



## **murder**

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**Tag(s):** "murder trial" "mob rule" poetry justice

## 1. concerning the prospective killers

he waits in the shadows      off camera  
memorizing his lines  
reel thoughts  
a prospective killer      cued.  
trees hissed, cowered  
stars fell to their knees      before  
this matinee idol.  
he turns his head  
toward the reader  
aims his eyes

shoots.



### 3. a report on the victim

NAME	Holly Magdalen
ADDRESS home	no fixed address
Mailing	city morgue
BIRTH DATE	the day U2 Gary Powers fell off the sky
RACE	potpourri
SEX	for medicinal purposes
RELIGION	only attends church every Sunday, all statutory holidays
OCCUPATION	actress in short art films
CRIMINAL RECORD	talks in her sleep writes left handed leaves her blinds open
OTHER	bad dream: an angel appears unto her and announces "you shall be the mother of GOD." but when the curtain rises she is giving birth to twins.

#### 4. police at the scene of the crime

snow white  
skin  
blue ice eyes  
pink trout lips  
granite jaw  
lieutenant elliot gritted his  
teeth  
hid his fingers in a fist  
mumbling  
staring at the sky  
that looked hollow, and shattered, and  
guilty,  
His eyes were  
pulled  
down to the grass  
where the victim had last been ad-  
dressed.  
he read over the facts:  
blonde and twenty-four  
raped and  
female  
murdered alone  
fingers chewed  
off.  
the killer, nervous.



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## 6. at the funeral

the ground yawned  
like a beast  
who has lost his taste but not his craving  
they lowered the brown plywood box  
(with mahogany veneer)  
the minister related her tragedy but emphasized it made little real  
difference  
since none of us was built to survive.  
her parents  
pinched each other  
with glances. the service  
ended in whispers.  
the chief of detectives was the first to leave  
taking notes he waited by the cemetery gate  
examining each face like an usher  
checking tickets  
to make certain  
that everyone who had attended was living. and as the mourners left  
and stepped into their limousines their heads were turned;  
the earth was heard to belch  
as the body rose up  
evaporated.

## 7. the mortician's aside

the mortician smiled

"yes

I remember

I assigned

a blue evening gown

to the occasion.

I arranged the

on her face,

organized her smile,

pruned the terror from her eyes."

dimples like gulls

against a falling sky

the fresh salty air

from her thighs.

powder



## 9. outside the courthouse

SUN squints bleachers filled with clouds  
TV cameras pan late afternoon scene  
RCMPolice stand behind barbed wire  
XxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxXXX  
protecting the courthouse from wind erosion  
reporters sharpen their tongues  
a mink dressed up in a woman  
selling postcards of her operation  
a loner 2 lovers in the grass  
discharges trying each other on  
his eyes  
PICKET LINES:  
homosexuals: demanding equal time  
women's lib: lips swollen into megaphones.  
behind the din a dog salutes the flag.



## 11. about the judge

behind the bench his robes hang regally  
across 65 year old eyes  
chair with roots  
shoulders  
hammocks of flesh  
swinging  
below his waist skin melts  
sliding  
down his bone stocking  
overflowing in his shoes.  
dreaming how  
as a kid he used to swallow  
caterpillars farting butterflys  
whole  
just to hear them scream.

## 12. spectators (1)

a cat lay on the window ledge  
    curled  
    into a perfect circle bathing in heat  
opened one eye  
    saw the cockroaches  
    scurry around the feet  
    of a room full of spectators  
    like pedestrians through heavy traffic  
closed that eye  
opened the other  
    watched the judge  
    hurtle his fury upon the courtroom  
    like a downpour upon the rush hour  
closed that eye  
    stretched                      herself out full  
  a perfect straight line  
and yawned.



#### 14. spectators (2)

cub reporter    buck teeth  
yawning                braces  
                              acne scars  
in a pew  
pressed against a large bosomed woman  
dreamed                of    swelling jeans spurting sighs  
                              spastic twitching blood heated  
                              to steam volcanic eruptions lava flows  
woke up    startled  
                  arousal  
                  panicked —her hand in his pocket.



## 16. elements (2)

plaster crack'd slowly paint  
peel'd  
fell from the ceiling  
in flurries floor  
boards creaked like thin ice  
cock roaches all 20 legs  
scurried  
across the hardwood. one stopped to  
sing  
WHITE CHRISTMAS and  
was crushed by a flake.



## 18. the first witness reveals herself

running her fingers like a comb through her hair. on the hour her face is drawing thin. an uncomfortable smile (like a child's alter she has knocked over a vase of flowers) memories that lay cold and lifeless. sheets that were seldom crowded. on a whim she turns and addresses the camera:

“it is easy to feel gay when one is young.  
but wisdom is accumulated with years.  
life is nothing but dimly lit corridors  
and hushed voices.  
(pointing her finger to her face)  
and next week I'll be twenty—one.”

## 19. spectators (3)

a bat  
    dropped out of the belfry  
        almost mating  
        with the judge's toupee  
darted left  
    almost entering a woman's scream  
looped over and  
        up and to the  
        right  
everyone ducked  
sergeant at arms ordered  
curtains drawn  
a cat leaped from the floor to the judge's bench  
                                  lights doused  
the courtroom turned blind  
all that could be heard was heavy breathing wings  
                                  flapping a child like screech  
and a cat                          laughing like a gatling gun.



## 22. spectators (4)

mary, the master thief,  
who has stolen 16 hearts,  
a dime store lover,  
is buried in a blush.  
in a panic she scours the room —  
has anyone noticed her leaving the ladies room  
forgetting to flush.

### 23. about the third witness

egologist

blueveningenes..... long brown hair blowing like dandelion seeds in your breath kneading her heart with her tortured grin as if the world had awakened into her dream. using her despair as a fix she laughs with her mouth

“the world is constipated with flesh.  
the earth is fat with us.  
communication is buggery.  
what she needs is a good laxative.”

## 24. spectators (5)

an old lady someone's aunt  
sits in the last row of  
pews  
thinking that these problems we all go on about  
are a social dis-  
ease.  
everything could be  
cured  
if we exercised our pray-  
ers and washed behind our  
knees  
as she holds her handkerchief  
over her mouth and nose  
so she won't catch a dose.





## 27. spectators (6)

dressed only  
in the maple leaf  
a flasher  
lowered the flag          half mast  
hoping the gentlemen would reach for their pockets  
and that the ladies's eyes would all be cocked;  
a reporter twisted his chin  
a mailman plundered his ears  
a girl wrapped in snakes and roses yawned  
a cop saluted  
someone's aunt waved so long  
a stenographer postponed her period.

## 28. the testimony of the third witness

I noticed the crowd  
I saw him on her  
I thought it was love  
I heard someone  
in the crowd  
cry out  
“

stop

it.

this is murder.

I'm going to burst at the gut with laughter.”

my eyes shudder d.

her face was born into my memory.

the last words from her lips was

'BASTURDS.'

## 29. spectators (7)

a philosophical cop leaned against a wall  
munching on a hot dog

and wondered  
what sort of creature is this MAN  
who reaches for the heavens and then licks the earth,  
and wondered  
what sort of creature is this MAN  
who once calls himself a god  
and then is able to swallow his pride

the philosophical cop looked away,  
licked his fingers, and finished his coke.

### 30. elements (3)

in the crowded courtroom  
perspiration drips from a nose,  
hangs like a metal from an earlobe,  
forms beads around necks,  
    headbands across brows  
fills bras with pools  
straightens out pubic hairs  
drips drips drips  
    behind panting flys  
20 days  
and 14 metric nights.



### 32. the accused takes the stand

x flower child    root bound  
barb'd wire    head band  
pointed nose    gargoyle  
                    over his  
                    mouth  
hair that scourged his face.  
fingers            uncontrollable  
kept rushing to the defense  
                    of his eyes  
words cluttered in his mouth.  
the sort of person who never had  
                    a bad word  
                    for anyone  
and whom no one ever trusts.  
                    he smiles  
at the courtroom  
bleach'd out    eyes  
swollen        lips  
trembling      with apologies.

### 33. elements (4)

overhead            neon lights            whispered  
                         like grasshoppers  
before the harvest  
learning to fly.  
                         locust rays            swarmed  
across the room    buzzing  
around the accused's head.  
licked their lips.  
gossiped.



### 35. spectators (9)

nick the miner  
twitches his ears and his eyes  
wiggles in his suit for special occasions  
killing the flies  
that refuse to be shaken.  
he listens to the prosecution's case  
and agrees with its conclusions.  
'life is sacred,'  
nick mumbles with a sense of pride.

### 36. the defense's case

hands on his hips, eyes on the floor,  
barely audible words flee from the defense lawyer's lips.  
'my learned colleague displays a strange disguise  
dressing up vengeance as some sort of appertif.'  
a flock of chuckles rose from the gallery.  
'we must not escape one truth.  
What is on trial here is crime itself –  
do we just forget auchswitz, Hiroshima,  
mai lai, pontchartrain, guernica?  
what is this crime, in history's terms,  
but wind through some teeth,  
    breath down a street  
    tears at her wake  
vengeance is the outlaw's virtue.  
mercy the rule of the blessed.  
even if gods,  
we could not mend the past.  
let us preserve the memory  
of this girl in the murderer's hands.  
since death ends all,  
slaying my client will only seal his victim's fate.'

### 37. the judge addresses the jury

'let no one ask why we are here  
guarding our memories       pockets in knots.  
we are those  
who did not survive birth and lived.  
we are condemned to weigh the evidence  
as if we were gods,  
the possessors of all possible facts.  
we have had enough of a joy  
that flushed the heart  
and leaves the eyes chapped.  
let us decide,  
knowing that outside       in the stillness  
not a moment has passed.'

### 38. judgment brought down

the jury slouched                      back into the room  
all 12 hung                              their heads  
the foreman fell apart  
   on the floor  
   and apologized.  
the judge's forehead cringed  
                         tapping his thoughts  
                                 shaking his head  
he washed his hands in gravel  
   'I will not cast  
the first stone.  
the prisoner will be released  
into the custody  
of the mob  
so that after his  
lynching                                      suspended sentence  
no one





## 41. epilogue

after the execution  
buildings spawned shadows  
after the mob unraveled  
tears turned into snow.  
outside the courthouse in the yard  
television  
gathered  
the day.  
16mm. cans  
spools of film  
prisoners  
of light  
bleeding inside.

two kids  
were  
flying  
a kite  
tugging  
at the moon  
with  
the wind.

THE END

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*Somewhere in the 1970s (2011)*

No one was going to tell them what life was about. Or tell them how to party. They were free. And arrogant. And young. It was the 1970s and everyone was lost.



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