Great Crimes
by John Escott
(Adapted book. Intermediate level)

Chapter 1. Dr Crippen - Murderer

Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen met Cora Turner in New York, in July 1892. He was thirty years old, and was working in a hospital, and she was nineteen. Crippen had been married before, but his first wife had died. He immediately fell in love with Cora, and six months later they were married.

At first they continued to live in New York, and Crippen joined a company which sold medicines. This was Cora's idea. She wanted her husband to earn more money than the hospital was paying him.

Cora wanted to be a singer, so her husband paid for her to have singing lessons. Her voice was not really good enough, and she wasn't very successful. Later, when the couple moved to London, she did begin to sing in theatres, although she was never famous.

Crippen was not allowed to work as a doctor in England because he had trained in America, so he continued to work for the American medicine company, and opened a London office for them.

In 1905, the Crippens moved to a house at 39 Hilldrop Crescent. They were not happy together. Cora was a cruel, violent woman, and the couple were always arguing, often because Cora spent more money than they could afford. She also liked to be with other men.

In 1907, Crippen fell in love with his secretary, Ethel Le Neve. Ethel wanted him to leave his wife and marry her, but Crippen would not - or was afraid to - do this.

Then, in December, 1909, Cora discovered that her husband and Ethel Le Neve were lovers. She warned Crippen that she would leave him, and take most of his money with her.

On January 31, 1910, two of Cora's theatre friends, Paul and Clara Martinetti, came to dinner with the Crippens, and during the evening Cora and her husband argued violently. The Martinettis left early.

The next week, Crippen told neighbours and friends that Cora had gone to America to look after someone who was sick. This came as a surprise; Cora had said nothing to them about a sick friend, or about travelling to America. Then, some weeks later, Crippen sold several of Cora's rings, and some of her other valuables, and in March, Ethel Le Neve moved into 39 Hilldrop Crescent to live with Crippen.

Later, when Crippen told the Martinettis and other friends of Cora's that she had become ill and had died in America, they could not believe it and suspected that he was lying. Finally, one of the friends went to the police with the story.

Inspector Walter Dew of London's Scotland Yard, England's most famous police station, visited Crippen soon after this and talked with the doctor and Ethel Le Neve. Crippen spoke calmly and confidently about his wife, making no secret of the fact that Ethel Le Neve had been his lover for several years. He also agreed that the story about his wife's death had been a lie. The truth was, he told the detective, that Cora went to America to live with a lover, Bruce Miller, who had been one of her theatre friends in England, a few years before.

Inspector Dew was not completely happy with this story, but neither was he able to prove that Crippen was lying.

But Crippen was not as confident as he pretended to be. The visit from Inspector Dew had worried him, and after the detective left, he told Ethel Le Neve that they must go away and make a new life for themselves in another country. They began by getting a boat to Holland, then went on to Brussels, in Belgium, where they moved into a hotel for several days.

When Inspector Dew visited Crippen's office on July 11, he was surprised to find the place closed and Crippen gone. Immediately, he

gave orders to search the house at Hilldrop Crescent, and it did not take his men long to find what remained of a woman's body under the house. She had been poisoned.

On July 15, Crippen read in a Belgian newspaper that part of a human body had been found under the house at 39 Hilldrop Crescent. He quickly got tickets to sail on a ship - the Montrose - which was going to Quebec in Canada. To make any discovery more difficult, Ethel Le Neve dressed as a sixteen-year-old boy, and pretended to be Crippen's son. They used the name 'Robinson.'

The ship sailed for Canada on July 20, but the captain of the Montrose, Henry Kendall, had read about Dr Crippen in the newspapers. He remembered photographs of Crippen and Ethel Le Neve, and began to suspect that Mr John Robinson and his 'son' were not what they seemed. Sometimes the two 'men' held hands, he noticed. And 'Mr Robinson' seemed to have had a moustache until recently. The more the captain thought about it, the more sure he became that these were the two people the police were looking for.

Kendall sent a radio message back to his company office in London. The information was passed to Inspector Dew, who left England on the Laurentic, a faster ship than the Montrose, which was also going to Quebec.

The English newspapers quickly heard what was happening and for the next week, helped by information coming from Captain Kendall on the Montrose, began to report the chase across the sea for their readers. It made exciting reading.

Dr Crippen and his lover knew nothing about any of this, of course, and were quietly confident that nobody had recognized them. So it was an unhappy surprise for them when they discovered Inspector Dew waiting for them in Quebec.

Together with a Canadian policeman, Dew boarded the Montrose and arrested Crippen and Ethel Le Neve. They were the first criminals

ever to be caught through using a radio message. Dew returned to London with them; they arrived on August 28.

Dr Crippen's trial, which began on October 18, took just three days. The jury first heard how he had poisoned his wife with hyoscine, then cut up her body and buried it under his house. No one was surprised when they found him guilty of murder.

Ethel Le Neve was tried as an accessory - someone involved in the crime although not there when it happened - but she was found 'not guilty.'

Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen was hanged on the morning of Wednesday, November 23, 1910, in Pentonville Prison. Hanging was the normal punishment for murderers in England at that time.

Ethel Le Neve went to live in America, but later came back to England using a different name. Later, she married and had children. She died in 1967.

Chapter 2. The Mona Lisa Robbery

At seven o'clock on the morning of Monday, August 21, 1911, three cleaners in the Louvre museum, in Paris, were walking through one of the rooms - the Salon Carre. The three men stopped to look at one of the world's most famous paintings - the Mona Lisa.

'This is the most valuable picture in the world,' said one of the men. 'They say it's worth one and a half million francs.'

After staring at the famous smile for a moment or two, the three men then walked on to the Grand Gallery, which was the next room, to continue with some repair work. It was 8.35 a.m. before they passed through the Salon Carre again, and one of the men noticed that the Mona Lisa had now gone.

'They've taken it away,' he laughed. 'They're afraid we'll steal it!'

The other men laughed with him, and went back to their work. It was not unusual for someone to move a painting in the gallery. They were often taken away to be photographed, and then put back later, so the three cleaners did not think any more about it.

At 7.20 the next morning, Poupardin, one of the Louvre guards, passed through the Salon Carre and noticed that the Mona Lisa was not in its place. He, too, thought someone had taken it away to be photographed.

At 9 a.m. a man called Louis Beroud arrived at the museum. He was a painter, and was painting a picture of the Salon Carre.

'Where is the Mona Lisa?' he asked Poupardin.

'It's being photographed,' replied the guard.

Beroud was annoyed. He wanted to continue his work, but he decided to wait for the return of the famous painting.

He waited all morning.

'What are they doing with it?' he asked himself. Then, early that afternoon, he told Poupardin to go and ask the photographer to send back the painting. 'I don't have much more time,' he said.

Poupardin went away - and came back quickly.

'The picture isn't there!' he said excitedly. 'They don't know anything about it!' And he hurried away to find his boss - Georges Benedite.

At 3 p.m. that afternoon, people were asked to leave the Louvre. 'The museum is closing,' they were told, but were not given any explanation. It was not until they read the newspapers the next day that most of them discovered the reason.

Someone had stolen the Mona Lisa!

The museum was closed for a week. Police believed that the famous painting might still be hidden somewhere inside, and they began to search. Everyone working at the museum had their fingerprints taken.

Then the police found the empty frame from the Mona Lisa on some back stairs. Slowly, they began to put together their own 'picture' of what had happened.

The thief came to the museum on Sunday, August 20 and hid in the building after the galleries closed. At 7.30 a.m. the next morning he took the Mona Lisa, then went into another room and down the stairs where the police later found the frame. He stopped to take the painting out of the frame, then went on to a door which led into a courtyard. The door was locked so he had to take off the doorknob and break it open. He had only managed to take off the doorknob when he heard a noise, so he pushed the doorknob into his pocket, and sat on the stairs. A man working for the museum walked by. He said later that he thought the man on the stairs was one of the museum cleaners, and he unlocked and opened the door for him.

The thief went out into the courtyard, walked across it and opened an unlocked door that led into the street. He ran off towards the Pont du Carrousel, throwing the doorknob away as he ran. (The police found it later.)

When the Louvre opened again, crowds hurried to look at the empty place on the wall of the Salon Carre. They could not believe their eyes. The Mona Lisa really had been stolen!

Police questioned hundreds of people, searched hundreds of houses, flats and rooms, took fingerprints and talked to other criminals. They also found a thumbprint on the glass in the empty picture frame. But they did not find the Mona Lisa, and as time went on the people of France began to believe that they would never again see the famous picture they loved so much.

Then, one morning in November, in 1913, Alfredo Geri, a man who bought and sold paintings, opened a letter in his office in Florence, in Italy. The letter was from Paris, from someone who signed his name as 'Leonard'.

The writer said that he was an Italian living in Paris. He said that he had stolen the Mona Lisa and wanted to return it to Italy, where it belonged, and where it had been before it was ‘stolen’ during the war with France in the nineteenth century.

At first Geri thought the letter was probably from a madman, but to be sure he showed it to his friend Giovanni Poggi at the Uffizi Gallery in Florence. They decided to write to Leonard and ask him to bring the painting to Milan.

On Wednesday, December 10, a thin young man with a small dark moustache arrived at Geri’s office. He told Geri that the Mona Lisa was in his hotel room, and that he wanted 500,000 lire (100,000 dollars) for the picture.

Next day, Geri and Poggi went to the young man’s room in the Hotel Tripoli-Italia - and there was the famous painting. Poggi asked if he could take it to the Uffizi Gallery and look at it together with photographs of the real Mona Lisa. The young man agreed, and the three of them went to the gallery.

Later, the young man went back to his hotel - and was arrested by Italian detectives.

The young thief’s real name was Vincenzo Perugia, and he was a house painter. He was actually one of the many people questioned by the French police not long after the painting was stolen, because he had once been employed by the museum. They had searched his room at the time, but had found nothing. (Was someone hiding the painting for him?)

Perugia had been in trouble with the law before - for a robbery. But his fingerprints, kept by the police, only showed his right thumb, and the thumbprint from the glass in the empty frame had been a print of the left thumb.

Now, the police searched his Paris rooms once more, and this time they found a 1910 diary with a list of the names of people who bought and sold paintings in America, Germany and Italy.

They also questioned two other Italian house painters; they suspected them of hiding the picture at the time Perugia's rooms were first searched. Finally they had to let them go.

The trial of Vincenzo Perugia began on June 4, 1914 in Florence. When questioned, this is what he told the judge:

'I entered the Louvre about seven o'clock in the morning. Without being seen, I was able to get into the Salon Carre. I took the Mona Lisa; took it out of its frame, then left.'

'How did you leave?' asked the judge.

'The same way I came in,' answered Perugia.

He was sent to prison for one year and fifteen days, but this was later shortened to seven months.

Some people believe that Perugia was working with other criminals, one of whom was a painter, and that they offered the missing Mona Lisa to rich Americans who collected paintings. Each of the American collectors bought their Mona Lisa secretly, not realising that it was forged by one of the criminals and that other forgeries were being sold, too. Could it be true? We may never know.

Chapter 3. The Lindbergh Kidnapping

It was evening on Tuesday, March 1, 1932. Charles and Anne Lindbergh finished dinner at their large country house near the village of Hopwell in New Jersey, USA, and Charles Lindbergh went to work in his library. Soon after nine p.m., he heard a noise like something breaking, but it was a stormy night and he thought it was probably thunder. His wife heard nothing. Upstairs their son, Charles Junior (often called 'Little It') was asleep in his bed.

Just after ten p.m., Betty Gow, the child's nurse, went to check that Charles Junior was all right. She found the little bed empty and the child missing. Quickly, she went to find Mrs Lindbergh, but the boy was with neither his mother nor his father.

In the child's bedroom, the window was open, and there was rainwater and dirt on the floor. There was also an envelope.

Lindbergh called the police, and they hurried to the house. Detectives quickly found a rough wooden ladder about twenty-five metres from the window of the child's bedroom, and two footprints in the garden. The top step of the ladder was broken - and Charles Lindbergh remembered the noise he had heard earlier. A detective checked the envelope for fingerprints but found none. He opened it. Inside was a note in poor English:

Dear Sir!

Have 50 000$ ready 25 000$ in 20$ bills 15 000$ in 10$ bills and 10 000$ in 5$ bills.

After 2-4 days we will inform you were to deliver the Mony.

We warn you for making anyding public or for notify the Police, the child is in gute care.

At the bottom of the letter were two open blue circles and a filled blue circle where they touched.

The Lindberghs were very rich and famous people. Charles Lindbergh was the first man to fly a plane alone across the Atlantic - from New York to Paris, in thirty-three-and-a-half hours - in 1927. And Anne Lindbergh was the daughter of Dwight Morrow, one of the richest bankers in the East. And now their son had been kidnapped.

Soon all America heard the news on the radio, or read it in their newspapers the next morning. President Hoover promised to do everything he could to see that the kidnappers were caught.

Al Capone, the famous American criminal, who was in prison at that time, offered to help find the child through his friends and contacts in the criminal world. For this, he wanted his freedom. The US government refused his offer.

Usually, the Lindberghs only went to their Hopwell home at weekends. Normally they spent the rest of the week with Anne Lindbergh's family in Englewood, which was nearer to New York. But

Charles Junior had caught a cold and Mrs Lindbergh wanted him to stay at Hopwell until he was better. So how did the kidnappers know that the Lindberghs were there that Tuesday evening? It was one of the first questions detectives asked.

People working for the Lindberghs were immediately suspected of having a part in the kidnapping. The child's nurse, Betty Gow, was questioned carefully but the police finally let her go. Another woman working at the Lindbergh house, twenty-eight-year-old Violet Sharpe, first told the police that she was at the cinema on the night of the kidnapping. Later she changed her story and said that she had been with a man. In May she changed her story again. On June 10, when she heard that the police wanted to question her once more, she killed herself.

Lindbergh told the newspapers that he would not try to injure the kidnappers if they returned the boy safely when they got the money. He then hired two criminals to try and contact the kidnappers.

But before Lindbergh's helpers could do anything, the kidnappers made contact with Dr John Francis Condon, a seventy-two-year-old teacher who sometimes wrote for the New York paper, Bronx Home News. He was told to take Lindbergh's money to the Woodlawn Cemetery in the Bronx. A meeting time was arranged over the telephone, and Condon went to the cemetery.

He saw an Italian-looking man walk by with something across half his face, and guessed that the man was checking to see if there were any police or detectives around. Then Condon saw a second man standing in the shadows, his hat pulled down over his face and something covering his mouth. When the second man spoke, Condon recognized the voice. It was the man who had spoken to him on the telephone. He was about thirty-five years old and had brown hair. He said his name was John and that there were six people in the gang, two of them women.

He told Condon that the child was well, but then asked 'Would I burn if the baby is dead? Would I burn if I did not kill it?' By 'would I

burn' he meant would he die in the electric chair - the punishment used in America at that time for kidnappers and murderers. Condon saw the danger at once. If the police caught a kidnapper he would die - whether the kidnapped child lived or not. So if a kidnapper thought he was going to be caught he would kill the child.

Condon and the man made more arrangements to contact each other, then 'Cemetery John' (as he became known) disappeared into the night.

Several more messages were passed between the two men, and then Condon received a package in the post. Inside were Charles Lindbergh Junior's sleeping suit, and a note making arrangements for the money to be handed to the kidnappers.

At 7.45 p.m. on Saturday April 2, 1932, Condon and Lindbergh went to Raymond's Cemetery in the Bronx. Lindbergh waited in the car while Condon went into the cemetery. They both heard a voice shout: 'Hey, Doc!'

Soon after, the man calling himself 'John' appeared, with his hat pulled down over his face. 'I have 50,000 dollars,' said Condon. The man gave him a note. It said that the boy was on a boat called Nelly, near the Elizabeth Islands, off the coast of Massachusetts.

Lindbergh searched for several days, but he never found the boat.

Then, on May 12, two lorry drivers found the body of Charles Lindbergh Junior in some woods about seven kilometres from the Lindbergh's Hopwell house.

He had died only a few hours after the kidnapping on March 1.

The police knew the numbers on the dollar bills which Condon gave to the kidnappers, and they began to watch for them. But it was September 16, 1934, before detectives caught a thirty-four-year-old German, Bruno Richard Hauptmann, when he paid for petrol with a ten dollar bill - one of the 'Cemetery John' bills. When Hauptmann was arrested, police found another of the bills in his pocket. And at his home they discovered another 13,760 dollars of Lindbergh's money.

They also learned that Hauptmann was a carpenter, whose job it was to make things from wood - like ladders.

Hauptmann said that the money belonged to a business friend, Isidor Fisch, who had gone back to Germany and died there in March, 1934. Hauptmann said Fisch had left the money behind when he went to Germany. And because Fisch had owed Hauptmann about 7,500 dollars, Hauptmann had taken it.

'I had no part in the kidnapping,' Hauptmann told detectives, 'and I did not write the notes to Lindbergh.'

But the police refused to believe him, and they said that the writing on the notes was the same as Hauptmann's.

At the trial in January 1935, Charles Lindbergh said that he recognized Hauptmann's voice. He also changed his story. He now said that 'Cemetery John' had called 'Hey, Doctor!' and not 'Hey, Doc!', and that he had spoken with a foreign accent.

Dr Condon, who was at first not sure that Hauptmann was 'Cemetery John' when questioned by the police, said at the trial that he was now sure that the German was the man to whom he had spoken in the cemetery.

The jury believed both men.

Hauptmann said that he had been working in New York at the time of the kidnapping. His wife and employer both agreed with this (although his employer would not speak at the trial), but the papers to prove it could not be found.

The jury finally decided that Bruno Hauptmann was guilty of kidnapping and murder, and he died in the electric chair at Trenton State Prison, New Jersey, on April 3, 1936.

But questions are still asked about the trial.

Was the writing on the kidnap notes really Bruno Hauptmann's?

How did Hauptmann know that Charles Lindbergh and his family were at the house near Hopwell on that stormy night in March 1932? He

told the police that he had never been to the village of Hopwell, and that he did not know it.

We shall probably never know the whole truth.

Chapter 4. The Great Train Robbery

In the early hours of August 8, 1963, the night mail train from Glasgow to London's King's Cross station was making good time. But for the driver, fifty-eight-year-old Jack Mills, and his assistant, twenty-six-year-old David Whitby, this would be a night they would remember for the rest of their lives. Mills, especially, would always be a sick man and, indeed, would die young, after what was about to happen.

Nearly all the train's twelve coaches were used as offices for the Royal Mail, for sorting the letters and packets into groups for different towns and cities. One special coach - for valuable packets - was carrying 128 bags of old money. The money was old banknotes which were on their way to the Royal Mint - the place where banknotes are made - to be destroyed.

At 3.03 a.m., almost eighty kilometres from London and near the small village of Cheddington, Jack Mills suddenly saw a red signal. He immediately brought his engine to a stop. It was unusual to find a red signal here, so David Whitby got out of the engine to walk to the emergency telephone, which was behind a signal box. But two men in black balaclava helmets (later known to be Buster Edwards and Bob Welch) came out of the darkness and pushed him down on the ground at the side of the railway. One man told Whitby, 'If you shout, I'll kill you!'

Two men climbed into the engine and Jack Mills tried to fight them. One of the men hit Mills over the head. Meanwhile, others in the gang quietly and efficiently unfastened the ten sorting coaches at the back of the train, leaving just the front two fastened to the engine. The valuable packets coach was the second of these.

David Whitby was brought back and the robbers made Jack Mills drive the train very slowly to Bridego Bridge, 600 metres down the railway. They left the other ten coaches behind - the seventy sorters still working inside them did not realize what was happening.

Other gang members wearing balaclavas and army uniforms were waiting at the bridge with Land Rovers and a three-tonne army lorry. They had tied something white to a stick by the railway to mark the place where they wanted the engine to stop.

They broke the windows of the valuable packets coach and made the Post Office sorters lie down on the floor. Next, the robbers passed 120 bags of old banknotes out into the darkness.

Fifteen minutes later, the train robbers put handcuffs on Mills and Whitby and warned them not to try to escape for at least half an hour. Then, leaving eight bags behind, they disappeared into the night.

The robbery had taken a total of twenty-four minutes.

The 120 mailbags contained 2.5 million pounds in old notes. Today, that would be about 25 million pounds, and at the time it was the biggest robbery ever. The newspapers were soon calling it the ‘crime of the century’, and the Post Office quickly offered 10,000 pounds for information that would lead to the arrest of the robbers.

How did the robbers change the railway signal from ‘Go’ to ‘Stop’? was one of the first things detectives wanted to know. They soon had the answer. The robbers had covered the green ‘Go’ signal with a glove, then used their own red light which they had brought with them. But where were they now?

Weeks before, the gang had bought an old farmhouse - called Leatherslade Farm - about fifty kilometres from the bridge. They went there after the robbery to count their money. Each man would get more than 150,000 pounds.

They had planned to stay at the farmhouse for four days, but during the afternoon of Thursday, August 8 they heard something on the radio news that made them change their plans. Buckinghamshire Police

announced that they were sure the gang were hiding not more than fifty kilometres from Bridego Bridge. In fact the police were only guessing this, because Mills and Whitby had been told not to try to get help for thirty minutes. The gang would have needed longer than this to go more than fifty kilometres to a hiding-place.

The gang left Leatherslade Farm on Friday, August 9.

By the following Monday the police had found the farmhouse where they were hiding. Inside were Post Office mailbags. Before long detectives had found the fingerprints of several people in the gang, some of whom were well-known criminals - Bruce Reynolds, Buster Edwards, Ronnie Biggs, Bob Welch, Roy James, John Daly and Charlie Wilson. Now began the job of finding them.

Roger Cordrey, who had fixed the railway signal to show red instead of green, and Bill Boal, another of the robbers, tried to find a garage for their van in Bournemouth. But they picked the wrong person to ask. The owner of the garage was the widow of a policeman, and she immediately suspected something when the robbers paid her from a thick packet of banknotes. She phoned the police while the two men were putting their van into the garage. The police caught them and found 78,892 pounds in the van.

More of the money was found in four suitcases in a wood in Surrey, on August 16. Then another 30,000 pounds was discovered in the ceiling of a caravan parked near the wood.

By the end of the year most of the gang had been caught. Charlie Wilson was arrested without any trouble at his Clapham home. Roy James was more difficult to catch. He was hiding in a house in St John's Wood in north London. But when he saw the police, James took a bag containing 12,000 pounds and climbed up on to the roof to try and escape. He jumped and ran along neighbours' roofs, but more than forty policemen were in the surrounding streets and James finally jumped down into the waiting arms of one of them. John Daly was arrested the same day.

Buster Edwards, Bruce Reynolds and Jimmy White were still missing. And so was two million pounds.

The trial of the others began on January 24, 1964, at Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire. The police did not want the trial to take place at the Old Bailey - the famous London criminal court - because they were afraid powerful London criminals might frighten people on the jury.

All the prisoners were tried together, and all but Roger Cordrey pleaded not guilty. The trial took two months.

Neither Jack Mills or David Whitby could be sure which had been the men behind the balaclavas, and nobody had seen the robbers at the farm. But the lawyers brought in a total of 200 witnesses, the judge took six days to talk to the jury, and the jury took two days to decide that all the robbers except John Daly were guilty. The guilty men were sent to prison for up to thirty years.

Jimmy White was finally caught in Dover on the south coast of England. Police suspected that he was trying to get abroad. Buster Edwards gave himself up in 1966. And Bruce Reynolds - the leader of the gang - was finally caught in 1968. He was arrested in Torquay, in Devon, and was sent to jail for twenty-five years. Two of the gang were not in jail for long.

In August 1964, Charlie Wilson escaped from Birmingham's Winson Green prison when three men broke into the prison to release him, even though prison officers were watching him carefully because they suspected that he was a person likely to try to escape.

In July 1965, Ronnie Biggs got out of Wandsworth prison with three other prisoners while they were walking between the prison buildings. The four men climbed the six metre prison wall using a rope ladder, which had been thrown down by one member of an 'escape gang' outside.

Charlie Wilson went to France and Mexico after his escape, but was finally caught again in Canada in 1967.

Ronnie Biggs finally went to live in Brazil, after first escaping to Australia. He is still there, living in Rio de Janeiro with his girlfriend, Raimunda Castro, and their child. There is nothing that English lawyers or the English police can do about it.

In 1993, Biggs said that four gang members were never caught. Nobody, other than the robbers and possibly a few other criminals, knows who they are.

Chapter 5. The Kennedy Assassination

'Where were you when you heard that President Kennedy had been shot?'

This is a question that most people who were alive at the time can answer. It is one of those moments that they can remember clearly, and will never forget.

On the morning of November 22, 1963, the President of the United States of America, John F. Kennedy, arrived in Dallas, Texas, with his wife, Jacqueline, on an official visit. It was a beautiful sunny day. At 11.50 a.m. they left the airport at Love Field, and crowds stood along the streets of Dallas to watch the open-topped presidential car go past. They waved and shouted their good wishes to the young president and his lovely wife, while millions more watched on television. In the same car were John Connally, Governor of Texas, his wife, Nellie, and two Secret Service men.

'You can't say Dallas doesn't love you,' Mrs Connally told the Kennedys, as they listened to the shouts and saw the smiling faces.

At 12.30 the car turned from Houston Street into Elm Street. It was moving very slowly. One of the buildings which had a view over Elm Street was the Texas Book Depository, a large building full of schoolbooks.

Mr Kennedy was waving at the crowds when there was the sound of a gun shot. The president's hand stopped moving and then, as a

second shot was heard, went to his neck. There was a third (and perhaps a fourth) shot, and his head was suddenly covered in blood. John Connally, who had also been shot in the back by one of the bullets, fell to the floor of the car.

The car immediately raced away to Parkland Memorial Hospital, with Jacqueline Kennedy holding her husband's wounded head in her arms.

'Oh my God, they killed my husband!' she cried.

The cry was echoed through the crowd. 'They've killed the president!'

And at one o'clock America and the rest of the world heard the news that President John Fitzgerald Kennedy was dead.

Not long after the shooting, Dallas policeman J. D. Tippit saw a man behaving strangely, and stopped to speak to him. As Tippit got out of his car, the man pulled out a gun and shot the policeman in the head and stomach then ran away.

At 2.50 p.m., twenty-four-year-old Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested in a cinema for the murder of policeman Tippit. Detectives took him to Dallas police station to be questioned. Oswald said that he had not killed anyone, but a gun which had been found in the Texas Book Depository belonged to him. He was arrested again - this time for killing President Kennedy.

Two days later, police decided to move Oswald from the city police building to another prison. He was handcuffed to two detectives when he came out of the building, but nobody could guess what was going to happen next.

Suddenly, a man pushed his way to the front of the crowd of newspaper, radio and television reporters.

There was a gun in his hand, and seconds later he had shot Oswald in the side.

'He's been shot! Lee Oswald has been shot!' a TV newsman told the millions of people who were watching on television.

The man with the gun was Jack Ruby, a night-club owner and a friend of local criminals. Later he would say that he shot Oswald because he wanted to save Jacqueline Kennedy from the problems and worry of a long and painful trial.

After his own trial, he was sent to prison for life, and died there in 1967.

Oswald died only a few hours after Jack Ruby shot him.

On November 25, John Fitzgerald Kennedy was buried in Arlington National Cemetery in Washington. Jacqueline Kennedy stood with her two young children, Caroline and John, beside her, and with her husband's brothers, Robert and Edward Kennedy. America's new president, Lyndon B. Johnson, watched with the heads of other governments from all over the world. Millions more watched on television.

At the beginning, almost all Americans accepted that Lee Harvey Oswald was the single assassin, but very soon questions were asked about the way things were supposed to have happened on that terrible day. The most important one was: how many shots were there? At first it was thought that three shots came from the sixth floor of the Texas Book Depository, where Oswald's gun was found. But some people doubted this. How could Oswald shoot three times in less than the five-and-a-half seconds it took the president's car to pass, they asked? It took more than two seconds to put a bullet into that kind of gun.

Then more than fifty witnesses said that they heard a fourth shot coming from a small grassy hill at the side of Elm Street, in front of the president's car.

There were more questions.

Did Lee Harvey Oswald assassinate the president, or was it somebody else? 'I never killed anybody!' he told the police, many times.

Was he working for someone else? The government of Cuba, perhaps, who did not like Kennedy? Or the Russians? Oswald had once

left America to live in Russia for a short time, before coming back with his wife to Texas.

Did the Mafia - the international organisation of criminals - kill Kennedy? They certainly wanted him dead, because he was making life difficult for them.

And so the questions go on, even today. Will they ever be answered, or will the assassination of President John F. Kennedy remain one of this century's biggest mysteries?

Chapter 6. Patty and the Terrorist Trap

In 1974, nineteen-year-old Patty Hearst was a student at Berkeley University, in California, USA. She was also the daughter of Randolph Hearst, the rich owner of several newspapers.

Patty was living in an apartment in Bienvenue Street, Berkeley, at that time, with her boyfriend, Steven Weed. He was a teacher at the university.

On the evening of February 4, two men broke into the apartment, knocked Steven on the head, and pulled Patty out of the apartment building to a car which was waiting outside.

For the next three days her parents waited by the phone for some word from the kidnappers. Then a local radio station received the first message from a group calling themselves the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) - a small, but dangerous, group of terrorists. The message was from their leader, a man calling himself 'Cinque' who was later discovered to be a criminal who had escaped from prison. His real name was Donald DeFreeze. DeFreeze said that Patty Hearst was now a prisoner of the SLA.

Other people in the group were twenty-seven-year-old Nancy Ling Perry, William Wolfe, twenty-four-year-old Camilla Hall, William and Emily Harris, Patricia Soltysik, and Angela Attwood.

A cassette with Patty's voice on it was sent to the radio station. She told her parents that she was all right and that the kidnappers were not hurting her.

The next message was an order from the terrorist group to Randolph Hearst. They told him that he must give seventy dollars worth of food to everyone in California who was 'on welfare' - people on welfare were those who were unable to work, or could not find work, and were being given money to live on by the government. There were about six million of them in California.

Hearst refused. It would cost more than 400 million dollars, he said, and he wasn't rich enough to pay out that much money. But he did give two million dollars to start an organization called 'People in Need', which gave food to the poor people in California. It was not enough for the kidnappers, and Patty remained a prisoner. Or did she?

On April 3 another cassette with Patty's voice on it arrived. This time she told her parents that she had joined the SLA and was not a prisoner anymore. She said that her name was now 'Tania', that she was fighting for the freedom of all black people, and that she would never again live with her parents, or people like them. She was now one of the gang of terrorists.

But did she join them because it was the only way she could be sure they would not kill her? This was what her parents believed. Or was she sincere about wanting to help the gang? It was a question that would be asked many times in the future.

The answer seemed to come on April 15, when she and others from the gang robbed the Hibernia Bank in San Francisco. Cameras inside the bank took pictures of Patty holding a gun and telling customers to get down on the floor or they would be shot.

Then, a few weeks later, two of the gang, William and Emily Harris, were caught stealing from a sports shop in Los Angeles. They managed to get away only when Patty, who had been waiting in a van

across the street, used a gun to help them. Nobody was hurt, but all three of the gang escaped in the van.

The police and many other people were now sure that Patty Hearst was a common criminal.

Later, police heard from someone close to the gang that the terrorists were living at 1466 East 54th Street in Los Angeles. Immediately more than three hundred policemen with guns were sent to surround the building, and the gang were told to come out with their hands up. Tear gas was used to try and get them out, but the terrorists replied by shooting at the police. There was a forty-minute gun battle with over six thousand shots.

Then Nancy Ling Perry tried to run from the house but was shot dead by police. Next the house caught fire, and Camilla Hall tried to get out, but was shot.

Patricia Soltysik, Angela Attwood and William Wolfe were burned to death in the fire, but Donald DeFreeze appeared to have shot himself in the head before the fire could kill him. The bodies of Patty Hearst and William and Emily Harris were not found in what was left of the building on East 54th Street. They, it seemed, had not been in the house at the time.

It was more than a year later - in September, 1975 - in an apartment in San Francisco, that Patty Hearst was finally caught. Emily and William Harris were also arrested. During that year the three of them had robbed two banks, and Emily Harris had killed a customer in one of them.

Patty Hearst was sent for trial in February, 1976, where she told the jury that everything she had done was to avoid being killed by the SLA. She said that she had been locked in a cupboard for several weeks until she agreed to do what they asked. By then, she said, she was so ill she was ready to believe and say anything that they told her to say.

But the jury - seven of whom were women - found her guilty of bank robbery, and Patty Hearst was sent to prison for seven years.

Her parents worked hard to get her free, and slowly the public came to believe that Patty Hearst was not completely to blame for everything she had done. And on February 1, 1979, she walked out of prison a free woman.

Chapter 7. Shergar

People have been asking questions about Shergar - the racehorse which became famous after winning the 1981 Derby - ever since he was kidnapped in 1983. What happened to him? Why was he taken? Who were the kidnappers? People have offered several possible answers to these questions, but the kidnapping still remains very much a mystery.

For James Fitzgerald, the man whose job it was to look after Shergar, it all began at about 8.45 p.m. on Tuesday, February 8, 1983, when two men with guns, their faces covered by balaclavas, pushed their way into his house at the Ballymany horse farm, near Newbridge, in Ireland. They locked Mr Fitzgerald's wife, son and daughter in a downstairs room, then ordered him to take them to Shergar's special stable, and to open the stable door. At the same time other members of the gang were driving a car and horse-box to the stable.

After opening the stable door, Fitzgerald was ordered to lead the ten-million-pound racehorse into the horsebox. As usual, Shergar was quiet and well-behaved, and did not kick or try to pull away. Then Fitzgerald was pushed into a van with some more of the kidnappers and told to lie down with his face on the floor.

The gang drove about forty kilometres away from the farm before they let Fitzgerald go. They told him not to contact the police, and said that they would telephone him the next day.

'We want two million pounds for the horse,' they said.

Fitzgerald telephoned his boss - the horse farm manager - as soon as he got home, and the police were informed about the kidnapping in the early hours of the next morning. Fitzgerald was questioned, but he

could tell detectives very little about the kidnappers. They had all worn balaclavas and he did not know what any of them looked like.

Soon, newspaper, television and radio reporters had the news, and everyone learned that one of the world's most famous racehorses had been kidnapped.

The police waited for the kidnappers' next move - but nothing happened. No telephone call. Only silence. They searched stables and farm buildings across the whole of Ireland. The Sporting Life racing newspaper offered 10,000 pounds for Shergar's safe return. Lord Derby, one of Shergar's several owners, said that he thought the horse was out of the country by now.

Weeks and months went by. During this time, hundreds of people telephoned the police to say that they thought they had seen the famous racehorse - either in fields, on roads, or in lorries - in various parts of the world. Others phoned to say that they were holding Shergar and would cut off his head unless money was paid to them. Two telephone calls to an Irish radio station, saying that Shergar would be returned, now that 1.2 million pounds had been paid to the kidnappers in France, were quickly proved to be false.

By October that year, Shergar's owners were offering 100,000 pounds for his safe return, but there was no news. There is still no news.

Some people say the IRA (the Irish Republican Army) was responsible for the kidnapping. But why was no money ever paid or collected? It's a question that will probably never be answered. But surely the biggest question of all has to be: is Shergar alive or dead?

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!