

The llama's black and white head was yanked back ninety degrees from its body with the neck slit from ear to ear. The animal's eyes were frozen open, and dark red blood was pooling on the portico flagstone. Nearby sprinklers diluted some of it to a rosy pink.

Clearly the slaughter happened right on the portico. Waves of blood flowed across the flagstone like they were propelled by a beating heart, while other signs showed that the animal thrashed around in its own blood. By now the soles of Boyce's shoes were covered with scarlet slime and several times he almost slipped on the porch.

No one driving on the street could see what happened since the oleanders blocked a view of the porch. He dragged the carcass by its rear legs alongside some Texas sage bushes; their violet buds made them look like they were splattered with dried blood.

*Spencer's behind this!* He knew it as well as he knew his own name. It may not have been his neighbor's llama but they all smelled alike.

Boyce glanced at the front door, fearful that his locksmith brother might have entered. After cleaning his shoes he cracked the door; the alarm was armed until he disarmed it. Breathing easier, he walked across the living room floor toward the glass doors of the patio overlooking the pool.

The second sight was more shocking than the first! The swimming pool water was reddish brown, almost rusty in color. Cautiously opening the sliding door, he stepped outside and looked at the diving board across the pool's crimson surface.

A second dead llama sprawled across the diving board's white rubber runner. He listened carefully and heard blood dripping into the pool, drop by drop. The llama's death was caused by a gaping knife wound directly to the neck. Apparently the assailant killed the animal on the pool deck and then dragged it onto the diving board.