

**A Scenario of How the Haysom Murders  
May Have Occurred**

On June 8, 1986, in London, England, two people confessed to killing Derek and Nancy Haysom on March 30, 1985, in Bedford County, Virginia. Both Elizabeth Haysom and I each claimed to have committed the crime alone. And we were both lying.

As we will see below, the forensic evidence discovered at the crime scene leaves little doubt that two people together killed Derek and Nancy Haysom. This was also the police's working theory before Elizabeth and I became suspects. And as a matter of plain common sense, it is very difficult to imagine how one single person (without special training) could kill two other people using only a small knife.

So, if both Elizabeth and I were lying when we each "confessed" to committing the crime alone, what really did happen on March 30, 1985? To answer this question, we should ignore both "confessions," my very long one and Elizabeth's very short one. Instead, we must focus on the facts and the evidence that can be verified independently, or whose veracity is beyond reasonable doubt.

Such a re-examination of all of the evidence (apart from the two "confessions") is especially timely now in view of recently discovered new evidence: DNA test results and a witness, Tony Buchanan. In fact, it is now possible to reconstruct with a reasonably high degree of probability how the Haysom murders may have occurred.

On the weekend before the murders, March 23 and 24, 1985, Elizabeth stole her mother's jewelry. She testified to this in court, and since this admission is not self-serving, there is no reason to disbelieve her.

The most likely motive for stealing the jewelry was to pay for drugs. Elizabeth testified that she was using drugs the following weekend, the weekend of the murders, and she told me on that weekend that she was still using heroin. Her addiction is well documented, so it is reasonable to believe that she was indeed consuming narcotics.

During the intervening week, Nancy Haysom would have noticed that the jewelry was missing. Since there was no sign of a break-in, and since she knew her daughter had struggled with drug addiction, she would most likely have assumed that Elizabeth had stolen the jewelry and phoned her at U.Va. to ask her to return it.

But instead of going to Lynchburg to meet with her mother about the stolen jewelry, Elizabeth went to Washington, DC, with me on Friday, March 29. This kind of avoiding behavior is typical of drug addicts.

However, it is also possible that the trip to Washington was part of Elizabeth's plan. According to trial testimony, she was the one who rented the car for that weekend and paid for it, which was quite unusual in our relationship. (My VISA card was used to guarantee payment, but no rental fee was charged to the account.)

At my trial, the prosecution argued that Elizabeth and I spent the afternoon and evening of Friday, March 29, and most of the day on Saturday, March 30, doing what any young couple would do on a romantic get-away. Then, in the late afternoon on Saturday, I suddenly drove off by myself to Lynchburg, armed with nothing more than a pocket knife, and killed Derek and Nancy Haysom by myself.

This makes no sense, given the kind of person I was then and still am today.

Even my worst detractors would agree that I am highly intelligent and extremely organized. In 1984, I became the first student at my elite private high school in Atlanta,

Georgia, to win a full scholarship to the University of Virginia under the Jefferson Scholars program. During my incarceration, I have had seven books and roughly fifty articles published. These sorts of achievements are only possible if one is methodical, disciplined and bright.

Had I been directly involved in any way with the murders of Derek and Nancy Haysom, then the crime would have borne all the hallmarks of my personality: It would have been well-planned and neatly-executed. Just as I studied for my college exams, I would have spent the hours before the murders preparing every last detail, purchasing a gun, arranging a plausible alibi, creating escape routes and so forth. Under no circumstances would I have wasted those hours watching the movie “Porky’s Revenge” and strolling around Georgetown, as the prosecution claims.

Buying a firearm in Virginia in 1985 was even easier than it is today—so easy that a “nerdy” college kid like me could have managed it. But according to the prosecution, I did not even attempt to purchase a gun, or make any other preparations. Does this sound plausible?

Please compare the Haysom murders, which I did not commit, to the crime I did commit approximately one year later: the check fraud in London, England, to support Elizabeth and me while we were “on the run.” For that crime, I acquired three different sets of forged identity papers for each of our many false identities: forged Canadian driver’s licenses, forged Canadian national I.D. cards, and forged certified copies of Canadian passports. In other words, this check fraud scheme was well-planned and very organized, in keeping with my personality.

Please note that I am not suggesting that intelligent, methodical people do not commit crimes; obviously they do. Rather, my point is that intelligent, methodical people commit crimes in ways that are at least somewhat intelligent and methodical.

And, by extension, people who are drug-addicted and mentally ill commit crimes in ways that are recognizably influenced by narcotics and psychosis. Any unbiased observer of the Haysom murders crime scene will recognize immediately, from the evident frenzy of the attack, that the perpetrator was almost certainly using drugs and/or experiencing a psychotic breakdown. The lack of planning and preparation in Washington—specifically, the failure to purchase a gun—also points to a disorganized and chaotic personality.

While Elizabeth was certainly intelligent, there is no question that she was quite unstable and impulsive. She had run away from her English boarding school with her lesbian lover and tramped around Europe for a year and a half; she had been addicted to heroin for many years; and in 1986 and 1987 three psychiatrists (Drs. J. Hamilton, H. Bullard and C. Showalter) diagnosed her with borderline personality disorder and pathological lying. Interestingly, one of the symptoms of borderline personality disorder is impulsiveness and short-term thinking.

If it is true, as I suggested above, that people commit crimes in ways that reflect their personalities, then it would be in keeping with Elizabeth's personality to suddenly drop everything and rush off to kill her parents, without even acquiring a proper weapon.

According to the prosecution's theory of the case, however, it was I who murdered Derek and Nancy Haysom—supposedly by myself. But as noted above and further explained below, it is virtually certain that this crime was committed by two

people acting together. This was the defense's theory of the case at my trial in 1990, too. Therefore, the following paragraph briefly summarizes this version of events, since it may actually be true.

On the afternoon of Saturday, March 30, Elizabeth told me that she was still addicted to drugs; that she owed money to another student at U.Va. who dealt drugs to her; that she had to pay off this drug debt by transporting drugs from Washington to Charlottesville that evening; and that she had to use our rental car immediately to undertake this action. I wanted to accompany her, but she refused: I looked too "straight," no drug dealer would trust me. So she drove off alone, leaving me in Washington, DC.

The U.Va. student who dealt drugs to Elizabeth was a Jefferson Scholar like me; however, he was one year older. His family members were friends with the Haysoms and lived only a few miles apart.

It is possible and perhaps even likely that the story Elizabeth told me before leaving Washington alone was based on a kernel of truth: She really was still addicted to drugs and really had run up a debt with her dealer. And she really did have to use our rental car immediately to settle financial problems related to her drug use.

But Elizabeth's financial problems had nothing to do with transporting drugs from Washington to Charlottesville. Instead, they had to do with the theft of her mother's jewelry one week earlier.

We cannot know whether the U.Va. student, who Elizabeth discussed in her conversation with me, really was Elizabeth's drug dealer, or whether that was merely

another lie she told me. Even if he were her drug dealer, we cannot know whether he was involved in the murders.

However, there is one reason to believe he may really have been involved: Elizabeth and her accomplice entered the Haysom residence that night without resistance. If the accomplice were this unnamed person of interest, whom the Haysoms knew well, this would be plausible. But if Elizabeth brought a stranger that night, the Haysoms might not have let him in, since they wanted to confront Elizabeth about the stolen jewelry.

After Elizabeth took the rental car, she drove to Lynchburg and picked up her accomplice. Either they left the rental car and drove together in the accomplice's car—the one that Tony Buchanan saw two to four months later—or perhaps each drove in his or her own car, in convoy.

When they arrived at the Haysom residence after dark, the Haysoms let them enter the house. This is significant because it is not clear that the Haysoms would have allowed me to enter by myself after dark. They had met me only once, for about half an hour, two months earlier.

Also, as noted above, if this unnamed person of interest were Elizabeth's accomplice, he would have had no problem entering the house, being well known to the Haysoms.

As anyone familiar with this case knows, whoever entered the house that night left sock prints in blood. The evidentiary value of these bloody sock prints will be discussed below. At this point, however, we should focus on what the sock prints can tell us about the perpetrators' relationship to Derek and Nancy Haysom.

Surely it is strange and noteworthy that at least one of the Haysoms' visitors that night removed his or her shoes. In Japan it is quite common for guests to remove their footwear upon entering a house, but in the United States, this usually suggests a close relationship with the hosts: in this case, either a family member like Elizabeth or a family friend like the unnamed person of interest. Since I had met the Haysoms only once, and briefly, I certainly was not familiar enough with them to take off my shoes.

The prosecution's theory of how I supposedly left those sock prints, by contrast, makes no sense at all. Allegedly, I committed the murders while wearing my athletic shoes, leaving sneaker print LR2. Then I left briefly and returned—but upon reentering the house, I removed my shoes to avoid leaving more sneaker prints. Walking around in my socks, I then left LR3 and LR5, the infamous sock prints. Does this sound plausible at all?

Is it not far, far more likely that there were two perpetrators at the crime scene: one who left sneaker prints, and the other who felt sufficiently "at home" to remove his or her shoes?

Whoever entered the house that night ended up killing Derek and Nancy Haysom during an argument that began in the dining room and then spread into two opposite directions: the kitchen, where Nancy Haysom was found, and the living room where Derek Haysom was found. What could have sparked off this fight?

There is evidence at the crime scene that the dispute revolved around jewelry. After the murders, police took a photograph of Elizabeth's bedroom, which was upstairs from the crime scene. This photograph showed a dresser in her room with the drawer pulled open, and a necklace lying on the floor in front. If Elizabeth had left her room in

this disarray on her last visit home, one week earlier, then her mother would have straightened up in the intervening week. So this disorder must have been created on the night of the homicides. And jewelry—the necklace on the floor—was involved. That is why police took this photograph.

If jewelry were indeed involved, the motive for the crime had to do with drugs and drug-debts, not the relationship between Elizabeth and me.

There is little doubt that Elizabeth did indeed steal her mother's jewelry on the prior weekend. If the motive for the theft was to pay for drugs, or to settle a drug-debt, then it is exceedingly likely that the jewelry would have been handed over to a drug dealer shortly after the theft. So Elizabeth could not have returned the jewelry on the following weekend, even if she had wanted to.

This would explain the avoiding behavior of going to Washington, DC with me, instead of returning to Lynchburg to discuss the missing jewelry, as her mother would have undoubtedly insisted. Or perhaps Nancy Haysom had simply told Elizabeth to come on Saturday.

In any case, if Elizabeth were unable to return the jewelry she had stolen, because she had given it to someone else (presumably a drug dealer), then perhaps she asked the person to whom she had given the jewelry to accompany her on this trip to her parents. That would perhaps make some sort of twisted sense to a drug-addled mind like hers.

What we can reasonably assume is that there was a complete impasse in the Haysom home on the night of March 30, 1985: Nancy Haysom wanted her jewelry back, and Elizabeth was not able to return it because she had given it to a drug dealer. This led to an explosion, with alcohol as a contributing factor. As will be discussed in greater

detail below, both Derek and Nancy Haysom had extremely high blood alcohol levels; Elizabeth's fingerprints were found on a vodka bottle on the front row of the liquor cabinet; and both unknown fingerprints and the fingerprints of Derek Haysom were found on a shot glass near Derek Haysom's body. What this suggests is that all four parties, the two victims and the two attackers, were under the influence of alcohol.

Given Derek and Nancy Haysoms' unusually high blood alcohol levels (more than twice the drunk-driving limit), one could draw the conclusion that they knew their attackers well. Most people will drink more heavily in the company of friends and family, but may reduce their alcohol intake if they are around relative strangers. Even if the Haysoms had already been drinking heavily before their visitors arrived, then it is certainly interesting that they continued drinking, despite their inebriation, and persuaded their visitors to join them. Most people know when they have drunk too much, and if a stranger shows up in the middle of the night, they are likely to stop. But if friends or family arrive in the evening, then one may pour another glass or two, no matter how intoxicated one already is.

The above is somewhat speculative, of course; thanks to the forensic evidence, we can be much more certain about other aspects of the events that evening. For instance, we can conclude with near-certainty that there were two attackers:

- a) All four blood types were found at the crime scene: the victims' A and AB, as well as B and O.
- b) Apart from the victims' footprints, there was both a sneaker print (LR2) and sock prints (LR3 and LR5).

- c) Both victims had two dramatically different wounds: very shallow stab wounds and very deep slash wounds.

In addition, it is simply implausible that one attacker could kill two victims in two different, non-adjacent rooms with a knife. Nancy Haysom was found in the kitchen; no one was found in the dining room; and Derek Haysom was found in the living room.

In the original A.P.B. issued by the Bedford County Sheriff's Department in April, 1985—immediately after the murders—investigators were looking for two perpetrators.

Was Elizabeth one of the two perpetrators? The forensic evidence strongly suggests that she was:

- a) Immediately next to Nancy Haysom's body was a half-open washing machine; inside, on the very top, was a damp (!) cloth with B type blood on it. This was Elizabeth's type, shared by 10% of the population. Neither subtyping nor DNA testing were possible. At my trial, the prosecution raised the possibility that the blood-typing test may have malfunctioned in this one instance.
- b) Both victims had very high blood alcohol levels (.22). On the front row of the liquor cabinet, near Derek Haysom's body, police found a vodka bottle with Elizabeth Haysom's fingerprints on the bottom and top, with the middle wiped clean. However, it is possible that Elizabeth left her fingerprints on that bottle on the prior weekend.
- c) A bloody sneaker print (LR2) was discovered at the crime scene. According to a 1985 Bedford County Sheriff's Department report (filed before Elizabeth and I

became suspects), LR2 “would be a woman or a small man or boy...a 6 ½ to 7 ½ shoe.” I wore an 8 ½ shoe.

It is worth noting that, at Elizabeth’s 1987 sentencing hearing, her half-brother, Dr. Howard Haysom, testified, “I think that she has lied to me in the past and, frankly, continues to lie. ... I think Elizabeth was in the house at the time of the crime.”

Could I have been the second perpetrator? There is some forensic evidence that suggest I could have been:

- a) As noted above, O type blood was found at the crime scene, and this is my type. However, 43% of the population also shares this type. Neither sub-typing nor DNA testing were possible on the O type blood, as with the B type blood.
- b) At my trial, a prosecution witness who was not qualified as an expert created the impression that the smeared bloody sock print LR3 “fits [Jens] like a glove.” During habeas corpus proceedings, two fully qualified impressions experts found that the sock print testimony by the prosecution’s witness had been “misleading” and “worthless” because LR3 matched only Elizabeth in length. In 1997, Assistant Attorney General John McLees conceded in a habeas brief that the sock prints “could not be sized with precision.” If Mr. McLees is correct, then I cannot be proved to have left LR3—but I also cannot be eliminated on the basis of the sock print.

While the blood and sock print evidence allow for the possibility that I could have been the second perpetrator, other forensic evidence strongly suggests that I was not:

- a) Luminol testing revealed that the perpetrator(s) washed off blood in the master bedroom’s bathroom sink. In the sink was a human hair that did not belong to the

victims or to me. (N.B.: This hair has not been DNA tested.) The hair must have been deposited there at the time of the crime, or it would have been washed down the drain.

- b) Both victims had very high blood alcohol levels (.22). On a side table near Derek Haysom's body was a shot glass with his fingerprints on one side and unidentified fingerprints on the other side. (N.B.: These fingerprints have not been run through AFIS.) In 1985, before Elizabeth and I became suspects, police devoted an enormous amount of effort to discovering who left these fingerprints, even comparing them to California's "hillside strangler." The police's initial view—that these fingerprints were key to the case—was correct, just like the initial view (expressed in the A.P.B. mentioned earlier) that there were two perpetrators.

Also, it is important to note that my fingerprints were not found anywhere at the crime scene—but Elizabeth's were.

As far as the sneaker print LR2 is concerned, this is probably the single most important and the most underappreciated piece of evidence in this case. It proves that someone other than me was present during the commission of the crimes. This means that the prosecution's entire theory of the case—that I committed the crime by myself—is definitely wrong. However, the sneaker print was most likely left by Elizabeth, so it does not necessarily prove that I was not present as well.

In 2009, DNA tests were performed on forty-two blood samples found in the Haysom case file under the Post-Conviction DNA Testing Program. Thirty-one of the samples were too degraded or too small to yield useable results, but with eleven of the samples, scientists were able to determine with certainty that the blood did not belong to

either Elizabeth or me. Because the DNA profile of the contributor of these eleven samples is not in the Virginia DNA Data Bank, his or her identity could not be determined. However, we now know with certainty that someone other than Elizabeth and me left his or her blood at the crime scene. This finding is significant for two reasons.

Firstly, it is highly significant that none of the forty-two blood samples could be linked to me. For over twenty years, the prosecution (and especially Investigator Ricky Gardner) has insisted vehemently that I cut my own fingers and bled at the crime scene while committing the murders. If that were true, then at least one of the blood samples should have been mine.

Secondly, it is a well-recognized fact that DNA evidence is not as helpful in murder cases as it is in rape cases. The reason for this is that the majority of homicides are committed with firearms, so the perpetrator is not usually injured. However, murders committed with knives, like this one, are different: In most knife-attacks and -homicides, the perpetrator usually does injure him- or herself. So we would expect to find the perpetrator's blood at the Haysom crime scene. And, indeed, an unknown DNA profile was discovered at the crime scene—exactly as one would expect in a knife homicide.

Overall, then, the DNA test results greatly weaken the case against me (because none of the forty-two samples could be linked to me, even though I supposedly cut my fingers at the crime scene) and strongly suggest the presence of a perpetrator other than Elizabeth or me (since one must expect an attacker in a knife murder to injure him- or herself and thus leave his or her DNA).

So what forensic evidence do we have that points to a perpetrator other than Elizabeth or me? We have:

- a) O type blood;
- b) fingerprints on shot glass;
- c) human hair in blood-stained master bedroom's bathroom sink;
- d) sock prints (assuming that Elizabeth left the sneaker print LR2); and
- e) eleven blood samples DNA tested in 2009.

In addition to this forensic evidence, we now also have a witness: Tony Buchanan. In 1985, a few months after the Haysom murders, a Chevrolet Nova or Camaro was brought to his transmission repair shop. Separately, a young couple arrived to pay for the repair: a woman who was definitely Elizabeth and a man who was definitely not me. Elizabeth paid for the repair, but the car seemed to belong to the young man. Inside the car, on the floor mat on the driver's side, was a puddle of dried blood and a heavily blood-stained hunting-type knife.

The forensic evidence (a) to (e) above, in combination with the witness, Tony Buchanan, establish the presence of a second perpetrator other than Elizabeth or me beyond reasonable doubt.

As discussed earlier, forensic evidence also establishes the presence of Elizabeth at the crime scene beyond a reasonable doubt.

This does not completely eliminate the possibility that I was also at the crime scene, as a third attacker. However:

- a) There was no forensic evidence suggesting the presence of a third attacker—say, another set of shoe or sock prints.

- b) If I were one of three attackers at the crime scene, then there must also have been a fourth conspirator who purchased the movie tickets in Washington, DC. These movie tickets were introduced as evidence during my trial, and both prosecution and defense agreed that they established an alibi for whoever purchased them; the dispute was whether Elizabeth or I purchased the tickets. But if neither of us bought them, then another conspirator must have been involved. And somehow this fourth conspirator must have given the tickets to me, since they were found in my possession (or, rather, in my college dorm room).

Assuming that a four-person conspiracy is considered too implausible, then by far the most likely remaining option is that Elizabeth and an unknown accomplice (seen by Tony Buchanan) committed the crime, while I stayed in Washington. This is precisely the theory of the case argued by the defense at trial—now further substantiated by DNA test results and the witness Tony Buchanan.

What can the crime scene tell us about the nature of the attack?

- a) The use of a knife suggests that the crime was not planned, or at least not fully thought out.
- b) The extreme violence (dozens of stab wounds) suggests the influence of drugs and/or mental illness.
- c) The extreme shallowness of the stab wounds suggests a female attacker who was acting out some sort of emotional conflict. The unusual depth of the slashing wounds to the neck suggests a male attacker of great strength who was perhaps “finishing off” the victims after the female attacker had (lightly) injured them.

As noted earlier, Elizabeth was diagnosed with borderline personality disorder and admitted in court to using drugs on the weekend of the homicides.

If indeed, as seems likely, there was a heated argument between Elizabeth and her parents over the stolen jewelry, this could have led her to act out of immediate anger and pick up a knife from the kitchen or dining room. Luminol testing revealed that one of the steak knives in the drawer of the dining room table had blood on it. At my trial, Elizabeth identified this steak knife as the murder weapon, and it was passed around the jury in an evidence bag. (My so-called “confession” claimed that I used a butterfly knife which I later threw in a dumpster, not a steak knife which I left at the scene.)

Once Elizabeth had attacked and (lightly) wounded her parents with very shallow stab wounds using the steak knife, her accomplice may have “finished them off” with his own hunting-type knife.

However, Elizabeth may have actually killed her mother while her accomplice killed her father. There was one single stab wound that was deeper than one inch: a stab wound to Nancy Haysom’s heart which, according to medical testimony, may have been the fatal injury. As noted above, the B type blood—Elizabeth’s type—was found in direct proximity to her mother’s body.

After the murders, the two perpetrators fled in a panic, without turning off the outside lights. Investigator Ricky Gardner considers these lights to be significant, but in fact they only prove that whoever committed the crime was in a hurry to leave. People under the influence of drugs forget to turn the lights off even under normal circumstances, let alone when they are panicky from having just committed double murder.

As the two perpetrators were fleeing, their car's transmission broke. They pushed the car off the road, into the woods or into a field, where it remained until late May or early June, or perhaps mid-July.

Because the perpetrators were, as noted above, in a panic and under the influence of drugs, they left the hunting-type knife in the car. Possibly the male perpetrator later noticed that the knife was missing. Either he could not remember where he lost or left it—or he could remember, but he was too scared to return to the abandoned car to retrieve it. What if the police had found the abandoned car with the bloody knife inside? Then they would have staked it out to see who would come to retrieve the car or the knife. So the safest thing would have been to stay away from the car.

Meanwhile, on the night of the murders, the two perpetrators kept moving. If they had driven off the Haysom residence in two cars, then Elizabeth would have driven her accomplice home in the rental car. But if they had driven to the Haysom residence in the accomplice's car, which had just broken down, then they would have had to walk to the accomplice's home, where Elizabeth had parked the rental car.

If Elizabeth's accomplice were the unnamed person of interest, then they would have simply walked to his parents' home, which was near the Haysom residence.

After separating from her accomplice, Elizabeth returned to Washington, DC in the rental car. There is one reason to believe that the rental car was not, in fact, used by the perpetrator(s) of the murders to drive to the Haysom residence: When police tested the rental car, they found no traces of blood at all. The extreme violence of the crime, and especially the bloody sock prints and sneaker prints, would suggest that the perpetrator(s) tracked some blood into their getaway car. Certainly, the car that Tony

Buchanan saw in his transmission repair shop had blood on the floormats, as one would expect. So it seems very strange that the rental car did not have any blood in it.

In one of her numerous statements, Elizabeth claimed that, in the early morning hours of March 31, 1985, in Washington, DC, she used Coca-Cola to clean dog remains from the bumper of the rental car. Supposedly, the car had collided with a dog as it was leaving the Haysom residence.

Police found no traces of blood to substantiate this story. But what if, in Elizabeth's drug-addled, mentally ill mind, there was a kernel of truth to this lie, as well? Perhaps, she and her accomplice did collide with a dog as they were fleeing the Haysom residence—but instead of the rental car, they were driving her accomplice's car. The collision with the dog could conceivably have forced them to veer off the road, damaging the car so badly that they had to abandon it in a field or in the woods.

When Elizabeth returned to Washington, DC, in the early morning hours of Sunday, March 31, she came to the hotel room where I was waiting for her. The first thing I noticed was that she was wearing different clothes: specifically, baggier jeans with pockets sewn onto the legs. Interestingly, this change of clothing could explain the sock prints at the crime scene, since she would have had to remove her shoes to put on a different pair of jeans. Also, there may be some connection to the open dresser drawer in the photograph mentioned earlier: Perhaps Elizabeth got the jeans out of that drawer and, in a rush, left it wide open, just as she left on the outside lights.

Another change I noticed in Elizabeth's appearance was brown staining on her forearms, which I recognized as dried blood; her hands were clean, however. This would match the forensic evidence, since Luminol testing revealed blood residue in the kitchen

sink—indicating that one of the killers washed her hands there. Immediately next to the sink, and next to Nancy Haysom’s body, was the half-open washing machine containing the damp rag with a spot of type B blood, Elizabeth’s type.

Again interestingly, Luminol testing also revealed that someone had washed off blood in the master bedroom’s bathroom’s shower. Clearly, whoever showered off blood was not Elizabeth, since she had dried blood on her forearms when I saw her; this would have washed off in the shower. If indeed it was the second perpetrator who showered and washed in the master bedroom’s bathroom, then the human hair found in the blood-stained sink there probably belonged to him or her—not to Elizabeth.

When Elizabeth entered the hotel room, she walked past me, sat on the end of one of the two beds, leaned forward and began repeating the same four sentences in different ways: She had killed her parents, the drugs had made her do it, they deserved it anyway, and if I did not help her, she would fry (i.e., be executed in the electric chair). Because Elizabeth was obviously in shock, and because of the dried blood on her forearms, I believed her; something unbelievably awful had obviously happened to her. It did not occur to me to ask her if she had an accomplice, perhaps because I was overwhelmed by what she was telling me.

Then Elizabeth stopped repeating her litany of four sentences, above, and told me directly: I had to be her alibi, I had to tell the police that she had been with me the whole night.

At this point I finally came out of my own state of shock a little and told her that this would never work: I was her boyfriend, and the police never believe a verbal alibi provided by lovers, spouses or the like.

This statement of mine led to a kind of stunned silence between us. And then I had my “brilliant” idea: I would take the blame for her crime, I would give a false confession.

Because my father was the Vice Consul at the German Consulate General in Detroit, Michigan, I believed I had a form of limited diplomatic immunity: I thought I would be deported to Germany and tried there for the American charges. Under German law, I would have been considered a juvenile and could not have been sentenced to more than ten years incarceration. I was willing to sacrifice a few years of my freedom in order to save the life of the woman I loved.

Of course I was willing to make this sacrifice only for Elizabeth. If I had suspected even for one moment that my false confession would also protect her accomplice—her drug dealer? her lover?—I would never have promised to “take the rap” for a crime I did not commit. But the subject or even the possibility of her accomplice never came up. Elizabeth told me she had killed her parents, and I had no reason to doubt her.

For the rest of that night, we worked on getting my “story,” my false confession, right: I tried to imagine how I might have committed this crime, and she supplied details or made corrections so the lie would be plausible.

As bizarre as this sounds now, I never asked Elizabeth what had happened. The truth is that, on some level, I really did not want to know any details; the whole situation was so awful, so frightening, that it felt safer to ignore it. This denial went so far that, over the following months, Elizabeth and I did not even refer to the murders directly but called them “our little nasty.”

Fear and denial were my primary emotions throughout this period. In the following exchange from my tape-recorded interrogation on June 7, 1986, these feelings are very evident:

Officer: Would you consider, taking into account your answer, pleading guilty to something you didn't do?

Soering: Would I consider that?

Officer: Yes.

Soering: I can't say for sure right now, but I can see, I can see it happening, yes. I think it's a possibility. I think it happens in real life.

Officer: I disagree with you, but don't let's get into any legal arguments right now. I'm sorry. I think you answered my question.

Soering: I mean, you know. I couldn't answer that question right now. I certainly hope that, I hope very much that it's not going to come to something like that.

But the very next day, on June 8, 1986, it did "come to something like that": I kept my promise to Elizabeth and "took the rap" for her crime.

And, without knowing it, for her accomplice's crime, too.

Interestingly, Elizabeth also lied to protect her accomplice. On June 8, 1986, after I gave my long false confession, she gave a short false confession, on audiotape, during which she admitted: "I did it myself. ... I got off on it." The state of the crime scene confirms that Elizabeth indeed "got off on it," but she did not commit the crime by herself; as noted above, there were two perpetrators. So, in addition to asking who Elizabeth's accomplice at the crime scene was, we must also ask: Why was she so intent on protecting him or her?

In the early morning hours of March 31, 1985, as Elizabeth and I were carefully constructing my false confession, we decided that I should tell the police that I had used a small folding knife called a "butterfly" knife. Fifteen months later, during our separate interrogations on June 8, 1986, we followed through on this plan. The only problem with this particular lie was that it was probably untrue: "Butterfly" knives have double-edged

blades, whereas medical testimony established that the knife used to kill the Haysoms had only a single edge.

Perhaps it was for this reason that Elizabeth changed her story at my trial in 1990: Now she claimed that I had used the blood-stained steak knife found at the crime scene, which had only a single edge. Unfortunately, this new story did not match my “confession” of June 8, 1986, or, for that matter, the forensic evidence: At the habeas corpus evidentiary hearing held on December 9 and 10, 1996, the Chief Medical Examiner of North Carolina testified that the blood-stained steak knife was probably not sturdy enough to have been the weapon used to kill the Haysoms.

Instead, the injuries indicated that a “buck” or hunting-type knife had been used. But no such knife was mentioned in any of Elizabeth’s or my statements to police and in court, nor was such a weapon ever recovered.

On March 10, 2011, however, the new witness, Tony Buchanan, gave a notarized and video-recorded statement that he had seen precisely such a knife, heavily blood-stained, two to four months after the murders. During this time frame, in late May/early June of 1985, Elizabeth returned to Lynchburg to help her half-brothers clean up their parents’ residence for sale. It was on this occasion that Mrs. Annie Massie, Nancy Haysom’s best friend, observed Elizabeth removing her shoes and comparing her feet to the bloody sock prints on the floor. So she was in the area at that time.

Perhaps it was then that she and her accomplice decided to retrieve the abandoned car. Or it could have been one and a half months later, when Elizabeth and I were attending summer school at U.Va., only one hour away.

In any case, Elizabeth and her accomplice did not accompany the car to Tony Buchanan's transmission repair shop. They arrived separately from the car, so they would not necessarily have had an occasion to look inside and notice the blood on the floormat and the blood-stained knife. If both of them were under the influence of drugs during the commission of the crime, they would not necessarily even have remembered that their abandoned car had blood and a knife inside.

Tony Buchanan noted that the bottom of the car was covered in leaves, as if it had been left in the woods for a long time. That would fit the timeline proposed in this scenario.

The car was a Chevrolet, perhaps a Nova or Camaro. Whether the unnamed person of interest or any members of his immediate family owned a Chevrolet in 1985 is not known as yet.

Inside the car, next to the center console, lay a blood-stained knife. This was a sturdy, single-edged "buck" or hunting-type knife—the kind of weapon which, according to medical testimony, was used to kill Derek and Nancy Haysom.

Unfortunately, we are unlikely to discover the identity of Elizabeth's accomplice, the second perpetrator at the crime scene, the probable owner of the car and knife. Certainly Elizabeth will never reveal his or her name, because her only chance of parole depends on maintaining the fiction that she was not present at the crime scene. And since the accomplice's DNA profile is not in the Virginia DNA Data Bank, forensic science cannot help us find him or her either.

There remains the (at least theoretical) possibility of running the unidentified fingerprints on the shot glass through the AFIS system. But unless the accomplice was

arrested for another crime, his or her fingerprints would not be in the AFIS Data Bank. And in any case, no law enforcement agency is willing to submit those unidentified fingerprints to AFIS. Imagine if they got a “hit!”

Even if Elizabeth’s accomplice cannot be identified, however, that does not change the fact that he or she exists. Logical and practical necessity (there had to be two perpetrators), forensic evidence (blood type O, fingerprints, hair, and sock or sneaker prints), DNA (eleven samples that were not left by me) and eyewitness testimony (Tony Buchanan) all point to a second perpetrator other than me. On that basis, I should be freed.