hours of nothing might not yield a good time to dissolve her marriage. Her mind returns to the present as a photographer's flashbulb nearly blinds her. The bailiff released her elbow as she slides down into her chair. She sighs and stares straight ahead, numb to the process and ready to accept her future.

As the verdict is delivered, the newly condemned's face is hanging down. She is silent and dazed. Around her, those attending the trial breathe a collective sigh of relief but all she can hear is the sound of her eyes blinking, slamming shut with the weight of steel doors. She feels her lawyer's arm slide across her shoulders in an attempt to

comfort her as he whispers an unconvincing apology. Jurors rise from their seats and shake hands as they exit the room. A job has been well done and justice has been served. The bailiff collects the prisoner and together they leave the courtroom.

Guilty? The juror's voice cracks, a causality of raw nerves, frayed by the crushing weight of uncertainty and responsibility. The courtroom erupts with the chaos of surprise and excitement. The jury was out for nearly three weeks and tensions ran high on both sides of the thick wooden door of the deliberation room. The twelve individuals had argued, disagreed, and bickered for hours a day trying to come to an agreement, one that never came. The hung jury was hung up on how to solve the task at hand: deciding the defendant's fate. Though her guilt was nearly undeniable, some individuals on the jury were uncomfortable with the verdict.

The defense painted a fairly clear and sad picture filled with dark images of a cruel husband and the wicked intentions of a monster. The lead defense attorney, there were three attorneys in all, had an opening statement inundated with colorful phrases that sounded like it had been ripped from a thesaurus with the page turned to "victim." This was not a story of cold-blooded murder, he argued, this was a gloomy tale of a marriage once was filled with love but now characterized by loud arguments and constant turbulence. The defendant in this case was not a monster, but rather a loving wife who just could not please her demanding and overpowering husband. Of course a life had been lost and a period of mourning was not only appropriate, but necessary. But after that period had passed, understanding and perspective needed to be given priority. He

asked the jury not to condemn this woman for an act of desperation, but instead try to identify with her, try to understand her, and then release her from this nightmare.

In an attempt to elicit sympathy, the defendant took the stand early in the trial and it could not have been more helpful for her case. Her delicate appearance instantly drew the jurors in. Her make-up made up for the hours she spent in the drab and cold cell, she was perfectly dolled up and ready to play her part. Her skin was evenly pale with a touch of rose rouge peeking through. Her dark and voluminous eyelashes blinked with quiet confidence as she rose from her seat at the defense table and walked to the witness stand. Her skirt reached modestly just below her knees, and her feet, generally used to being stuffed into high heels, sat comfortably in ballet flats that reduced her stature considerably. She barely made a noise as she moved toward the wooden chair at the judge's side, her stage for what had to be the greatest performance of her life. As she lowered herself into the chair, her hair fell neatly and smoothly to the side, flawlessly framing her fragile face. She folded her hands in her lap so as to conceal her new bracelets, the not-exactly-Tiffany's addition to her jewelry collection. With passionate and emotive words, she answered her own attorney's questions, claiming she knew exactly what happened that day because it had happened so often before, leaving the jury intrigued and wanting to know more. Aside from a few deep breaths, the woman's voice stayed steadily vibrant.

The defense attorney barely said a word as the defendant, his perfectly prepped puppet, painted a portrait of a possessive partner, a husband with an uncontrollable temper. *She explained that her husband had come home from a three-week business trip*

in a jealous rage, and by golly she had no idea what could possibly have upset him so. He demanded answers from her and told her that he deserved better than “I don’t know what other man you’re talking about” and “I can’t remember where I was this morning.” He paced around the kitchen with a look of ferocity that haunts her to this day, she said. And then he did what she had hoped he wouldn’t: he reached for a knife from the wooden block that sat on the marble island. As the clean silver escaped its wooden chamber, she felt the wind escape her and the room began to spin. The next part is not so clear, she told the jury, it’s as if she hadn’t even been there.

The next thing she remembers, really, is standing over his body. The knife wasn’t even in her hands; it was on the ground next to her husband’s face. That’s when the panic overcame her and thoughts of her son popped into her head. She felt sick to her stomach and began to scream. She grabbed the dishtowel that was hanging cleanly on the stove and threw it over his face—to cover up that look in his eyes. And then she called the police. The defense attorney’s next questions were not directed at her, but rather to the jury. What kind of woman doesn’t protect herself from a dangerous man? What sort of passionate mother doesn’t do whatever it takes to save from herself and her child from harm? The defense rests.

The woman dabs her eyes with the pale pink monogrammed handkerchief she had removed from the sleeve of her sweater minutes before her story came to its climactic end. The courtroom was silent as she sniffled a bit and then looked up at the jury. She didn’t say a word; she didn’t need to. The bailiff has a strong hold on her elbow as he helps her out of the chair and directs her back to the defense table. The woman looks up

as she slowly pads toward her attorneys. The courtroom is full, it seems as though the world was holding its breath until justice was served. The initial local shock and outrage over the event has barely faded as time wore on and the papers continue to plaster her picture on the front page.

Her frantic eyes scan the courtroom looking for his face. She wanted to find comfort in his eyes, consolation in his presence, and her son was there sitting in the third row, her rock through this whole treacherous process. His artwork and letters decorated her new concrete residence, giving her a sweet taste of home and love while she was there. She looked forward to the days when he could visit, though the cold glass in the visitor's room that kept him from her was truly devastating. She loved him more than words could say and she hoped that he knew that, could forgive her for what has happened, and continue to love her. She dreams of playing with him at the playground, teaching him how to read, and tucking him in at night, the precious moments only a mother can truly find joy in. Her mind returns to the present moment as a photographer's flashbulb nearly blinds her. The bailiff releases her elbow as she slides down into her chair. She sighs and stares straight ahead of her, nervous the process will not go her way and ready to move on to her future.

As the verdict is delivered, the woman's face is hanging down, silently praying to a god that had so far been kind to her. She is silent and dazed. Around her, those attending the trial breathe a collective sigh of relief but all she can hear is the faint, perhaps imagined sound of her smile sliding across her face. She feels her lawyer's arm slide across her shoulders in an attempt to convince her this is real as he whispers a

comforting explanation. Jurors rise from their seats and quietly exit the room. Their job was done, though questions still lingered in some of their minds. Her defense attorney collects her and together they leave the courtroom.

Another day, same routine. The guards call out at 6:30 a.m. announcing that her day as inmate # 429809 is obligated to begin. They declare that the sun is shining, an observation the woman has not been able to make herself in over five years. She opens her eyes and sees that same familiar piece of cold metal above her head, the bottom of her cellmate's bed.

For the first three years, she had a recurring nightmare, always of that fateful day when her life turned completely upside down. *She was trying so hard to get Sam into the bath, it was a daily routine they had. She had tried all the tricks in the book to get him into the tub, but her efforts had been exhausted; bribery, counting to three, and empty threats were no match for Sam's stubborn attitude. She would get him in for a minute but he would splash his way out again, finding increasing joy in his antics. Finally, she decided to pick him up and put him in the tub. She was furious, frustrated at his uncooperative state, and ready to pull her own hair out. Be firm, she told herself.*

She picked him up and held on tightly as she walked toward the bathtub. There must have been some water on the floor, remnants of Sam's exploits, because her right foot slipped on the cold tile and she felt her body fall forward. She could feel her fingers sink into his soft skin as she tried desperately to hold on. As she fell, she felt the wind

escape her and the room began to spin. And as her eyes closed in that moment, it sealed the end of a memory and created a gap in time she could not fill in, despite the greatest of efforts.

The next thing she can picture, and the next thing she can feel, is the cold porcelain of the bathtub. She is kneeling now, feet tucked neatly under her body and her forearms resting on the cool and flat surface of the bathtub. There is no moment of discovery or realization, just an understanding of what has just happened: her baby, her Sam, was dead. But she also knew that she didn't kill him, she would never harm him. He drowned, but not at her hands, she must have gone unconscious and couldn't get to him in time. She couldn't process her emotions fast enough and the next parts were just a routine, a reflex, as if a puppet master were guiding her through the steps: call the police, tell them what happened, listen to their questions, try to answer them, try and fix this situation.

Her memory again skips to when she was sitting with one of the officers and that tall, stoic detective came and stood in the doorway. She looked up at him thinking this all will be over now, he will know the truth, and so she smiled.

The claustrophobic feeling of waking up from that nightmare has quieted down over the years, mostly because she knows there is never going to be an end, no hope for her cause, and no light at the end of the tunnel. This is her home now and there really is no use in thinking any differently. Daydreams are her dearest and most trustworthy friends, but in the end they weren't going to save her from this hell.

She slides from her bed, the frigid place where she lays her head each night, stands upright in her cell, and takes a deep breath, inhaling the familiar smells of her surroundings. The smell of bleach radiates from her pajamas, becoming stronger each time the stiff fabric is stretched in a new direction, her cellmate's morning breath permeates the air around the top bunk, and the all-too-familiar stench of human excrements oozes from the not-so-private restroom area of their cozy living arrangement.

The day has barely begun before she hears his boots stomping in a rhythm that breeds fear deep in her bones. His baton clicks against each bar of the neighboring cells with a hollow sound that echoes in her ears for what seems like an eternity. She feels her heart quicken in pace, the fight or flight instinct kicks in, though she knows it's utterly useless—neither is truly a viable option. She counts the clicks in her head, clenches her knees, and makes two solid fists. Her spine is straight and she is staring straight ahead as she knows he is barely inches away. And then he appears. His jet-black hair slicked back and his clothes crisply ironed; he looks as slimy and disgusting as she knows him to be. His eyes mercilessly grip hers and hold her captive. After a moment's hesitation, he returns to his rhythm and moves on from her cell so as not to call attention to this interaction.

She first felt the full extent of his evil six months ago. She had finally gotten a highly coveted job in the laundry room of the prison, and was excited at the prospect of the change in pace, regardless how menial it seemed. On her fourth day he paid the laundry room a visit.

The guard moved toward the only other occupant of the room and barked at her

to stand up straight. He inched closer to her, making every hair on her neck quiver. He was so close to her that she could smell his cologne, the pungent odor of corruption, as it burned the inside of her nostrils. She sensed his hand as he reached out toward her, and she tried desperately to will it away. She considered her limited options, knowing that screaming will do little more than cause the punishment to be harsher, and concedes to doing nothing. She stood there, becoming increasingly numb as his hands mercilessly conquered each new inch of her body without stopping to ask for permission. And then she felt herself leave, flee her body and the scene of the crime. She escaped his touch, the violation and the pain, and instead enjoyed a moment of ecstasy, completely removed from a body and a place she barely recognized. Instantly the quick sound of his zipper shocked her back into reality and once again connected her to the present moment. He was finished with her for the day, but there was no doubt in her mind that he would be back for more another time.

She was right. The abuse has continued, daily, for six months now, and has become a piece of her prison routine sandwiched neatly between afternoon chow and yard time. She does not even consider complaining, knowing that her words will fall on deaf ears, or even worse, his ears. Instead, she suffers quietly, going numb each time and waiting until the lights are out for the night and her tears can pour out in privacy. She knows that this is her life now and she settles into a life of depression and defeat.

Another day, same routine. The alarm clock calls out at 6:30 a.m. announcing that her day as a stay-at-home mother is obligated to begin. She opens her eyes and sees

the same face she has woken up to for over two months. She stretches toward the eggshell colored ceiling and greets the sunshine that is streaming through her Venetian blinds. The man stirring next to her leans over and kisses her cheek, starting the day off the same way it had ended the night before.

Her trial had taken a month and after the jury came back without a real answer, the case stood at a standstill. Her lawyer assured her there wouldn't be another trial, that the prosecution didn't have enough to try again, and he was right. The District Attorney dropped her case, afraid of the embarrassment of another hung jury, or even worse a verdict of not guilty. She was granted the opportunity to live again, pick up where her life had been interrupted, and continue as a normal citizen.

She was enjoying being a mother to her son, showering him with love, affection, and emotional security. He had been traumatized by the trial, but she tried to show him that having her back was the most important thing. Never addressing where he had gone, she removed all remnants of her former husband, storing pictures and mementos in dusty trunks in the attic, actions that erased all memories. She wanted her son to forget him, wanted to move past him herself, and wanted to get on with their future together. Immediately after the trial, she moved them to a new house across town, a fresh start and a fresh new coat of paint on the walls.

And there was the man, a dear friend of hers for years, that she was seen with shortly after the trial. Neighbors enjoying clear summer nights could see him enter through the back door at night, and leaving the house in the morning as they were picking up their newspaper. Suburbia respects no secrets, and gossip rapidly spread

around town. The people who had once supported her, now sported sharp, judging eyes that were intolerable and followed her everywhere: in restaurants, down grocery store aisles, and at her son's middle school functions.

But her recent life has suited her well. She lives a comfortable life, attending social events and tending to her son while the man with whom she shares a life places bread on the table in a silver napkin. Her routine is busy, filled with soccer games and parent teacher conferences, what she considers fulfilling and exciting. The man cares for her, loves her, protects her. He never raises his voice or points a finger, behaviors she appreciates immeasurably. She has settled into her new family and her new life, a life of happiness and success.

The pregnancy is what saved her. The guard's visits became much more frequent, and he had paid the laundry room a visit everyday for the last month. Soon her stomach began to swell up. She complained of severe nausea, and landed a ticket to the infirmary. Guarded by the confidentiality of a doctor's office, she releases her secret and, feeling the weight lifted from her shoulders, the doctor told her what she already knew to be true, "*You're expecting.*" Though "expecting" wasn't her preferred term because it denoted some sort of excitement, she accepted that her body was currently housing what she considered to be the greatest blessing and curse she had ever known. She soon came to realize the implications of this pregnancy.

The pregnancy is what got her. The man's visits became much more frequent, he was spending nearly every night in her home. Soon her stomach began to swell up. She complained of severe nausea, and immediately made an appointment with her doctor. She sits nervously in the doctor's plush and comfortable office, and she fidgets as she waits for the doctor to tell her what she already knows, "*You're expecting. You're three and a half months pregnant.*" She quickly does the math, knowing that her husband must have been out of town at the time of conception. She soon came to realize the implications of this pregnancy.

Justice comes for him. A prison-wide DNA collection and paternity test easily confirm her allegations and his crimes. Watching him walk away with his hands securely chained behind his back and his head hanging low gave her a sweet taste of freedom, one that she hadn't had in far too long. She felt liberated knowing that he would now be a slave to the correctional system; lose his autonomy, his identity, and all of his power. She was a glutton for this delicious idea. As the other officers lead him past her cell she caresses her ever-growing stomach, silently thanking her baby.

And justice comes for her. Due to his conviction, the rest of her sentence is suspended and she is given probation. Her release day arrives and she is given back her belongings, most of which are useless: a gold wedding ring that symbolizes abandonment in the form of a failed marriage, clothing that will no longer fit over her "expecting" body, and a photograph of her former family, her former life. An officer retrieves her at noon and leads her to the gates of the prison where she is given \$25 dollars for bus fare

and a weak “good luck” from the guard. She is relieved to see that her mother is waiting for her and greets her with open arms. She buries her head in her mother’s familiar chest and begins to release the emotions she held in through the interrogation at her house, through the trial, through her incarceration. Though she knows the road in front of her is long, she also knows that she is free to walk it without chains on her feet, and a new baby in her arms.

Justice comes for her. Just like the woman, suburban neighbors could do the math as well, knowing full well that the baby did not belong to the woman’s former husband. The District Attorney, too, caught the scent of this scandal, this affair, this new piece to the puzzle. A few detectives were sent back to pour over the clues again, see what they could find. With this new suspect involved, everything seemed to change. The District Attorney orders the apprehension of both individuals, and vows that this time, she will not get away.

The woman is again brought into custody, this time with a male companion, a fellow suspect, in tow. The two are separated into interrogation rooms, and asked the routine questions. They are asked about the nature of the relationship, when it turned romantic, and whether the victim knew anything about the affair. The woman knows how to answer these questions, how to play the game. She has been through this mill once already so the second time is simple. She feeds the officers a story about how she has always known the man, it was strictly a friendship, and there really was nothing for her former husband to have known about because there was no affair.

The man, however, has never been under such pressure, and as the sweat drips down his forehead, he begins to fold, eventually letting the house of cards crash down. *He and the woman had been having an affair for months. She told him that her husband was abusive and that if they could just get rid of him, they could be together. The man had fallen in love with her long ago and would do anything to have her to himself. On the day of the murder, the woman had let him into the house and told him to hide in the kitchen, supplying him with the long, powerful knife before she went out for the day. The man waited very impatiently for Barry to come home from his trip. When he finally heard Barry's feet pound through the atrium into the kitchen, his heartbeat sped up and before he knew it, he had lunged up from behind the island and was on top of Barry plunging the knife into Barry's chest using strength he didn't know he had. Finally, he either exhausted himself or realized that the gruesome task had been done, and he stopped to evaluate the scene.*

He had nearly cleaned up the scene when the woman came back through the door. She called out his name, unsure exactly what kind of scene she was walking into, and slowly moved toward the kitchen. As the body came into her view, she began to panic, grasping her face in her hands and talking rapidly. But as she ran out of breath, she began to calm down, and as she looked from the body of her former husband to his murderer, she began to put together that her plan had worked, so she smiled.

She grabbed a dish towel off the oven rack and placed it over Barry's face so that he couldn't see what she was about to do next. She stepped over his body and fell comfortably into the man's arms. Before calling the police, the woman orders him to

attack her, make it seem like she had put up a fight against her husband. He followed her directions diligently and began to push her around, scratch her back, and bruise her body with repeated strikes of his hand. When she felt like the scene had been set enough, the man exited the house and the woman called the police, beginning her greatest performance.

This story was enough for the officers, capturing it all on tape and immediately booking both suspects. The trial was nearly as quick and before she knew it, the woman is standing outside the entrance of the prison gates. She rests her handcuffed hands on her belly, unable to concentrate on anything other than the fact that when the baby comes, the state will claim ownership over it right away. She knows the road in front of her is long, she also knows that she is going to walk it with chains on her feet, and a no baby in her arms.