

Anthony Martins never thought he would be a victim of murder. It all started when he was walking back through the quiet, peaceful, and uneventful town of Brookesville, Virginia in the summer of 1969. The town was littered with posters advertising the big Woodstock Music Festival in August. The only sound heard was the occasional car or two or a newspaper sheet rustling in the wind. Anthony thought he was by himself as he took out a pack of cigarettes from his pocket and proceeded to light one. Mid-lighting, he was startled by the sound of heavy boots walking towards him, getting louder and louder. He decided to just continue on; however, he had a deep-gutted feeling something bad was about to happen.

He decided to ignore his nerves as he took a long drag from his cigarette and let the calming flavors of tobacco fill his mouth. The unidentifiable man behind him suddenly pulled out something that glistened with menace and that would soon be inside of Anthony. He turned around and saw the masked figure right in front of him and before he could even let out a tiny scream, the knife found its way through his chest. The killer took his cigarette and took a deep drag from it as he walked away into the bleak, starless night. This would only be the start of his reign of terror.

One week later, head detective George Collins sat in his office as he surveyed a corkboard riddled with pictures, newspaper articles, and bags of miscellaneous items marked in bold black letters **EVIDENCE**. He stared blankly at the red thread connecting them all together. He was shocked.

"He's a smart killer," Collins thought to himself, as he adjusted his khaki-colored tie stained by years of hard work, sweat, tears, and black coffee.

Co-detective Stanley Allens walked into his office with a hot cup of coffee in a mug with Snoopy on it.

"Fresh cup 'o' joe for ya," Stanley offered to George in his thick New York accent. George gladly accepted the Snoopy mug of coffee with a nod as a gesture of gratitude.

"Any leads on da' case, partna'?" Stanley asked George. George remained frozen in place, as he stared intensely at the corkboard.

Stanley's eyes shifted from George to the pictures on George's desk. It was lined with many places he'd travelled and animals he's hunted. But perhaps the most beloved picture was one of him and his wife, two years before she died.

Collins merely grunted in response. "Nothing yet. This killer knows how to kill. He knows how to escape the grasp of forensics. I wouldn't be surprised if we don't narrow down any leads on him by the end of the week," he said in a tired and disgruntled voice.

"Ah cheer up, buddy - I'm sure we'll get somethin', eh?" Stanley replied hopefully. Stanley was a very nice and friendly man, unlike most New Yorkers. He would go out of his way just to make someone happy or to cheer them up. He was the type of person who will do any act of kindness without hoping for a reward. He was always a goofster. Whenever Collins walked into his office, he found him reading a Peanuts comic from the newspaper, quietly chuckling to himself. He once dressed up as Santa Claus on Christmas for all the unfortunate kids on Christmas and let them ride in his cop car. He was just that kind of guy.

Just as Stanley was about to say something to Collins, the phone rang out. Collins picked up the worn, black rotary phone, caked with oil, crumbs, and sweat tucked away inside

the buttons. His face went from annoyed to worried, as he kept telling the caller that he would be there right away.

Stanley asked Collins, "Whatsa' matter buddy? Everythin' a-okay?"

"The Douglass kids were all killed," Collins said, a trace of horror lingering in his breath. He grabbed his coat and swiftly led the way as Stanley followed suit.

Immediately, Collins, Stanley, and two other cops rushed right down to the Douglass' farm. As Collins and Stanley were riding down in a 1969 Dodge Polara, as "Helter Skelter" by the Beatles quietly played from the crackling stereo. Stanley, very worried, turned to Collins and asked "Ya think it might be the killa'?" Collins replied nervously, "Let's hope not," as he stepped down harder on the gas.

As they arrived on the scene, Collins slammed down on the squeaking brakes. He put on his scratched black aviator sunglasses as he emerged from the car. He quietly surveyed the scene around him.

The farm was just a plain field of grass with the occasional spots of brown and yellow. The house itself was an old, worn, wooden house, painted over in a very depressing, negligent shade of blue. A pathway connected the house to an old, crippled, red barn with many chips, cracks, and holes that allowed mice and bugs to seep through. A yellow police caution tape was wrapped around all four corners of the barn. Just outside the barn was a man and woman, both hysterical and in pure shock, with a cop trying to calm them both down in order to get answers and descriptions out of them. Police officer Phil Bean led the detectives into the barn. Inside was a horrific sight.

Three lifeless children sprawled out across the blood stained hay, their corpses mangled beyond recognition. As Collins approached them he noticed something twisted: the killer decided to play around with their bodies; he switched around their limbs and heads from each other along with their clothes and shoes. Without hesitation, Collins knew that this was the same killer.

Brookesville, Virginia was not known to be a crime-filled town as maybe the worst thing that happens is a child steals a piece of candy from the corner store, or maybe an occasional fight breaks out. The county jail was almost always empty along with the police station. No killings were ever reported. Because of this, Collins instinctively knew that this was the person who killed Anthony Martins. After carefully placing individual items such as blood-stained buttons, or puss-covered hay into white plastic bags, he and Stanley both proceeded to ask the frightened couple standard investigation questions such as "Where were you last night?" or "Were the kids at home last night?"

After a brutal hour of protocol, Collins and Stanley hopped back into their police cruiser and left for the station. A long stretch of silence unfolded between them when suddenly "Helter Skelter" pierced the air.

Collins murmured to himself, "Enough with this song already," and tried to turn the knob to a different channel, but the radio was broken. A distorted guitar riff followed along with the sound of Paul McCartney's rugged vocals.

After arriving back at the station, Collins and Stanley both proceeded to pull out bags marked as evidence from the car and bring them in for investigation by the two forensic scientists, Peter Burroughs and Jim Horrace.

After doing a little bit of forensics work, Burroughs and Horrace still couldn't come up with any leads.

"Jus' like ya said boss" Stanley said, "Killer knows howda' kill."

Collins just stormed off in a wave of fury. He had never seen anything this gruesome before in his 36 years in law enforcement.

Just as he was about to go into the breakroom to collect his thoughts, suddenly over the loudspeaker, "Helter Skelter" began to play.

"Marsha!" Collins screamed to the receptionist of the station, "Turn that stupid song off, I have heard it too much today!" Marsha yelled right back to him, "It isn't me! Someone else is playing it!" All of the sudden, the song started to go static, pausing at specific words until the phrase "I'm coming, look out" repeated over and over by McCartney. Everyone at the station was in complete shock. Not knowing what was going on, everyone just froze.

"So, the killer's a technology genius, ah?" Stanley said to himself, with a mouth full of powdered donut and a hand holding a Bugs Bunny mug filled with coffee. Collins slowly got up and a sharp pain shot through his back, most likely due to many years of bending down, laboriously studying evidence, coupled with aging in general. He trudged slowly to Stanley's office and barged through the birchwood door. Stanley already knew what Collins was going to ask as he immediately said to him "Of course it's him, eh?".

Not too far away from Brookesville Police Station, a young fresh out of college nursing graduate Mary Steinbach was driving back from her long and tedious nurses shift in her 1964 Ford Galaxie. She thought she was all alone, driving down a barren, worn, and peaceful country road. Just her and the surrounding sounds of the radio playing "Good Times Bad Times" by Led Zeppelin. As the music slowly faded, an advertisement for the Woodstock Music Festival came on.

"Wouldn't it be nice to take a little break and enjoy some music for three days," she mumbled to herself. "In my dreams." She turned down the volume on the radio as the only thing playing were ads after ads. Suddenly, Mary thought she heard breathing and the sound of a rustling blanket in the back of her car. However, she just shrugged it off, chalking it up to her imagination; after all, it was very late at night and she hadn't had much sleep. A bright, steely reflection appeared in the windshield and before she could look in the rearview mirror of her car, she felt a sharp pain drive through her fleshy neck, leaving a trail of thick blood in its wake. Immediately after going unconscious, the killer took control of the car from the backseat. He pushed her leg onto the gas even harder and drove the car straight into a tree before jumping out of it in order to destroy all possible evidence. The killer took out his pocket radio, turned on "Helter Skelter" and blasted it as he lit a cigarette into his mouth and walked down the dark, long, and winding road.

Later the next morning, Marsha came into Stanley's office. Surprised to see him not his comical self as usual, he had big bags under his eyes, and was taking longer drags than usual from his cigarette. "Everything okay?" Marsha asked him, as she adjusted her glasses. "Yeah, just a... late night last night." Alright well here is your morning paper and coffee," Marsha said, while handing him his essential morning items.

Meanwhile, Collins was in his office, admiring the pictures of the burning car, and scorched body from the night before. "Jeez, this man is brutal," he said to himself under his breath. "Son of a gun."

Collins walked into Stanley's office looking at his newspaper, about to start a conversation about the Yankees game from the night before when he lifted his head and stopped in his tracks. He, too, noticed the sagging bags under Stanley's eyes.

"Rough night?" Collins teased, as he pulled out a manila envelope.

"Yeah," Stanley said, emotionless.

"Anyways, we got to go check out the scene. I must warn you though: it brings a whole new meaning to the word 'barbeque.'" Collins replied, sighing his usual tired morning sigh. "I'm driving."

As they got into the car, "Helter Skelter" played again repeating the words "I'm coming, look out."

"I'll fix that stupid piece of crap now," Stanley said, exhausted and with a dull tone. "Remember I majored in engineering at M.I.T, eh?"

Like clockwork, by the time they arrived at the scorched car, the radio was working again.

The duo got out of the police cruiser and stared at the scene blankly, not knowing where to start. Either with the blacked, charred, and worn car, or the many pieces of the poor victim scattered over the ground. Looking around the scene, they found a burnt Peanuts comic that the wind lifted from the car. Not much else was found, but they took the bloody steering wheel, and parts of the blood stained dashboard for forensics analysis.

Walking back to the car, Collins stepped on a piece of the newspaper advertising a Purple Hands concert coming near them.

Back at the station, Collins walked in on Stanley fixing up a jumble of wires and machinery while listening to "Revolution" by the Beatles.

"Never knew you were a Beatles fan," Collins told him, as he handed him a cup of coffee.

"Love The Beatles," Stanley replied, as he continued working on a wire. Collins noticed a cut on Stanley's hand and asked if he needed a Band-Aid. Stanley told him he didn't, as he put his hand under his desk. "Well, I was wondering if you wanted to go see Russell Gardner and the Purple Hands on Friday," Collins offered to Stanley.

"Oh. I... can't, chief, I'm busy. Sorry." He replied. A bit of silence ensued, as Collins headed back to the investigation room.

Collins stood dead center of the board, his eyes not particularly fixed on any given "clue." He took a long drag from his cigarette and leaned his head back. Suddenly, a creeping feeling began to manifest as the smoke rose in the air. He felt his stomach drop like an anvil on solid Earth as he came to a twisted realization. He stared through the window across from him looking dead at Stanley who was whistling a Beatles song.

"The Beatles song, the comic at the scene, the cut, the sunken eyes.." He whispered to himself under his breath as he paced back and forth across the room. Collins sat down in a chair slowly, a burning feeling ripping through his gut. "Stan?" He thought to himself as he put out his cigarette. Just as he stood up to confront the foe, the lights went out and a loud scream

cracked through the thick air. When the lights came back on, he ran out of the room, pistol in hand, to catch the man who seemed to be the good guy.

Collins stormed into Stanley's room, his gun pointing straight ahead. At that moment, he stood frozen in place, as he saw the limp and lifeless bloody corpse of Stanley, slumped crudely against the wall. A phrase was written in blood across the wall. It read out a line from the Purple Hands song, "The Wicked Gypsy of the West," along with the word "Friday" written under it. Collins slumped to the floor and began sobbing over the loss of his closest friend. He cried until he couldn't any longer - until his sadness was replaced with sheer rage. No more "ifs," "ands," or "buts": Collins would put an end to this reign of terror once and for all.

As the roar from the screaming crowd got louder and louder, Russell Gardner and his band were getting ready for their big show backstage. The rockstar took out some mascara and proceeded to apply it to his eyes as they became darker and darker with every drag of the black liquid. His fringe dangled from his shirt as he turned sharply and proceeded to walk out to the stage. The roar of thousands of people got louder. The band proceeded to break out into a fury of the distortion of the guitar, the rumbling of the loud bass, and the constant thumping of the drums. Russell started beaming out a few chords until the fans recognized it was "Ice of Fire."

One of the many people in the crowd was Collins and a couple of cops, as he knew the killer would be here thanks to his none-too cryptic message. Collins tried his best to blend in so as not to arouse suspicion. But in the cloud of purple haze and rowdy teenagers, Collins knew he was out of his depth. He nodded occasionally to one of the cops, to ensure they all knew where each other was at all times.

As the music began to die out and the show came to a thunderous end, Collins and his crew began to move closer in order to reach the band. Russell Gardner walked back into his dressing room and sprawled dramatically on his couch with a bottle of whiskey in his hand. After taking a few swigs, he took out his most prized possession: his 1962 Electric Blue Fender Stratocaster. He began to strum a few chords until he heard his door open. He swiftly turned around, expecting to see one of his bandmates, but instead he saw what he thought was a fan. "You're not supposed to be in here, mate," Gardner said in his thick British accent, drunkenly stumbling around his words. The man asked for an autograph and reluctantly Gardner gave in and turned around to get a pen to sign his piece of paper. The fan however kicked his back, and a drunk Gardner became too dizzy to get up. The man took his electric blue Stratocaster and snapped it in half taking the jagged-edged maple neck. He proceeded to drive it into Gardner's body over and over again. Russell screamed out in sheer agony, hoping someone would hear from outside the open door.

Hearing the scream, Collins and his men rushed into the backstage heading for the dressing room. They followed the screams like Hansel and Gretel following a trail of crumbs. No sooner did they stumble upon a grotesque sight of a tall, thin man dressed in a neat suit, with deep blue eyes, dirty blonde slicked back hair, and a well-rounded goatee. "I thought you would never ca-" before he could finish his sentence, Collins drove a .9mm bullet into the man's head.

Justice had been served. Stanley and the countless other victims had been avenged. No more fears of having your life stolen from you. No more worrying about going outside. And thank god: no more "Helter Skelter."

A week later, Collins got out of a black Cadillac and stepped onto the frozen grass of the bitter winter. He walked along a path of gray cobblestone, with tiny flowers poking out of each individual crack. He walked past an old white oak fence with vines and moss that had taken over it. He along with five other men carried a big, beautiful black wooden casket. They carefully placed it into the wet and muddy hole dug below a small grave with a Bugs Bunny mug stained with coffee and tea and the occasional hot chocolate and whipped cream, Stanley's favorite Peanuts comic, and his beloved Beatles record, the white album. Of course front and center was a picture of a smiling Stanley sitting happily in his beloved black painted police cruiser with the Brookesville, Virginia police department logo slapped onto the side of it. Collins felt a deep dark guilt inside of him for thinking that his best friend or someone like Stanley himself could have killed so many people and so brutally. As the 6 men finished placing down the casket into the hole, Collins stepped away hearing the sound of his loafers crunch into the mud as it had rained shortly before. An old priest dressed in a purple soutane came along as he squished his way through the mud until he arrived at the tombstone. He stopped and proceeded to pull out a worn blue bible with a big golden cross on the front, and a small pair of reading glasses with a gold chain around them. "Stanley was known to be a man who put others before himself. He would do anything to make someone else happy. He loved many jolly things in life including friends, family, Peanuts, and of course The Beatles. He is now seated next to the almighty throne of God and shall rest in peace forever undisturbed and uninterrupted." The priest began to recite multiple bible verses as a moment of silent prayer ensured after. The only sounds heard were birds chirping and flying around him, leaves rustling from trees, mud squishing under people's shoes, the wind flying around, squirrels gathering food, and of course the quiet sobbing coming from Collins. He couldn't bear the dreadful thought of not having to see him sitting there at his desk chuckling to himself as he read Peanuts and drank his coffee. He couldn't think about not being able to work on another case without him. Collins couldn't get the horrendous sight of Stanley's limp bloody body lying dead on the floor. Before he knew it, the service was over. Collins walked back to his car looking at the rest of the tombstones that appeared before him. He walked down the wet stone path seeing the occasional squirrel or two walk past him. He admired the flowers around him and remembered how Stanley would always bring in flowers for Marsha the receptionist. Collins reached his car and proceeded to get in it. He started it and the radio turned on. "Helter Skelter" by the Beatles was playing. Collins was about to change the station but hesitated. He kept the song on and started to sing along to the words as he started to drive down the wet road into the light of the day.