FOUL PLAY

BY AJANTA JUDD

1968

AUGUST 11TH

Deep dark August night
a primal gut-wrenching wail pierces the silence.
'She's gone; she's gone. I know she's gone!'
Kitchen light's soft glow, kerosene heater fumes
mingle with existential terror.
A Mother collapsed on the kitchen floor[1]
her favourite teacup shattered
sepia liquid pooled on the cracked linoleum.
Swollen-eyed, guilt-ridden siblings huddle in the hallway
witnessing their mother melt into oblivion.
There will be no resolution for those present.
Not in this lifetime.

AUGUST

22ND

I was nearly ten
when seven-year-old Linda Stilwell
whom I never met, disappeared forever.
Both born on the same date in
a deep Melbourne winter,
we were bonded by a disparate fate.

[1] Linda Stilwell disappeared near Luna Park, St Kilda on August 10, 1968. No trace of her remains has been found. Her mother, Jean Priest, fought for years to find what happened to Linda, said the family had been through hell. https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2014/oct/30/derek-percy-abducted-and-killed-linda-stilwell-in-1968-says-coroner

1964

SKEDADDLE

Mum and Dad arguing. Again.
Uh oh, better piss off before I am told to.
Take off on my battered red scooter
back of our kid's clothing shop
traverse the bluestone laneways of Balaclava.
Scoot behind the milk bar, cake, grocer, and shoe shops.
Pass variations of back fences
overhung with vivid purple morning glory.
Yards. The occasional gate slung open
a glimpse into other lives.
Corrugated iron, rubbish piles
yellowing weeds winding up walls
incinerators exuding grey toxic plumes.
Dank smell of bird shit mingled with smoke
gentle sounds of chickens foraging
unaware of Saturday afternoon beheadings
on greengrocer Cincotta's chopping block.
On those days, drawn by cacophonous
sounds emerging from two doors down the lane,
I would peer through a hole in the fence to spy on death.
Mysterious laneways of childhood.
Abundant with variegation, industriousness,
Sunday bathing rituals, voyeurism.
Diaspora of Jews, Italians, and transients.
Cuckolding. Secret machinations.
From a young age left to my own devices.
Nothing escaped my attention.

1966

SPLITS

Bump, clatter, bump, clatter
my wheels hit the cobblestones
past the red brick facade of the Swiss bakery
comforting aroma of macaroons and coffee scrolls
dirty grey grease floating in puddles outside.
Retrieving a ball two years later
falling through the bakery roof
dignity saved by straddling a rafter.
A painful thump to a nine-year-old cunt.
No sympathy from oblivious adults
who freely bandied words about
not suitable for young ears.

1964

PERIPHERAL

Left to my own devices
feeling resentful. Heavy hearted.
Rounding the corner
flirting with the unknown
deserted St. Kilda police station
parking lot. Illicit destination
all grey drab and unattended.
Skidding aimlessly through loose gravel
my hackles are up.
Am I allowed to be here?

Reflecting upon
my young self. Saddled
with dysfunctional, often
neglectful parenting.
Other priorities always
taking precedence.
Bless them.

1948

CHARM'S PERILS

Unbeknownst here
sixteen years earlier a charge was laid
Sidney the charming husband
buggered a 14yo boy in Mum's kitchen
lured him with money.
My older half siblings[2]
repressing a lifetime of shame.
Their father sent on paid holidays
two years in Pentridge.
It was something in those days
to have a charge
to have a sentence for such a crime.
Following an access visit after his release
Mum said my sister,
'came back a sullen withdrawn girl.'

[2] My half siblings were my sister (14 years older) and my brother (10 years older); from my mother's first marriage to Sidney. Mum told me that her wedding night wasn't consummated (despite her best efforts) so she reverted to other means to have children. She had an affair she said, with the *'love of my life'* in the year or so before my sister was born, and I suspect that my sister was the by product. The family forbade Mum from marrying her 'great love' years earlier as they were Methodists (Mics), and he was a Catholic. Sidney was acceptable as he was a Methodist and a 'gentleman'.

For years I copped disdain
from his two offspring
much older than me, almost a generation.
In cahoots they were. Spitefully jealous
down putting. Denying.
Isolating me further.
Branding me the *'lucky one',*
an annoying kid sister
suffering collateral damage
heading for black sheep land.

QUESTIONABLE ORIGINS

The inmate. Was he
homosexual or paedophile?
Kiddy fiddler or invert?
Jail brands men like him
rock spiders.
Discovering the folklore,
other predators were
present in the family.
Mum, like it was natural,
'Your uncle Les, he liked little girls'.
told me tales of
kids swimming at Elwood beach
floating in his lap
copping a fiddle. Unseen.
Historic family acclimatisation
to inappropriateness
to sexualised behaviour

to the disregard of innocence
a cesspool of endemic tolerance
engendering psychic epigenetics
coupled with corporeal sleaziness.

❖

My child self
gifted via osmosis
with family hand me downs
of perverts and sleazes.
Rendered ripe for the picking.
As though my forehead was marked,
'Innocence, free for the taking.'
Although the hidden bonus,
my learnt wariness,
sometimes saved me.

❖

That same beach
where the girls got fiddled.
Summer of 1969 the year
Yvonne Tuohy was murdered.[3]
Auntie Joyce
laughing her head off
lost her false teeth
in the sand at dusk.
The hunt was on.

[3] Yvonne Tuohy (12) was snatched from Warneet beach at Victoria's Westernport Bay in July 1969. Her body was later found under some bushes with her wrists bound behind her and her mouth stuffed with a balled cloth. She had been strangled and her body mutilated. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-07-24/derek-percy-linked-to-deaths-of-9-children/4840556

1964

WARINESS

Spooky place this. Knew all about
the long arm of the law. Hearing
parental conversations of
murder. Mayhem. Abduction.
The outside dunny stands solitary
a sinister presence loiters behind.
Grey flannel pants. I remember the felt hat.
Later it appears in a composite sketch.
Was it Percy, the one who took Linda?[4]
Smells of Brut. Like Dad.
Feigning friendliness, he gestures
moistened lips whisper
'Look what I've got for you'
Looking up I stare into blank eyes
they don't match the voice
puts the wind up me.
He lurches forward. I recoil
jerk from his grasp. Bolt for my life
back up the lane. Scramming
past the supermarket carpark
through our shabby timber back gate
screeching and yabbering

[4] Derek Percy, depraved child killer. Found by the Victorian State Coroner Iain West (2014), to have abducted and killed Linda Stilwell on 10th August 1968. Imprisoned on Governor's pleasure (never to be released) for the sadistic murder of Yvonne Tuohy at Warneet on 20th July 1969. Suspected of nine other child murders and abductions.

Coroner's Report: https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/lindajanestilwell_148905.pdf

Derek Percy profile: http://maamodt.asp.radford.edu/Psyc%20405/serial%20killers/Percy,%20Derek.pdf

One man, so many faces of evil by John Sylvester, The Age April 22nd2007
https://www.theage.com.au/technology/one-man-so-many-faces-of-evil-20070422-ge4pv0.html

heart jumping through my chest.
My brother working on his car
screwdriver in hand. Takes off
flat out to the cop shop.
Predator already vamoosed.

❖

Giving chase must be the most decent
thing my bully brother ever did for me.

1968

AUGUST 10TH

Bright winter's day
air so crisp it could shatter.
Sun sneaking out. Promise of spring.
Stilwell kids topsy turvy during the day
Mum's out shopping
'don't leave the house'
they go anyway
dribs and drabs
enticed by excitement
Karen, Gary then Linda
together then apart
coming and going
from their St. Kilda home.
Little Luna Park, the penny arcade,
fishing off the pier.
Colours, crowds, carousels, kaleidoscopes.
Carefree abandonment.

Later in the day
around 4 pm
Linda, happy go lucky
trusting friendly child
'She would talk to anyone'[5]
refuses to go home with Gary.
Giggling, she tumbles down
the grassy boulevard slope
never to be seen again.[6]

1968

THE UNTHINKABLE

Alone she plays
on the soft green grass.
Carefree. Full of life.
legs and arms spinning.

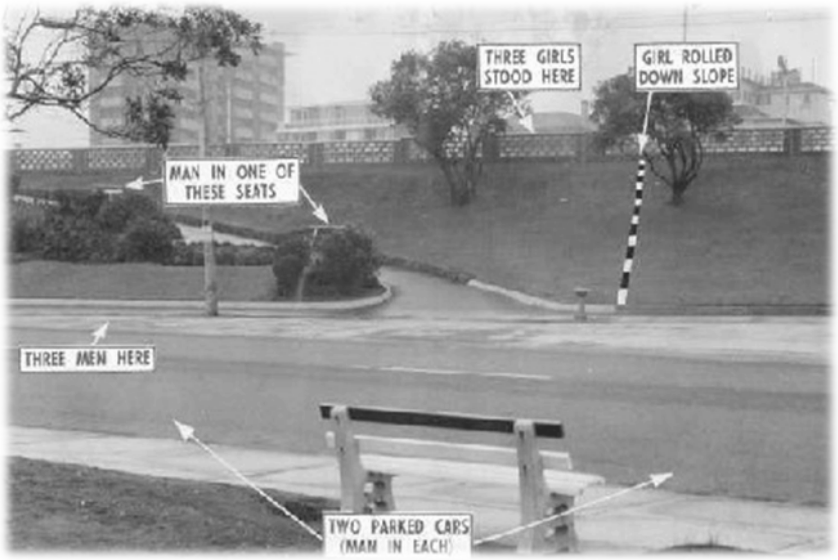
❖

On the nearby bench
alert with sadistic desire
he sits watching.
Orange Datsun wagon
its yellow sticker saying
go well go shell
parked for the getaway.

[5] According to her mother, Jean Priest, Linda was: 'a very friendly, trusting and affectionate child who would talk to anyone, whether strangers, adult, child, male or female.' Finding into death with Inquest; Inquest into the death of Linda Jane Stilwell https://www.coronerscourt.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2018-12/lindajanestilwell_148905.pdf

[6] Linda Stilwell profile in the http://www.australianmissingpersonsregister.com/Stilwell.htm

Laughter from the carnival below
floats above sweet pink fairy floss.
August number one hit
People Got to be Free
pumps from tinny speakers.
His lips quiver in anticipation
as opportunity presents.
With a sordid smile he beckons,
'Look what I've got for you.'
Shaded by trees they speak
winter evening closing in
her fate sealed.
Accepting a car ride home.
There one minute
then she was gone.[7]



1968

DUTY OF CARE

Unknown to him a woman watched
and thought the girl had better beware
observing him watching her with
that intent stare. A lone child.
Goosebumps crept up her arms
as she turned and walked back into the crowd.

[7] Linda Jane Stilwell was seven years of age when she disappeared on 10 August 1968 whilst playing in the vicinity of Little Luna Park, on the St Kilda foreshore.

1965

I GOT YOU

Earlier sunny winter's day
St. Kilda home ground.
Little Luna Park
Sonny and Cher number one
I Got You Babe
floats on the salty breeze.
Sea slapping against the shore
squark of seagulls hustling for titbits
boulevard traffic bustling.
Where they had been.
Balloons floating above, spirits up.
This time I'm supervised
rolling down the lush green slope
laughing and covered in grass.

WATCHERS

In every crowd sprinkled with young ones
paedophiles watch for the vulnerable
children who have a fragility about them
on the periphery. Loners or left alone.

❖

Beaches and toilet blocks
not the only playgrounds
for those with ill intent. Bedrooms.
Often the least safe place.

1962

VARICELLA ZOSTER

Trusted family doctor
thudding up the stairs above our shop.
Customers demanding
parents' attention below.
In bed alone.
Skinny five-year-old
sick and itchy everywhere.
Chicken pox.
Warm bedside lamp
throws shadows on the wall.
His bulk towers over me.
Shrink into the bed try to disappear.
Hear breath whistling through
nicotine yellowed teeth.
Gruesome slobbery lips say,
'Open your legs'
say, '*checking for blisters.*'
The sound of someone
ascending the stairs saves me.

My confused terrified
compliance to authority. This
and later assaults, interferences, indignities.
Teaches me distrust
teaches me defiance
teaches me to buck the system.
Teaches me wariness.

1956

GOD FIGURE

Slime bucket doc
and Mum share history.
Mum with her submissive naivety
1918 Spanish flu
claimed her mother's life
stole her little brother.
Exposed to dodgy heredity.
No maternal role model.
Doctors were God.
Spittled lips violator
the great white saviour.
Saved her life he did.
At least she thought so.
the mastectomy
the three births
the termination.

1957

THEREFORE, I AM

That abortion
newlywed to misogynistic Dad.
With me at ten years old being
too young to hear
such serious business.

Mum says confidentially,
'Incomplete abortion. Fully formed tiny girl
plopped out in the toilet bowl at home.'
Birthed me at forty the next year.
Risky age for producing a flawless child.
Guess they couldn't face doing it a second time.
Three years before Linda Stilwell was born
August 22nd 2.53 am.
There was a contingency plan
surrounding my arrival.
Collusion with the good doc to,
'snuff me out if I was mongoloid.' [8]
Mum tells me, '*If I was born*
'flat faced, thick necked and slanty eyed,'
there would be no first breath.
He would pinch my nostrils.
Cover my mouth. Eradicate.
Here I am to tell the tale
by some quirk of fate. With
no extra chromosome 21.
Wonder. '*What was so different about their lives one year before?*'
Wonder. '*Why my aborted sister, not me?*'
Wonder, *'Did they flush her away?*'
Wonder. '*Was my 'I am' by default?*'
Wonder. '*Do I exist at the expense of another life?*'
Wonder. *'Why Linda Stilwell, not me?*'

Luck? Familial conditioning? Personality? Temperament? Divine intervention?

[8] The term '*Mongoloid*,' is an abhorrent cultural remnant. Coined by 19th-century European anthropologists who, in a worldview that now seems crude and outdated, used the term to describe every native ethnic group from Mongolia down to Southeast Asia. The term took a nasty etymological turn in the 1800s when it was used to describe people with Down's Syndrome.

LEGACY

Early life for this outlier.
Dodging ducking escaping.
Victimhood
a role since relinquished.
Burdened with parental expectations
constructed ideals. Inconsistency
projections. Self-interest.
Identity embodied amidst layers
of intergenerational
adaptation to hardship
coupled with absence of insight.

❖

Siblings had vamoosed home by the time I was nine
Surrounded by adults preoccupied with gossip and hearsay
I was a fringe child hovering in the background.
Honing listening skills. Drinking in words.
Anxiously interpreting meanings

❖

Unlike gregarious chatty
Linda. Her tragedy enabled by friendly openness.
But for my disposition, it could have been
#Me too. Wariness, my great protector.
Distrust saving my skin.
My gender's honour badge.[9]

[9] The #MeToo Movement is a social movement that is against sexual violence and sexual assault. It advocates for females who survived sexual violence to speak out about their experience.

1965 TO

1969

Porter's Eldorado[10]
A scorching hot Australia Day 1966
a bright white Adelaide beach
three kids fading out….

❖

The Beaumont children.[11]
Jane. Arna. Grant.
Alone. Unsupervised.
'Would you like a lift?'
Never to be seen again.
These beaches
the lure of freedom. Sun
swimming frolicking. Even during
wintertime the vast ocean calls.
Every child taken during those years.
Removed from near a beach
or left near water.
Nine known. Perhaps others.
Upon a quick arrest for Yvonne
Tuohy's murder in 1969
the signature pattern stopped.

[10] El Dorado by acclaimed poet, lyricist and librettist Dorothy Porter is a fragmented verse crime novel. The storyline is that of a serial child killer stalking the streets of Melbourne. He kills his victims gently and places a gold mark on their head.

Porter, D.F. (2008) *El Dorado.* Sydney: Picador. https://nla.gov.au/nla.cat-vn4365646

[11] Jane, 9, Arnna, 7, and Grant, 4, left their home in the Adelaide suburb of Somerton Park around 10am on January 26, 1966 to go to a beach. They caught a bus to nearby Glenelg beach and were expected to return home on the noon bus but never did. Despite a large reward, the involvement of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and Scotland Yard, and numerous leads - including an alleged sighting in New Zealand - the children have never been found and their fate is unknown.

CONSEQUENCES

Remaining
bruised by close escapes.
Resonance of Linda's fate.
We are forever
inextricably linked
by happenstance.
Sisterhood bonded by sinister intent.
Loss of innocence. Of life.
The taking of Linda
the fate of my terminated sister
walk hand in hand over my shoulder.

❖

Writing this. I notice
an occasional by-product.
Vigilance.
Possibilities play over
crossing the road
speeding cars, trees falling
Is the gate shut? Are my dogs safe?
Predators lurk in dark spaces.

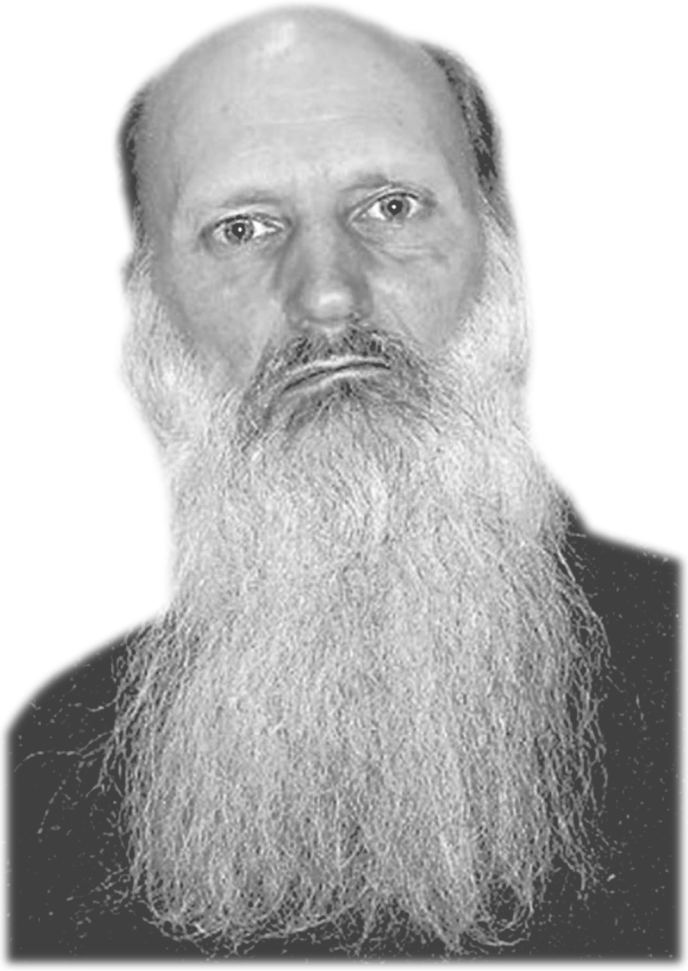
❖

In the depths of reflection
remembrance and association
an agitation arises
can't quite put my finger on it.
It loiters like a child hunter.

2013

WITHOUT MERCY

Australian prisons'
longest serving inmate
lies dying in hospital.
Derek Ernest Percy.[12]
Convicted for murdering
violating Yvonne Tuohy 1969.
Classified criminally insane.
Coroner found he killed dear Linda.
Took her from the boulevard
that day. One of the nine
innocent children.
Got away with mutilation
murder. Torture.
Even on his death bed
they tried for confessions.
For the others. For Linda.
For her mother, Jean.
Blank eyed sadist
keeper of secrets, sick deeds and
fantasies, over and over,
'I was present on each of those days'
'I can't remember'.
The truth.
He took it to the grave.



[12] Derek Ernest Percy was a suspected Australian serial killer and convicted child killer, who was also a person of interest linked to the mysterious deaths of at least nine other children in the 1960s He had the hallmarks of a serial killer from an early age. He started stealing and wearing women's clothing and developed a fetish for slashed or cut underwear and for knives.
https://www.smh.com.au/national/a-man-called-percy-beast-without-mercy-20130726-2qpm2.html

2021

JUNE 3RD

Classic day today
early winter azure sky
decorated with
wispy mares' tails.
Walking the dogs. Our
favourite beach deserted
idyllic and beckoning.
But for one solitary
dishevelled looking
man standing watching
the emptiness below.
His ominous looking van
with its darkened windows
parked nearby.
Assess him. Attempt to
read his vibe.
Do not like the look of him.

❖

Heart longing for the beach
we double back
skedaddling for home.

❖

Like a virus
we adapt
to survive.

IN REMBERANCE

KNOWN OR PURPORTED CHILD VICTIMS OF DEREK PERCY[13]

All the children listed below share the commonality that Derek Percy was in the vicinity when the crime was committed. Of the found victims, a similar methodology was used in each case – torture and mutilation. Percy has only been convicted for one of these crimes and refused to divulge information about the others. This series of child abductions and murders and the modus operandi used ceased after Percy was convicted and incarcerated.

Found murdered. No charges or conviction:

1. *Christine Sharrock (15) Wanda Beach, Sydney January 1965*
2. *Marianne Schmidt (15) Wanda Beach, Sydney January 1965*
3. *Allen Geoffrey Redston (6) Canberra September 1966*
4. *Simon Brook (3) Glebe, Sydney May 1968*

Abducted. Body to this date not found:

5. *Jane Nartare Beaumont (9) Glenelg Beach, Adelaide January 1966*
6. *Arnna Kathleen Beaumont (7) Glenelg Beach, Adelaide January 1966*
7. *Grant Ellis Beaumont (4) Glenelg Beach, Adelaide January 1966*
8. *Linda Jane Stilwell (7) St Kilda Beach August 1968*

Confirmed victim. Percy charged and convicted:

9. *Yvonne Elizabeth Tuohy (12) Warneet, Vic July 1969*

[13] New evidence in Simon Brook case implicating Derek Percy in his murder. https://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/new-evidence-in-kill-mystery/news story/94fc32e9385b618e46c85ce118ea68e2