

**T**HE PROSECUTOR PACED in front of the jury.

**PROSECUTION:** It all began as a harmless escape.

Four healthy teenagers sneaking into an old abandoned house. A final night of adventure before one of them went off to college. That will never happen now. Lilly Kincaid will never go to Princeton. For on that night, Lilly was brutally murdered by this man, William Willis.

Even dressed up in a cheap suit paid for by his lawyer, Billy Willis looked like the homeless recluse he was. Harmless enough, or so everyone had thought.

The prosecutor reviewed the facts. The trespassing teens had been Lilly Kincaid, her younger sister, Anne, and their boyfriends, Mark and Larry. On a sultry August night, a week before Lilly's departure for Princeton, all four finally did what they'd always talked about, breaking into the eerily isolated Alway mansion at midnight and searching for ghosts.

Lilly's boyfriend, Mark, had been in the lead, using his flashlight to illuminate cobweb-filled crannies. Despite promises to the contrary, the boys were having their fun, scaring the girls at every opportunity. They had finished exploring the first floor and were halfway down a second-floor corridor when Larry turned around and saw that Lilly was no longer behind him.

"Lilly? Where are you?" Their whispers grew louder as they began to backtrack along the corridor. "Stop fooling around." Lilly was hardly the type to wander off on her own. "Lilly?" And then they heard it. Several muffled shouts followed by a piercing scream. Lilly's scream.

When Anne and the boys stepped into the dusty bedroom, they saw the 18-year-old stretched out on the bed frame. A hunting knife was protruding from her chest, the black handle-grip facing her shoes. They were hoping it was all a perverse joke, Lilly getting even with the boys. Anne nudged her sister, telling her to cut out the dramatics. "Lilly?" Anne gazed down at her own hands. They were covered in blood. "She's . . .

she's dead."

Mark was just stepping forward to check her pulse when Anne gasped. "Oh, my God. Did you see?" She pointed out into the hallway. "A man with a knife."

Instinctively, the boys gave chase, inadvertently leaving the surviving sister alone. No more than 30 seconds later, as they pursued clouds of cobwebs through the downstairs rooms, a second scream brought them up short. "Anne!" Mark and Larry instantly reversed their tracks.

"You left me alone!" Anne screamed as they ran back in. "Let's get out of here." The boys agreed. Whoever had done this was still close by, wielding a second knife. They ran, Anne sandwiched between her protectors, and didn't stop until they'd reached the safety of the police station.

When Ben Alway, the mansion owner, was told of the murder, his opinion was unequivocal. "Billy Willy," he replied. "Willis, I mean. A homeless drunk who's been squatting in the house for years. I kick him out and lock up the place, but he always finds some way in. The girl must have surprised old Billy. He's got a crazy, violent streak. Anyone'll tell you."

An hour later, the police discovered the lanky, middle-aged drunk passed out in the park. He had finished two pints of bourbon and his hand was gripped around a third. Through his alcoholic stupor, Billy denied the murder. "I ain't been in that place for days. That Alway guy is crazy. Last time, he took a shotgun and put it right up to my head. Said he'd blow my brains out if I ever came back."

Anne Kincaid was unable to identify Billy Willis in a line-up, but there still seemed to be more than enough evidence. The district attorney summed up his case with an emotional appeal.

**PROSECUTION:** Lilly Kincaid was the proverbial golden girl, the joy of her family, the focus of their hopes and dreams. For years Lilly's parents struggled so that one of their children could go to a good college. And now those hopes and dreams . . . where are they? Stabbed through the heart by a drunken monster.