

TWO BOYS

Divided by Fortune—United by Tragedy
A True Story of the Pursuit of Justice

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The following story is true. It is based on official documents, trial transcripts, and interviews with those who were involved.

CHAPTER 1

DROPS OF BLOOD

IT WAS A LAZY, NOTHING-TO-DO KIND of afternoon. Maggie, a college student and the oldest of the Mahoney kids, was napping on the couch in the family room. Tucker Mahoney, who was 16, was out by the pool with his best friend, Ty, doing, well, what teenage boys do. Becky, their mother, could hear them cackling through the sliding glass door. She surveyed the scene and decided this was a good time to make a quick trip to the supermarket.

It took barely an hour to buy her groceries and return home, her Volvo coursing easily through the country roads of Solebury Township, an affluent, suburban-rural community bordering horse farms and corn fields nearly an hour's drive north of Philadelphia. Becky pulled into the garage of the Mahoneys' large stone and stucco house. She grabbed her shopping bags and stepped out of the car. She took only a few steps when she noticed a reddish spot "the size of a nickel" on the garage floor. It looked like blood. Stanley must have stepped on something and cut himself, Becky thought. Stanley was the family dog, a floppy springer spaniel prone to misadventure.

"Maggie," she called out as she entered the house.

Nothing.

"Tucker?"

Nothing.

Becky took a few more steps and noticed another drop of blood. Fresh blood, still a bright red against the white stone floor. Then another drop, and another. As she walked toward the counter to put her bags down, she saw a strand of droplets in a curved row on the floor, like red pearls on a string. More drops were in the sink, some spilling down the drain. Becky, a tall, willowy blonde with a relaxed nature, felt a rush of anxiety.

She ran to the other side of the house and shouted up the stairs.

“Maggie!”

She ran to the back door and thrust it open.

“Tucker! Tucker!”

No one was home. Except Stanley, and Stanley was fine.

CHAPTER 2

A BANGING NOISE

IN A SMALL SUBTERRANEAN WORKROOM with a heavy stainless steel door that thousands of commuters walked past every day, Bill Kinkle and Ray Mosley, employees of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, sat eating their lunch. The two men were SEPTA millwrights, mechanics who worked on the mass transit authority's machinery, including its escalators and elevators, installing and repairing and replacing parts as warranted. Kinkle and Mosley, dressed in their blue coveralls, were virtually invisible to the people who hurried on and off the trains in the underground of the Broad Street Line, a subway system that stretched from North Philadelphia to Veterans Stadium, home to the Phillies and Eagles, in the south part of town.

The workroom that Kinkle and Mosley occupied was located just beneath the escalator leading to the subway at the Cecil B. Moore Station, named for the late Philadelphia attorney, city councilman, and civil rights leader. A constant groan emanated from the underbelly of the mammoth escalator rumbling overhead, with the sweep of its steps and constant clatter of its chains creating a monotonous drumbeat. But the workmen were accustomed to the sounds, and the room offered sanctuary in a public train station.

Kinkle was peeling the plastic wrap from a ham sandwich when he heard a commotion from above. Unusual sounds. First he thought he heard someone running on the escalator. Then a banging noise. Loud. Mosley would later recollect it as a “boom, boom, boom, boom, boom.” Both men dropped their lunches and ran for the door, Mosley a few steps in front of Kinkle. They ran to the bottom of the escalator and saw people standing at the top. Then they heard shrieking, harsh screams. Mosley bounded up the escalator, while Kinkle smacked the emergency stop button at the bottom of the escalator. Only one of the 27 working escalators in the SEPTA system had an automatic emergency stop, one that tripped at the slightest sign of something jamming in the escalator. This was not that escalator.

Kinkle ran up the escalator after Mosley, the huge cluster of keys that hung from his belt loop jangling like tiny alarm bells. When he got to the top, he saw Mosley standing still, staring. Kinkle looked down and saw what had halted Mosley in his tracks, what all the screaming was about. The sight paralyzed him as well.

“Oh, shit,” Kinkle yelled. “Oh, shit!”