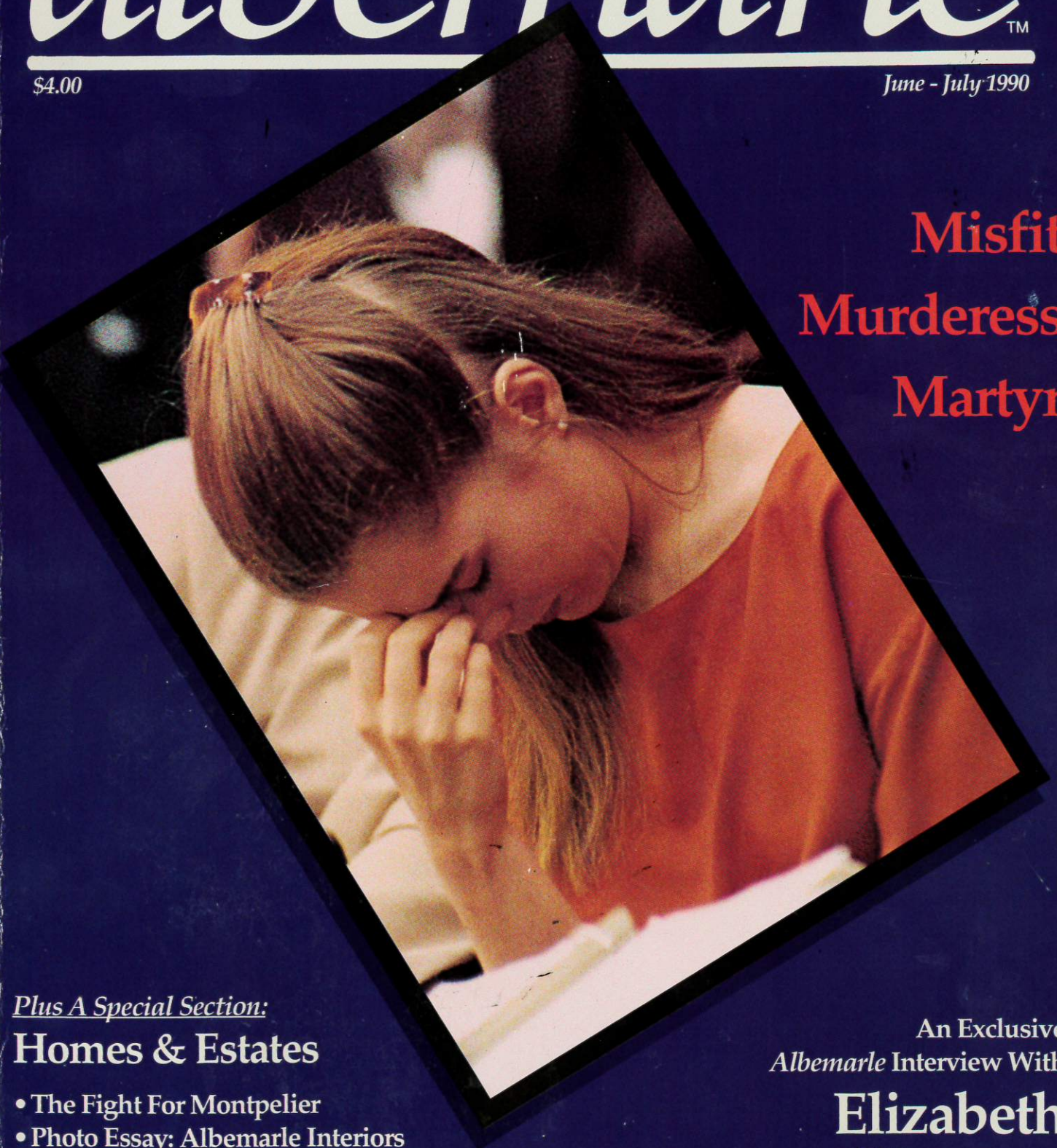


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An Exclusive
Albemarle Interview With

**Elizabeth
Haysom**



MISFIT, MURDERESS, MARTYR

The Changing Face of Elizabeth Haysom

By Amy Lemley





Left and right, Elizabeth Haysom pulled her sweater sleeves down to hide her handcuffs before leaving the courthouse on the day of her sentencing to 90 years (October 8, 1987). To the right on the steps is Bedford County Sheriff Carl Wells. Photographs courtesy of The Cavalier Daily.

On the last Saturday in March, 1985, a Lynchburg couple prepared to sit down to supper. Retired executive Derek W.R. Haysom came in from his ham radio shack, drew the curtains and fixed two cocktails, one for himself and one for his wife. In the first-floor bedroom of the brick and clapboard house they called Loose Chippings, Nancy Astor Haysom changed out of her gardening clothes into a zip-front Dashiki-style housecoat, anticipating a quiet evening. In the kitchen, she sipped her drink as she warmed up a ground beef and rice dish and made a salad. Setting the dining room table with white placemats and flatware, she served the meal on china plates. As the couple finished eating, there was a knock at the door.

Two hours later, the Haysoms were dead.

On April 3, an impeccably groomed white-haired woman and her husband strode into Suite 330 of the University of Virginia's Watson Dormitory in Charlottesville, where a few first-year women sat talking. The woman asked to see Elizabeth Haysom, her voice gushing with southern gentility. Elizabeth's parents, she told them, had been killed.

Elizabeth was not there. She had gone

to see "Citizen Kane" with her boyfriend, the girls said. When Elizabeth and Jens Soering returned, Dr. and Mrs. William Massie escorted Elizabeth into her room and closed the door.

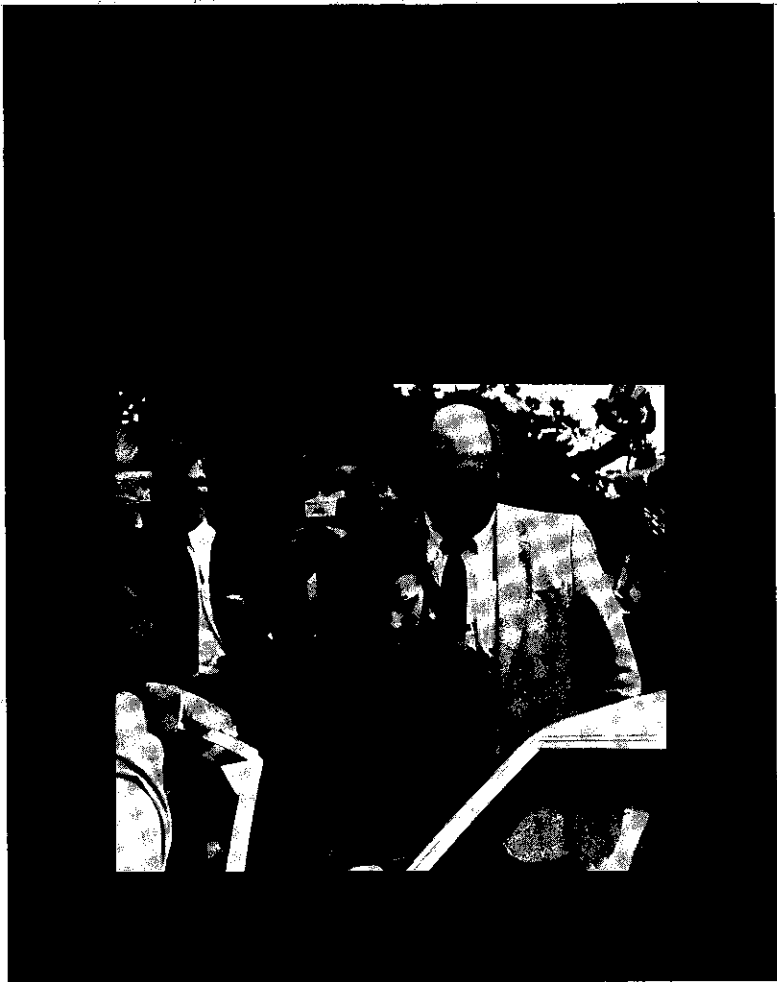
When it opened again, Elizabeth was ashen. "My parents have been murdered," she told Jens and her roommate, Christine Kim, but no one else. Mechanically, the 20-year-old freshman began to gather her things. She would stay with the Massies for the funeral. Jens said he would go along. Christine asked if Elizabeth wanted her support as well. She did. In Lynchburg that night, Annie Massie — Nancy Haysom's best friend — fixed omelets for the trio, but no one was hungry. The brutal stabbings of Derek and Nancy Haysom weighed heavily on everyone who knew about them.

The next day, Elizabeth and her five half-siblings joined each other in mourning. It was not a close family, and Elizabeth, her parents' only mutual child, sought comfort not from her kin but from the two friends she'd met in Charlottesville. Her aloofness irritated her brother Howard, who thought Elizabeth should stay with her family at the Radisson Hotel downtown. But the adult Elizabeth, no longer the obedient child of Howard's memory, was unpredictable and often rebellious.

Ironically, it was her rebellious streak, and not her mother's Virginia heritage, that had brought her to the University — one year later than the Haysoms had intended.

On the second afternoon of college life, three stories above the crowded cookout in the dusty grass that fronted Watson dorm, an impish girl leaned on the railing, her wry smile placing even greater distance between herself and the group below. Alone, Elizabeth did not have to wrestle with the tricky business of finding her niche. Alone, she did not have to feign exuberance at the thought of being on her own for the first

The next day, Elizabeth and her five half-siblings joined each other in mourning. It was not a close family, and Elizabeth, her parents' only mutual child, sought comfort not from her kin but from the two friends she'd met in Charlottesville.



time. She had been on her own before.

As the barbecue smoke curled over their heads, members of the class of 1988 ate hamburgers and introduced themselves to one another. Watson is the scholars' dorm, housing the University's Echols Scholars, the College of Arts and Sciences' top 6 percent of each entering class; the Engineering School's Rodman Scholars make up the balance of 150 residents.

A camaraderie exists among this group, who are coddled with special advising programs, receptions and a monthly newsletter. Though it pays none of the students' expenses, the program's perquisites are enough to attract some of the

country's most promising young minds. Free of the standard curriculum requirements, the Scholars often bypass lower-level survey classes for more specific advanced seminars. While most students have trouble getting their selected courses, Echols Scholars simply whisper their affiliation, and usually move to the top of the waiting list.

There is a subtle pressure in being housed with 149 other exceptional students, in having to confront, as one of them put it, "that we are no longer the smartest kid in the school. We're in a whole dorm full of the smartest kids in the school." For the first time, the endless potential they'd been told they possessed confronts a limitedness they were not taught to expect.

And, like any students away from home, they discover that they have a past they can control, that what they reveal of themselves is up to them. For many, the first year of college feels like a second chance.

Rounding the corner onto the third-floor balcony, Jonathan Greenberg was struck by the odd figure in black baggy pants and slippers whose heavy shock of blond bangs kept her from meeting his gaze. As they chatted, he was charmed by her soft English accent and conspiratorial laugh. Her worldliness, he would learn,

came from more than just her being older than the other freshmen.

While Greenberg was taken with Elizabeth, she in turn was attracted to a stocky West German boy she met that night. A diplomat's son, Jens Soering had perfected and maintained what a friend called a "BBC accent" even after five years of living in Atlanta, where his father was a West German vice consul. Arrogant, animated, and contentious, Soering held forth with an intensity that was an annoyance to some. But it charmed Elizabeth Haysom.

Within a week, Elizabeth had won the adoration or envy of all she had deigned to speak to. Her circle included many of the university's best and brightest, several of whom, like Soering, were Jefferson Scholars, receiving full four-year academic scholarships. A captivating storyteller, Elizabeth regaled her new friends with tales of her exploits on several continents, revealing how she had almost avoided the University's inhibiting traditionalism altogether.

Whether consciously or not, Elizabeth created an aura of mystery around herself. With drop-in references to her "inheritance," to her father's former position as executive vice president of Nova Scotia's largest steel company, and her mother's

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relation to the late Lady Astor (the first woman to sit as a member of the British House of Commons and her great-grandmother's cousin), Elizabeth Haysom gave the impression of family wealth and political and social prominence. She had attended two of England's most prestigious boarding schools, an ocean away from home, which was at that time an estate in Northwest, Nova Scotia, called Hayhill. Her parents had moved from Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), where she was born, to Luxembourg, then Canada before settling into

semi-retirement in Lynchburg, where the former Nancy Astor Benedict had attended high school.

With this background, and a penchant for exaggeration she says she learned from her parents' dinner party conceits, Elizabeth was Watson's unofficial entertainer of the year in 1984, and she called her own shots. Bored with most of the fellow first-year students almost two years her junior, she cultivated the association of older Echols Scholars. They were an asset on weekend/ nights especially, when

Elizabeth would join her friends for off-campus parties or meals out. An upperclassman with a car was always available to take her where she needed to go. Away from the adolescent suburbanites and their academic obsessions, she could scout out an obsession of her own.

"Do you know anyone who would have some smack?" The question hit second-year Jefferson Scholar Jim Farmer like an unsolicited confession. There was a drug scene at the University, as there was on most college campuses, and Farmer had observed his share of it. But heroin? "It was the big, bad drug," he recalls. "I didn't even know if it was available in Charlottesville. That sort of tipped me off that Elizabeth had seen some things the rest of us hadn't."

For the most part that semester, Elizabeth had to content herself with marijuana and LSD, also making do with pills, which she says she obtained by every available means, from visiting Student Health to pilfering prescription sedatives from her mother's medicine cabinet. And she drank.

Her drinking, like her drug abuse, was something she had learned to conceal after almost a decade of eagle-eyed headmistresses and boarding school prefects eager to snitch. From the age of 10, when she took the first secret swig from her parent's well-stocked liquor cabinet, Elizabeth sought mood modifiers wherever she could. In substance abuse, she found justification for the nagging feeling that she did not measure up, that she could not meet the high expectations her parents had of her. Her academic achievement, her athletic prowess, and her artistic talent meant nothing to her because of her deceit.

The dual existence she fashioned was easier to maintain with her family thousands of miles away. When a few drug-related incidents at Wycombe Abbey, the century-old boarding school from which Elizabeth graduated in 1983, prompted school officials to contact her parents, she says they shrugged it off as typical adolescent experimentation.

There were other social transgressions as well. Elizabeth was suspected of embezzling from one of the clubs of which she was treasurer. And in her senior year, she and classmate Melinda Peake* were accused of stealing checks from a Pakistani student. Fed up with the accusations, and disgruntled with the arrangements her parents had made for her to attend UVa., Elizabeth Haysom enlisted her friend to help execute an alternative plan. Taking their final exams ahead of schedule, they went by train to a rock concert on July 1.

* name has been changed


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They never returned to school.

By the end of August, they had arrived in Bonn, Germany, and from there traveled through France and Italy. The two smoked marijuana often and also used hashish and heroin during their sojourn. By September, they were picking grapes for Moet-Chandon, and by mid-October they had hitchhiked to Berlin. Exploring the Berlin Wall area, they wound up staying in a condemned railway station called Cuc Cucs, where they crossed paths with heroin addicts and would-be "terrorists." As Elizabeth repeated her story to her UVa. acquaintances a year later, the terrorists became more dangerous, and she occasionally would imply they had Irish Republican Army connections. In that version of her tale, she had become addicted to heroin during a several-month stint on the streets of Berlin. But by October 21, 1983, as both girls slipped into an oblivion of uncertain origin, the party was over.

Five days of Elizabeth Haysom's life are missing from her memory. When she "awoke" on the 25th, there was "an egg" on the back of her head and all her money was gone. At some point, she believes, she fell down an elevator shaft. Malnourished, exhausted, and defeated in their attempt at independence, Melie and Bunnie, as they had nicknamed each other, went to the

British Consulate to request tickets to England. They had been missing almost four months.

The British vice consul made a quick call to U.S. Air Force Colonel Stuart Herrington, a friend of a friend the Haysoms had asked to help locate their daughter.

Her drinking, like her drug abuse, was something she had learned to conceal after almost a decade of eagle-eyed headmistresses and boarding school prefects eager to snitch.

Elizabeth, thin and bedraggled, her fuchsia mohawk a striking contrast to her translucent skin, looked nothing like the healthy smiling teenager of her parents' photographs. She and Melinda would stay with the Herringtons for a week, reluctantly agreeing to rejoin their families in England at the end of the month.

In London, where Derek Haysom met his daughter, the old roles were replayed as

the distinguished South African made the social rounds with the contrite adolescent on his arm. Melinda was dispensed with when Haysom bought her a ticket home. Cut off from her intimate friend, Elizabeth had no choice but to return to America with her father. It was Christmas Eve when they turned into the driveway of the Haysoms' 10-acre property in Boonsboro, an area just outside Lynchburg.

But the reconciliation was slow and incomplete. Nancy Haysom, who had been frantic during her youngest child's absence, cuddled the 19-year-old as though she were a toddler; Elizabeth recoiled. In an effort to better understand her, Nancy Haysom intercepted the letters Melinda sent her, and quizzed Elizabeth about their sexual relationship. "There is no doubt that she loves Elizabeth and is determined to 'keep' her," Nancy Haysom wrote Stuart Herrington. But Melie and Bunnie quickly lost touch. In her parent's realm of fresh-air activity by day, social engagement by night, Elizabeth was once again the dutiful daughter, sacrificing the loyalty of friendship for the cocoon of togetherness the Haysoms had spun.

That cocoon was dry and hollow, however, binding but not always comforting. Though the Haysoms had always tried to please their daughter, their responses



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were often inappropriate. Rather than play with children her own age on school vacations at home, the child Elizabeth would often stay in foreign hotels with her parents, almost always in the company of adults. Even a pet of her own would have helped, but the requests for a cuddly animal she coyly slipped under her parents door went unanswered.

Instead, the family acquired a huge St. Bernard, hardly the ideal dog for a lonely child. Afflicted with a mangy skin condition, Ben was irritable and intolerant of the little girl, and her cheek still bears the scar from the time he bit her as she tried to retrieve his food bowl. Crying, Elizabeth fled the empty house to find her mother, but she was nowhere in sight, having wandered from the yard's edge. The terrified child had to walk a good distance to a neighbor's house to get treatment for the gash.

Elizabeth's desire for animal companionship had waned by the time she left Nova Scotia two years later, and though Riddlesworth Hall, her first English boarding school, allowed Princess Diana and other students to keep small pets, Elizabeth did not adopt a guinea pig or gerbil. Her imagination would keep her company, as it had for most of her young life.

As a little girl, she had found refuge in

books. Because her five half-siblings, all at least a decade older than she, attended boarding school, Elizabeth says she hardly knew them, and was left to ramble alone through the spacious houses the Haysoms favored. So she turned to novels, and from them borrowed character traits at whim. "I

Adept at cueing herself to whatever role was expected, Haysom let her company dictate her character.

was raised to believe I could be anything I wanted to be, and I took that quite literally. I would read about a character and say, 'That's an interesting way to be. I think I'll be that way for a week or two.'" Often, she would take on the most fragile, pathetic characters in Charles Dickens' novels, dressing up in rags and acting out scenes of the downtrodden and disadvantaged.

As she grew up, Elizabeth perfected her acting, and in high school took on

numerous difficult dramatic roles, from Martha in Edward Albee's "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" to the Queen of the Nile in Shakespeare's "Antony and Cleopatra." But disparate stage roles were not the full extent of Elizabeth's costume changes.

With a face one friend described as "a cross between Ingrid Bergman and David Bowie" and the malleability of a character actress, Elizabeth changed her look whenever the mood struck, demure one day in a lace collar, jumper, and plastic hairband, the next day threateningly decked out in punky leather and a spiked hairstyle.

Adept at cueing herself to whatever role was expected, Haysom let her company dictate her character. With her parents, she was a proper young lady. With her Korean-American roommate, Christine Kim, she was a dedicated student who kept normal hours, not the drug abuser and alcoholic Elizabeth says she was, beginning most days by "rolling out of bed at 3 p.m. and grabbing a beer from the fridge." (Christine did think it strange, however, that Elizabeth had slept through final exams that fall.)

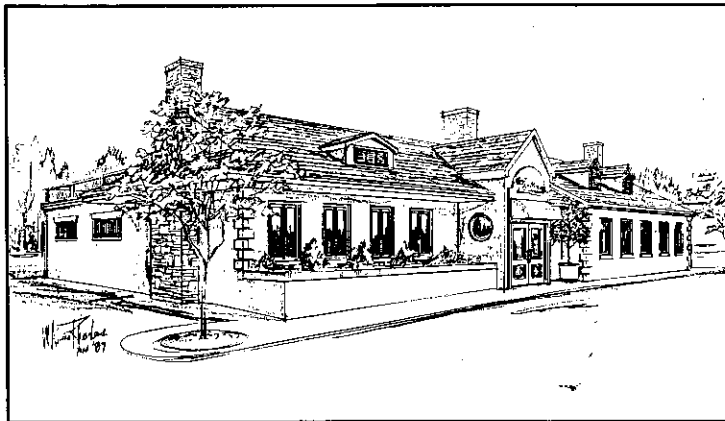
To others, Elizabeth was a "thrill-seeker" who enjoyed rebelling. She told friends she wanted to sneak through fraternity rush in drag, confident she could disguise her lovely bone structure and trim physique to fool them into pledging her. She openly discussed her sexual ambiguity, referring to past girls' school liaisons with candor, and gravitating toward a group of homosexual and bisexual students who shared her passion for the avante-garde. Though many of them imitated a bohemian lifestyle, they saw Elizabeth as the genuine article. That she would renounce her family's apparent wealth, could so easily join the European drug culture, intrigued them. Looking back, Elizabeth says she partly despised them for their phoniness, but she recognized her own artifice as well. Her persona held their rapt attention, but her victory was hollow. She had fooled them, and therefore they didn't really know her at all.

Other men in her life, men who were in love with her, were allowed glimpses of the truth, but among the pearls of veracity were many cut-glass falsehoods, these so brilliantly crafted that her listeners marveled at their rarity. "I guess she did lie a heck of a lot," says Eric Engels, a 1987 alumnus.

But when they talk about her now, friends turn their statements into questions.

"Her father was a millionaire — wasn't he?" The family estimated Derek and Nancy Haysom's estate at under \$1 million at the time of their deaths.

"She had a publishing contract, right?" During a 1984 University of Rochester summer writing workshop, an agent to whom Haysom had shown a 10-page manuscript



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said that if she finished the novel, he would put her in touch with a publisher.

"She had been a world-class skier as a youth in England — well, she did have long skis, didn't she?" Haysom's 1987 resume lists membership on the Martini Ski Championship Team in 1980.

Indeed that list of accomplishments is impressive, for Elizabeth claims she not only competed nationally in lacrosse and tennis, she played piano and cello and sang publicly. Her eight school play leads won Royal Academy of Dramatic Arts certificates and her acceptance into Britain's National Theatre. She cites three plays of her own, and roughly a thousand pages of other writing — composed between ages 17 and 20 — on subjects ranging from the history of ancient warfare to "The Metaphysics of the H₂O Molecule." Her love of language had become the vehicle through which she tried to make herself understood.

For Jens Soering, the prolific Elizabeth was the ideal intellectual sidekick, if an unlikely paramour. The two circled each other for months, slowly recognizing a like-mindedness for which they had always longed. With Soering, Elizabeth recaptured the sense of superiority she had shared with Melinda Peake, and they became friends by indulging each other's haughty cynicism.

The bookish Soering and the eccentric

Haysom shared creativity as well, spending hours in fantasy, rewriting scenes from Shakespeare one day, designing a hybrid Ferrari-Porsche the next. As they grew closer, they began to expose their dark sides, trusting in their mirrored emotions.

Elizabeth had mixed feelings toward her

Nancy Haysom was "tremendously perceptive" and could "very subtly, very cleverly make people feel terrible," says her daughter.

parents, whose relentless attention encouraged dependence. Her father still chose her classes for her, as he always had. But his emotional stoicism kept him from comforting her, she told Soering, even when she was raped at age 10. Moreover when her mother found out about the incident, which she says took place behind a tennis court at her Swiss boarding school, she made the girl feel as though it were her fault, Elizabeth said.

Her mother's excessive involvement in Elizabeth's psyche reached a fever pitch in the months following her return from Europe, and she insisted her daughter perpetuate the hardy elegance of the Gibson girl who was her ancestor. When she did not exude refinement or the proper degree of ambition, or when she tried to live up to her mother's ideal and failed, Haysom was taunted.

When Eric Engels drove Elizabeth to Loose Chippings to retrieve a party dress, for example, Nancy Haysom had remarked over dinner, "I hear you're very good in math. Maybe you could help Elizabeth."

Though "it wasn't a lashing comment," Engels recalls, Elizabeth was mortified.

"She made Eric feel like a god, and she made me feel terrible," Elizabeth remembers. "She humiliated me because I wasn't doing science anymore, because I just couldn't cut it." Nancy Haysom was "tremendously perceptive" and could "very subtly, very cleverly make people feel terrible," says her daughter.

Elizabeth would go to great lengths to avoid her mother's "gift" for chastisement, and often wished to be completely free of her willful guidance. If her parents simply vanished, she mused, then magically she would mature into the independent adult she wished to be, without ever having to

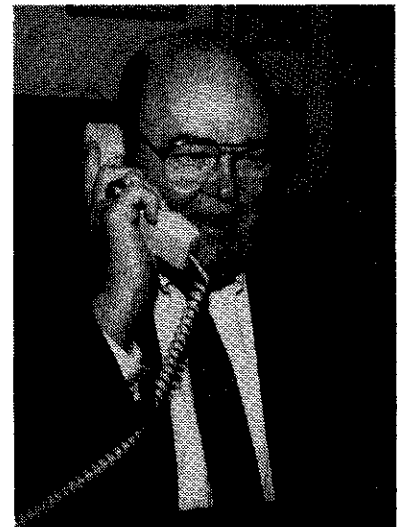
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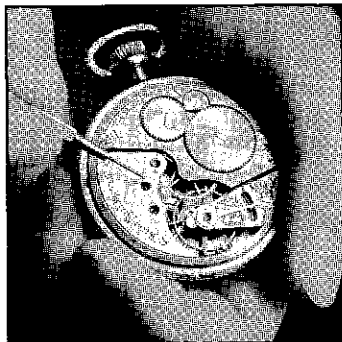
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confront what it means to forego the protection she knew in childhood. She had tried to separate once, when she had run away from school at 19, but the bond had not broken. Maybe being accountable to her parents was a small price to pay for their generosity and devotion. "No guy I ever saw could compete with my parents," she said at 20. She was theirs, and felt as though she could be no one else's.

Jens Soering also felt engulfed by his family. Born in Bangkok, Thailand, Soering was the eldest son in a family that moved frequently. Typical of many German families, Klaus and Anne-Claire Soering's was a structured household that "emphasized duty, the marriage based on respect and commitment," according to Solomon Cohen, the Atlanta dentist who treated the Soerings and became friendly with them. Pleased with the accomplishments of Jens and his brother Kai, Klaus Soering was a loyal, supportive father. "He was critical," Cohen says, "but only in jest."

A housewife, Anne-Claire remained behind when her husband was transferred from the West German consulate in Atlanta to the one in Detroit, giving Jens the chance to complete his senior year at the prestigious Lovett School before the family would reunite in the posh suburb of Grosse Pointe the following summer. Cohen says he talked with her "about how it was so difficult for a mother to be everything to a son, and a father to be everything to a son."

Similarly, during that year, Jens tried to fill his absent father's shoes, and discussions between mother and son began to mimic discussions between husband and wife. "Jens became very responsible for his mother," Cohen recalls. "He was feeling a lot of pressure." But Soering's letters to Haysom, written over winter break, would reveal that the pressure had begun to build long before 1983.

In those letters, he characterizes his mother as an unhappy woman who suffered from severe bouts of depression and who depended excessively on her children for fulfillment. Solomon Cohen says Mrs. Soering sought treatment at a "wellness-type camp" during their Atlanta years.

Jens describes his relationship with his father as forced. (The Soering family, under their lawyer's advice, declined to be interviewed for this article.)

According to Haysom, Soering spent hours confiding his feelings to her, depicting his home life as unbearable and getting worse. It was no secret Elizabeth resented her own parents; she had discussed their strained relations with many friends. "It was almost like she was testing us," Jon Greenberg would remark three years later. "She had mentioned problems with her parents,

but I couldn't relate to that at all. Maybe I failed her test." With Jens, she refrained from giving details until she could stand his wallowing no longer.

"I just told him, "Look, everyone has problems. You're not the only one. Listen to this." As she poured out her pent-up anger at her parents' overprotectiveness, the years of making her feel like they loved her three vacations a year and forgot her the rest of the time, she expressed her hatred so vehemently that her emotions took on a momentum of their own. Jens Soering felt he had found a soul mate.

But Elizabeth was not convinced. Through the end of the first semester, she divided her time among three admirers, a balancing act she made no attempt to conceal. "She sort of played guys off against each other. Jens and me against Eric, Eric against the two of us," Greenberg says. "She complained about the other two to whomever she was with at the time."

In December, Jens made a move to obtain Elizabeth for himself, once and for all. Just before winter break, Jens "confessed his love for her," Greenberg says Soering told him. "He thought that would be the end of it." It wasn't. Suddenly, the pair were as one. "For Jens, it was almost pathological," he recalls. "I'm a great lover of romance, but his was his whole life."

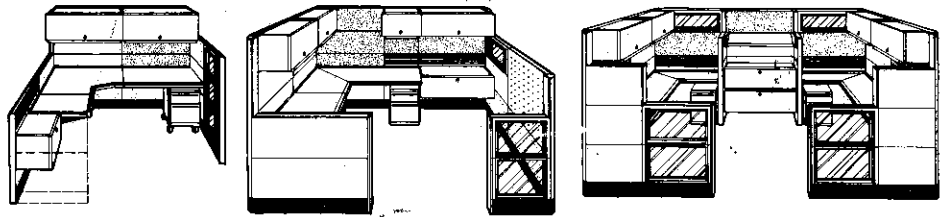
Soering spent countless hours writing letters to Elizabeth during the Christmas holiday, though he never mailed the 40 pages, keeping in touch by telephone instead.

In the letters, Soering accuses his mother of awaiting the deaths of her wealthy mother and husband so that she might be both free of their ties and financially secure. But it is Jens who seems to dwell on death. He depicts his father as a man whose work has caused him to lose his family's love, and who appears to be on the brink of cardiovascular collapse. Although their son describes their marriage as strained, the Soerings' commitment clearly has weathered many changes, from the geographic to the emotional. If Jens Soering truly feels he contributed to his mother's depression, that even as "the absolute centre of her life" he could not quell her unhappiness, it seems logical that guilt would cause him to look elsewhere for the roots of her misery.

Elsewhere in Jens' letters, his parents present a united front. Using metaphors that connote violence and battle, Jens describes an incident in which his parents confronted him about his future. Concerned about Jens' tendency to distinguish himself as a misfit, they said that since he was in a dormitory of intellectual equals, he

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should try harder to fit in. His parents also questioned whether he was living up to the expectations of a Jefferson Scholar. And his new girlfriend, his father said, was either a liar or too good for him. "Their attack was fierce, and I fought back bravely, winning on every point. (Why so militaristic, Jens? The situation seemed to be) . . . I felt drained and . . . raped."

The 18-year old Soering suggests that words are the only outlet for emotional suffering. It follows that his language would be militaristic and violent; his writing "I love you" to Elizabeth becomes "I love you fiercely." Jens characterizes his home environment as "emotionally brutal. If it were only physical, there might be some release, some action taken sooner!"

Soering chose to withhold the lengthy confessional until the couple returned to school in January, when together, he told her, they would decide if Haysom should read it. She would, but managed to wade through only about six pages before giving up on her boyfriend's rambling verbosity. She missed some telling passages.

Elizabeth had spent Christmas at home with her parents. Once again they misread her desires and forced a togetherness that recalled the time Elizabeth had spent with them after her European disappearance. Then, they had hoped that a year of socializing with Lynchburg's old guard and its children might heal the resentment nine years of distance had fostered. Now, once again, the Haysoms hoped their daughter would come back to them.

But Elizabeth had begun to wean herself, and preferred the company of her peers. When she went to a party at Jim Farmer's nearby home, her parents called two hours later to retrieve her. She gave her friends an implausible excuse, but one they did not question: An Interpol agent had some questions for her regarding her upcoming ski trip to Yugoslavia. In fact, her parents simply wished her to spend her last few nights at home.

In the evening, the Haysoms drank quite heavily; often their bitter spats resonated throughout the house. Craving time alone, Elizabeth, rather intoxicated herself, retreated to her upstairs room and chose, as Jens had, to vent her hostility through writing; unlike Jens, she would mail her letter.

In morbidly surrealistic prose, Elizabeth mixes declarative sentences with cryptic images and transitions. In a passage she would later say was meant to mock Soering's interest in mind control, she asks, "Would it be possible to hypnotize my parents, do voodoo on them, will them to death? It seems my concentration on their death is causing them problems. My father nearly

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drove over a cliff at lunch . . . my mother (drunk) fell into the fire. I think I shall seriously take up black magic.

"Will you really come to Summer School?"

The death wish she expresses is interspersed with day-to-day narrative, which itself contains some fabrication. "Swelling kumquats, red wine, brewing coffee — the scene of a feckless dinner party. William Styron (*Sophie's Choice*) and an entourage" of other guests (Styron says he never met the Haysoms). As the letter continues, quoting poetry and professing undying love, it is interrupted with, "Why don't my parents just lie down and die? I despise them so much."

On the way back from her student trip to Yugoslavia, a welcome relief from her parents' smothering affection, Elizabeth called home and was offered some good news. She had earned a 4.0 average, her mother told her, and they were pleased. Against all reason, Elizabeth allowed herself to ignore her poor academic performance, her missed exams, the impossibility of her mother's report. She asked no questions. If her mother said she'd earned all A's, then it must be so.

When they were reunited in mid-January, Jens spent the few days before classes resumed synchronizing Elizabeth's schedule with his. That way, he said, they could spend all of their free time together. All of it. Despite his efforts, Elizabeth, adept at sneaking time for herself, would disappear some afternoons, returning to find Jens' desperately scribbled notes: "Where have you been? I've been waiting for six hours."

Denial is an instrument of sweet torture, and Elizabeth recognized in Jens the perfect victim, creating a reward system that shifted power over to her. Elizabeth loved Jens, but love for her "represented a form of pain, of complex manipulation and control," she says now. Jens' dependence was exhilarating; the tables had turned, and she was the sole object of devotion.

But Elizabeth told several friends she did not expect the romance to last: So volatile a union surely would self-destruct. That was all right with her. "He was just my boyfriend," she explains. Though Soering strongly disapproved, Elizabeth would not give up her drugs; instead she hid them. And while she spoke admiringly to friends about Jens' "love-without-lust" stance, she later attributed it to the sexual dysfunction he refers to in letters. There were numerous trysts he never knew about. "I don't think it ever crossed his mind," Elizabeth says. "He didn't perceive any other threat except my parents."

The Haysoms were indeed a formidable

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obstacle. Elizabeth still spent many weekends with them, and they continued to visit her at school, to help her look for housing, and to make her vacation plans. And though she struggled with it, resenting how much she still required their guidance, Elizabeth wished to please them.

If Derek and Nancy Haysom had discouraged their daughter's relationship with Soering, it was not because they particularly disliked him; they had met him only once. The Haysoms simply thought that Jens, who had just turned 18, was too young for the cosmopolitan Elizabeth. She was used to the company of adults; and after all, Derek Haysom was 19 years older than the 53-year-old Nancy. There were no arguments. The Haysoms merely suggested Elizabeth spend less time with Jens. Their daughter, knowing a confrontation with her parents would be futile, chose not to plead her case. This too would pass.

"All I wanted was to have my parents, school, and a boyfriend," she says, using her hands to pantomime three distinct compartments. For her to lead the ideal life, she would have to be the center of it, fully in control of all its elements. And those elements would have to remain separate. For her to lead the ideal life, she would have to be free from having to choose any one of those elements over another.

But she found it increasingly difficult to pit one element against another without their becoming entangled. "Jens wanted things," Elizabeth says. He wanted to travel with her to Europe that summer. He wanted to live with her the following fall. He wanted to possess Elizabeth. To all of this, Elizabeth said no.

As Elizabeth studied in her room, Jens stormed in. "I could blow their bloody heads off!" The fury behind his exclamation scared Elizabeth. "At that particular time, I took it seriously," she later said.

"My parents had always told me to use them as an excuse if I was having problems with a boyfriend," Elizabeth says. So she created an alibi: Her parents would not allow it. But even if they had, she had other plans in mind.

She would spend spring break in Colorado, skiing with Howard and his wife,

as her mother had arranged. The mystery thriller Jens had scripted would not get made. His filmmaking hopes dashed, and a forced separation just a month away, Jens was enraged. As Elizabeth studied in her room, Jens stormed in. "I could blow their bloody heads off!" The fury behind his exclamation scared Elizabeth. "At that particular time, I took it seriously," she later said.

As Jens became more possessive, Elizabeth began to placate him by creating the illusion of sacrifice. Confident Jens would hold out for the fortune she said she stood to inherit, Elizabeth wrote from a Denver Ramada Inn in mid-March 1985 that she would be disinherited if she disobeyed her parents. "If I go to Europe with you or anybody else just to bum around, I can kiss lots of lolly goodbye." Their alternative? Summer school, an internship, something practical.

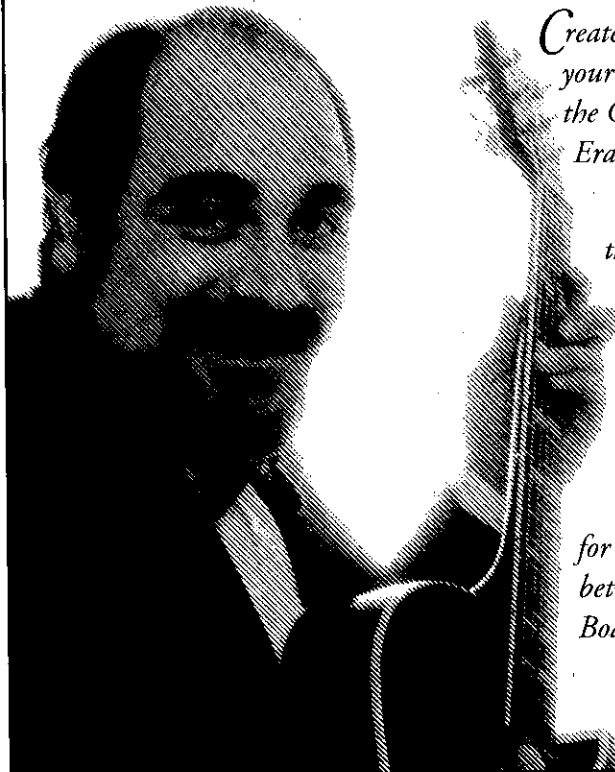
Hoping to give him the impression she was willing to forego the family riches for his love, Elizabeth made an offer she was sure Jens would refuse. Rather than wait until graduation to escape her parents' hold on her, they could, in Elizabeth's words, "get rid of them now," dropping out of school to become globe-trotting "adventurers," surviving on "sheer force of personality." If these were the only conditions under which she would travel with him, Elizabeth reasoned, Jens surely would prefer to complete his years as a Jefferson Scholar.

She was so sure he would choose to finish school that she offered to pay for Kai Soering's education if they left UVA., using "the rest of [her] book money — \$15,000." A literary agent's vague promise to take a look at her finished novel suddenly had been transformed into a book contract with an advance she she had already begun spending. If Jens believed her story, it would buy her time. "The only thing Jens listens to is money," she says.

But Jens heard rumblings of something else, something that terrified him far more than financial insecurity ever could: abandonment. Raised to rely on unconditional love, Jens craved Elizabeth's devotion. Yet after more than two months of commiserating about their home lives, of swearing allegiance to each other, the unthinkable happened. In a single weekend, the Haysoms seemed to win their daughter back. And Jens Soering felt he was losing her.

On Saturday, March 23, Elizabeth took a bus to Lynchburg. In her bag were a wool sweater, an imported hairbrush, and some handkerchiefs, all gifts for her father's 72nd birthday. The family enjoyed a pleasant afternoon before the Haysoms went to a dinner party that evening, leaving

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Elizabeth behind.

The next day, what began as a tense discussion concluded in unprecedented understanding. Soon to be 21, Elizabeth desired more financial responsibility, and was surprised when her father capitulated; later that week, he initiated an account with the Bank of Bermuda in her name, to be handed over to her on her birthday three weeks later. The family discussed Elizabeth's summer plans, agreeing she could attend the Goethe Institut to improve her German, and later enroll in the University of Vienna for a year abroad. Maybe, her parents said, the three of them would spend a year in Austria. And the Unitarian church-owned rooming house at 803 Rugby Rd. that Elizabeth and Christine had selected for fall met with their approval. It was a breakthrough weekend. "I felt that I had the golden cart in front of me," Elizabeth recalled.

That weekend was the culmination of a change that was taking place. Not one month before, Elizabeth had remarked to a friend: "Isn't it amazing that I'm getting along with my parents? I'm really starting to like them as people." Returning to Watson Sunday night, she was thrilled to give her boyfriend a progress report. But Jens did not share her enthusiasm.

During the week that followed, Jon Greenberg, who still carried a torch for Elizabeth, invited her on a day-trip to Washington, D.C., to visit the city's art museums. He was encouraged by Elizabeth's "maybe," and jealous to discover that by Friday afternoon, she and Jens had traveled there for that very purpose. Or so they said.

All that week, Jens had needled Elizabeth: She had spent a weekend with her parents, now she owed him a weekend. With midterms over, their workload was lighter, and when Elizabeth's plans to sign a lease that Saturday fell through, she assented. Renting a blue Chevette from Pantops Texaco, they then headed north on Route 29 at about 2:30 p.m. on March 29. By 6 o'clock, they had checked into the Washington Marriott on 22nd Street NW.

In need of spending money, Elizabeth says she brought along several pieces of jewelry to sell, and phoned some area pawn shops Saturday morning (the Marriott receipt lists five local phone calls). She claims she sold the items — among them a gold chain — for around \$400 to various downtown jewelry dealers, and returned to the hotel to join Jens for lunch. Growing incensed that Elizabeth was so strapped for money, he blamed her parents for withholding funds. Elizabeth may have offered a rationale, perhaps saying they were denying her because they disapproved of Soer-

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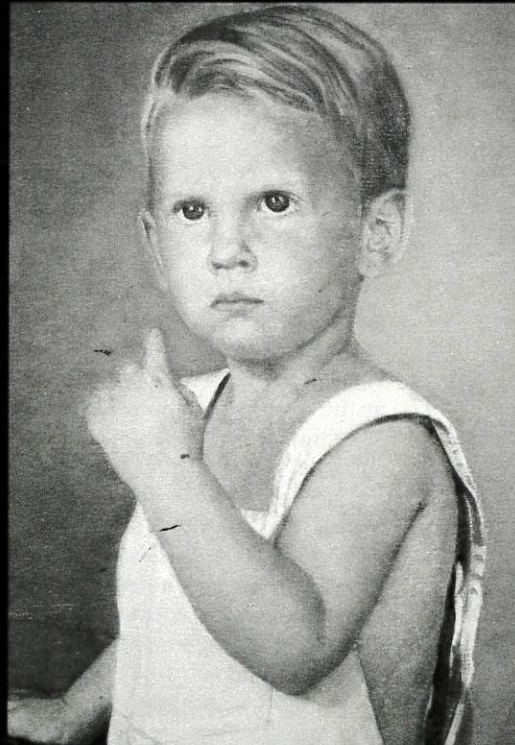
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ing. And what was the root of their disapproval? Jens wanted to know. He had to speak his mind, he told her, and thought they should drive down to Lynchburg that instant to confront them.

Elizabeth refused. "I wouldn't have gone down there for anything under the sun," she says. "The thought of confronting my parents about Jens' and my relationship . . .

"She couldn't face their questions: Where had they come from, how had they gotten there, and why wasn't she in Charlottesville signing her lease as she had told them Thursday she would be? "I didn't want any boats rocked." That she would not take up for Jens further enraged him. "That was part of the argument. I didn't feel there was anything to confront," she says. Fine. He would go alone. He was furious. "I could kill them," he fumed.

As it became clearer that Jens intended to make the 410-mile round trip with or without her, Elizabeth began scheming. "With Jens out of sight, I could go have some fun," she says. He instructed her to meet him after "The Rocky Horror Picture Show," the midnight movie at Georgetown's Key Theater. He dropped her off at another cinema, where he assumed she would spend the rest of the afternoon. When he drove away, Elizabeth put her plan into action.

"When you're a junkie, dealers can smell you a mile away," she said. Aching for a fix, Elizabeth says she ducked into a bar and procured some drugs (heroin or LSD), which she ingested in the ladies' room. She says she then bought more and returned to the hotel.

There were fleeting moments of panic at the thought of her worlds colliding in Lynchburg. "I did consider calling them," she says, "but I couldn't figure out what to say." That they shouldn't let him in? Shouldn't believe him? That he was dangerous? It was a long afternoon, and Elizabeth's main concern was indulging herself. She had halfway expected Jens to drive around for an hour or so and then return to the hotel.

But he was not there. Her mind racing in a drug-induced frenzy, Elizabeth ordered room service — a bottle of Johnnie Walker Black Label scotch and possibly some food, though she can't quite recall; the total was \$35.11. She had just stepped

out of the shower when the order arrived, and managing the towel, the bottle, and a signature was daunting. She did not keep a copy of the receipt.

After "doing serious damage" to the fifth, Elizabeth arrived 20 minutes late to "Rocky Horror." When it was over, she stood on the sidewalk watching the blur of Wisconsin Avenue's Saturday night traffic. Before too long, Jens pulled over across the street, and Elizabeth crossed and opened the passenger door.

The mock-horror flick had not prepared her for the sight she now beheld.

"My God! What's happened? What on earth's been going on?" A rash of scenarios coursed through her mind. Jens had been injured. She was having a bad trip. Jens was trying to freak her out. In the dim overhead light, Jens Soering was a bloody vision. Wrapped in a white cloth, he was blood-spattered from head to toe.

"Shut up, shut up! And close the door!" Fearing passers-by might see him, he pulled away from the curb.

"I did consider calling them," she says, "but I couldn't figure out what to say." That they shouldn't let him in? Shouldn't believe him? That he was dangerous?

"I've killed your parents." By the time they reached the Marriott garage, Jens had given a brief account of his grisly tale.

When he arrived at Loose Chippings, the Haysoms were in the dining room. Derek Haysom let him in, and they sat at the heavy cedar

table. The Haysoms were drinking gin, and Jens joined them. As Nancy Haysom set a plate of leftovers before Jens, and a bowl of ice cream in front of her husband, a series of arguments ensued. Nancy and Derek argued about her painting, a hobby she had enjoyed for years. They fought about their in-laws, all long since dead. Then, conversation shifted to the issue Jens had come to confront: why the Haysoms felt his relationship with their daughter was "inappropriate."

Frustrated, Soering got up as though to leave. "I don't want to hear any more," he said. Soering would later say Derek Haysom pushed him, causing him to fall and hit his head. Soering grabbed a knife and attacked.

Though the gist of Jens' story would remain the same, there are discrepancies between what he allegedly said that night and what he would later claim; Elizabeth's recollections would vary as well.

"He told me, 'There was a lull in the conversation and it seemed like the thing to

do.” Jens said he picked up a steak knife from the table and attacked her mother first, she says, which seems more likely to her than her father’s striking Jens. “It’s possible she was goading him in some way.”

Elizabeth appears unusually distressed as she imagines the dynamics that Saturday night — ones she knew well. “Every time you try to speak, you are interrupted, then the interruption is interrupted by a third person. They fight, and everything under the sun is brought in. They never missed the opportunity to stick the knife in. You become part of the problem, and you just snap.”

Derek Haysom put up a hell of a fight, Soering told her. Haysom’s wounds confirmed it: With more than 30 gashes lacerating his face and torso, and defense wounds on hands and forearms, it is obvious he fought fiercely. “He told me my father ‘just wouldn’t lie down and die,’” Elizabeth recalled. When at last he lay still, Derek Haysom had crossed the threshold into the living room, falling across the hearth. His throat was slashed, his jugular veins, carotid arteries, and larynx severed.

Nancy Haysom was virtually decapitated. Only her spinal cord remained intact. Soering would eventually say he had used her as a shield against her attacking husband, but Elizabeth recalls his saying that he cut her neck before her husband could defend her. Clutching her throat, Nancy Haysom walked into the kitchen, collapsing on to the linoleum floor. She received five other wounds, including a heart puncture more than five inches deep.

In the Marriott parking lot, Elizabeth gave Jens her overcoat to hide his bare legs; he had thrown his clothes in a trash bin near Loose Chippings, then returned there for the white coverlet, taking some Band-Aids from the master bathroom to doctor his wounded hands. The couple made their way through the lobby and up to Room 551. Elizabeth was in shock: Her parents were dead. She was alone, except for Jens. She was his alibi. She would protect him. Her parents were dead. She couldn’t change that. Jens instructed her to clean the blood from the car. He had hit a dog on the way down; she should clean the grill as well. He showered and went to sleep. Elizabeth did as she was told. Again a flurry of disjointed thoughts: Had he really killed them? Would

he kill her too?

Cautiously, Elizabeth asked Jens why he had killed her parents. “He was revved up to the eyeballs,” she says, “and when he said, ‘Because you told me to — I did it for you,’ everything else goes out the window. That changes your whole life. Why else would he have done it?” He pointed to her letters, to her obsessive death wish. It was true; Elizabeth at times had despised her parents. She had wished they would disappear. Was murder what she had in mind?

The couple left the next afternoon, paying their bill with Klaus Soering’s credit card, and arriving in Charlottesville around 3:30 p.m. That night, Elizabeth phoned her parents. No one answered.

April Fools’ Day found Elizabeth and Christine on the floor of their dorm room, using crayons and large paper to create an illuminated manuscript: “The Waste Land,” by T.S. Eliot. They had been musing idly, when one girl said to the other, “April

is the cruelest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land . . .” When they completed their project, the poem’s text was surrounded by an amalgam of designs. As their suitemates looked askance, they taped it to their door, where they often hung works-in-progress.

A mid-morning call home brought no response; Elizabeth would try again very late that night, and again the next day. On Wednesday morning, April 3, she called Annie Massie; it was urgent, she said, so Massie’s maid retrieved her from painting class, and Elizabeth’s call was returned 10 minutes later. She explained the situation, and Annie told her she would look into it.

That afternoon, Annie Massie received another call.

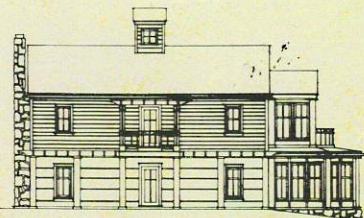
Three Lynchburg ladies had arrived at Loose Chippings at 1:30 for a scheduled game of bridge with Derek Haysom. But the curtains were drawn, and their knock went unanswered though both cars, a 1963 BMW and a 1975 Dodge van, were parked in the driveway.

The card players drove to Mitchell’s convenience store about a mile away, and one woman telephoned Massie, who had a key to the Haysom home. They went en masse to Loose Chippings.

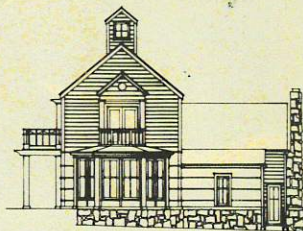
When the slate blue door swung open, Derek Haysom’s body lay in plain view.

In the dim overhead light, Jens Soering was a bloody vision. Wrapped in a white cloth, he was blood-spattered from head to toe.

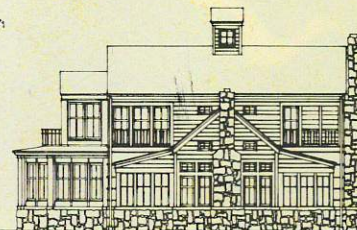
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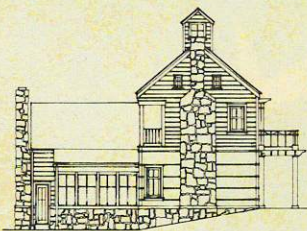
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Area investigators said it was the worst massacre they had ever seen. On the scene for 18 hours, the team, composed of Bedford County authorities, Lynchburg police, and members of the nearby Amherst, Appomattox, and Campbell county sheriff's departments, combed the house for evidence. During the next few weeks, a laser probe was flown in from Florida to search for clues. But months into the investigation, there was still very little physical evidence to go on.

Most of the killer's footprints had been smeared out of the bloody trail that led through the dining room to the kitchen, the living room, the Haysoms' bedroom and into the master bath, where a bathroom cabinet door hung open. Dining room chairs were askew. A blood-red hand print stained one brocade chair seat. On the pegged oak floor, investigators saw what they thought could be a letter V or a horned figure drawn in blood. On the kitchen floor was a Victor mousetrap, curiously spotless, though it rested on a wash of dried blood. Nearby lay Nancy Haysom, her diamond earrings and two gold chains untouched.

The family held a private burial, and a memorial service followed two days later. Elizabeth appeared distraught, and she and her friends kept to themselves. One Lynchburg mourner, a former boxer, noticed that Jens' hands were cut, and that a slight black eye made him look "like he'd been hit with a right cross."

At the Massies' that night, Jens persuaded Elizabeth to sneak into his room. On prescription tranquilizers, she fell into a deep sleep. No doubt feeling she was his now, Jens was able to have intercourse with her for the first time. Elizabeth awakened slowly, and she did not struggle.

A few days later, Elizabeth, like her other family members, was questioned by sheriff's deputies. She told them she and her parents had had a good relationship, and spoke energetically about her father's achievements with Sydney Steel Company and Metropolitan Area Growth Investments in Nova Scotia. She said she and her boyfriend had driven to Washington March 29 in a rented car. She told them she couldn't imagine who had killed her parents.

When Investigator Ricky Gardner spoke to Elizabeth again a week later, he had a few items on the agenda. First of all, had her boyfriend been to Loose Chippings before? He had, she said, on a few occasions when her parents were away. Then there was the matter of the rented car. "Now you knew we'd check this out," Gardner said. "You drove 699 miles that weekend. It's a 240-mile round trip to Washington [from Charlottesville] at the most. That leaves 429

miles." Elizabeth glibly said they had made a detour into Warrenton and gotten lost for two hours.

But an undocumented detour did not close the case. Elizabeth submitted physical evidence — footprints, fingerprints and blood — and tests showed her blood type differed from the "alien blood type" found throughout the house. Her fingerprints were discovered on a vodka bottle, but investigators could not prove she had been there that weekend, and they had nothing to suggest she had committed the acts.

In the coming weeks, Elizabeth and Jens would turn inward, and friends saw less and less of them. With Jens at her side, the wan and puffy-faced Elizabeth said little about her parents' deaths. Those who knew her thought it had been a political assassination; Elizabeth did not speculate. She did, however, criticize local authorities for suspecting her.

That summer, Elizabeth spent a week at the Soerings' Grosse Pointe home before she and Jens traveled to Europe for about a month, as he had wanted to do all along. They returned to Charlottesville for the summer session, subletting a house with several students, where they spent most of their time alone in their upstairs room, watching soap operas or listening to their recently purchased compact disc player. Occasionally, they would descend, their conversation a flurry of Chinese-department and business-school course offerings, which they hoped would give them the skills to found an American investment corporation in China.

In September, Elizabeth Haysom and Christine Kim moved in together as scheduled. "One of the first things she said was, 'I'm not in love with [Jens] anymore,'" but that she feared leaving him because he had threatened her, Christine recalls. Soering took a dormitory room, but was rarely there. "He sort of moved in with me," Elizabeth explains. And for privacy's sake, "I threw him out Wednesdays and Saturdays, which meant he would leave around 1 a.m. and pitch up at 6."

In early October, Bedford investigators Ricky Gardner and Charlie Reid asked to question Soering, who drove to Bedford in his new Volkswagen Scirocco, a car he had ordered in February. They offered him a cup of coffee, which he accepted. They asked him to provide physical evidence, which he refused.

Elizabeth told Christine she thought Soering might have had something to do with her parents' murders. Then she told Christine she was wrong, and that it might have been some Irish terrorists she knew.

Soering began to fear that Gardner was

closing in on him. The couple had considered the 29-year-old deputy a bumpkin; that he didn't know what Luxembourg was or where Cambridge was had amused them. But had Gardner been clever enough to lift Soering's fingerprints from the cup he had used in Bedford?

In the second week of October, the investigators called again to ask Soering for physical evidence. This time, he said yes, but not until midterms were over. They arranged to meet at the University Police Station October 16.

"If you had to choose between self-preservation and loyalty, which would you choose?" Elizabeth Haysom asked Christine Kim. "Self-preservation," Christine answered quickly.

The next day, Christine wished to amend her response. "I think it would depend on the circumstances," she said. As they walked up University Avenue past the Rotunda, Christine turned onto Elliewood, saying good-bye to her friend. It was the last she would see of her for a while.

Elizabeth went back to the house and began her accounting homework. Jens had left Charlottesville that day, expecting her to follow. Stalling for time, Elizabeth had promised to obtain false passports through an invented IRA contact named Rover, whom she said she could reach only from Charlottesville Saturday night.

Pacing her third-floor room, "praying for an answer," she considered her options.

That afternoon, Jens called from the airport in Newark. If Elizabeth did not join him, he threatened, he would provide the Bedford authorities with her letters to him. Surely those would incriminate her.

A call from her brother Howard that evening forced her hand. Something in his tone told her he suspected her. When she left the next day, "it was an act of cowardice more than anything else."

The next time Howard phoned, Christine Kim answered, informing him that Elizabeth and Jens had left Charlottesville, and had told her that they might not return for a day or so.

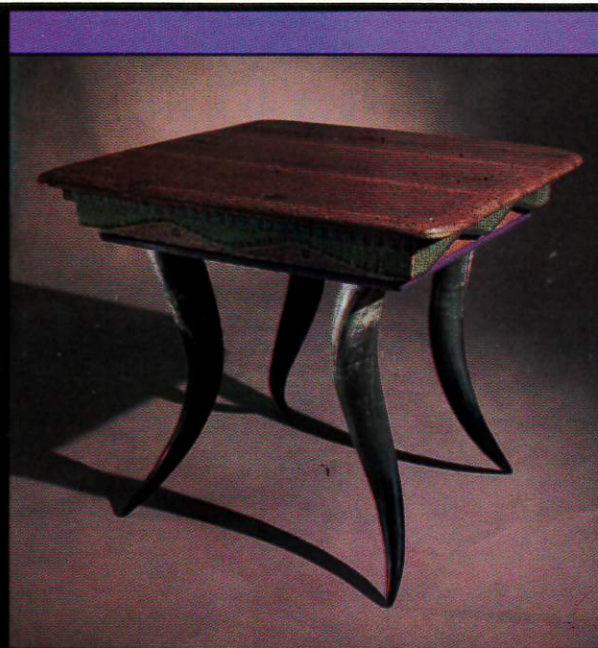
But it wasn't like them to miss classes, and by Tuesday, Christine was concerned. She climbed the stairs to Elizabeth's third-floor room and opened the door. On the bed were three letters.

Christine opened the first one. "Dearest All," Elizabeth began, "What is the point to life if we forsake those who love and trust us most?" What followed was a farewell note with a promise to "remain in contact." But Elizabeth would contact no one.

The second letter was from Soering to his parents.

The third letter Soering addressed to

albemarle



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Officers Reid and Gardner, with photocopies of the other notes for their convenience. "I am afraid you must remain, as Officer Reid put it, 'only 99% sure' of my innocence," Soering wrote.

For the time being, Jens Soering and Elizabeth Haysom had had the last word.

An outraged Howard Haysom immediately informed the Bedford deputies, who quizzed Kim only to discover she knew as little as they did. Within days, they located Soering's Scirocco at Washington National Airport. In March 1986, because her whereabouts were unknown to the family, Elizabeth was removed as ancillary administrator of her parents' wills. Though Haysom says Soering contacted his family, the Soerings' attorney says Jens' location was unknown to them. With no official suspects, and no new evidence to consider, the investigation was at a standstill.

One Wednesday in April, 1986, a young couple walked through the streets of Richmond, England, a London suburb. Hesitating in front of the Marks & Spencer department store, they entered separately, several shopping bags in hand. The man, of medium build with red-brown hair and a thick mustache, exchanged his purchases for about £50 cash and headed for the ladies' department.

Though he passed the woman, dressed fashionably in Sloane Ranger style, her curly brown hair brushing the challis scarf draped over her shoulders, they did not speak, and they made no eye contact. As she loitered nearby, he passed his hands over a rack of women's clothing. Fingering the price tags, he appeared more concerned with cost than the cut of the cloth. Before long, he found what he was looking for.

Handing the clerk his bank identification card, he wrote a check for about £50 and exited the store, joining his companion across the street.

Inside Marks & Spencer, Fijian store detective Seston Welland told the clerk to hold the check. A call to the Richmond Police Station around the corner informed them Welland was in pursuit. A few paces behind the couple, Welland signaled to an off-duty policeman she recognized. When the suspects boarded a tube train, Welland, her off-duty acquaintance, and two of his on-duty colleagues were right behind them. Determined to confront the couple before they reached the center of London, the impromptu investigative team approached the pair, asking them to get off at the next stop; they seemed glad to oblige.

The "cop session" took place on the Kew Gardens railway platform. Canadian student Christopher Platt Noe and his wife,

writer Tara Lucy Noe, said they were taking time away from their studies at Bath University to visit London. Producing Canadian citizenship cards, they handed their checkbooks over for inspection. Suspecting them to be stolen, the officers took the couple to the Richmond Police Station.

In the interrogation room, the suspects calmly insisted they had broken no laws.

"Why are you picking on a couple out on a shopping expedition?" the woman asked.

"Well, why are you buying gents' clothes and you buying ladies' clothes when you're man and wife out together?"

"We like buying each other presents," she said without hesitation.

"And surprising each other," her husband added.

Confronted with the checkbooks, the man insisted they were legit. "We have two accounts with that bank."

Despite these claims, the Richmond police trusted the store detective's sixth sense. If Seston Welland said the couple were pretending to be strangers to each other, they were. But why?

In order to find out, the officers separated the Noes, placed them in holding cells and interrogated them alternately.

Having gotten nowhere with the woman, they honed in on her partner. There was something odd in his demeanor, some chink in his armor the investigators could not point to, but were determined to find.

At last, they were able to break him down. He admitted the fraud, though his confederate would not. But what neither of them said was that the consequences were more threatening than they appeared.

Christopher Noe accompanied police to a one-room flat on Gloucester Place, near the Baker Street of Sherlock Holmes fame. In a corner of the room were a sink and hotplate. Several suitcases were stacked next to a table, and the floor was littered with Marks and Spencer shopping bags. On the bed were a diary, a large red hat, and a long wig. Suddenly, Detective Inspector Kenneth Beever remembers, something just...clicked. Christopher Noe wore a false mustache.

The room took on a shabbiness as evening fell. The officers marveled at the meticulousness of these young criminals, who had labeled each of some 30 shopping bags (containing £50 or £60 worth of clothing) with the date, location, cost, and disguise worn at the time of purchase. Their diary listed arrival and departure times for the subway stops nearest each store. The officers discovered £1,700 in cash, and were curious to find rubber stamps similar to those that customs agents use to stamp passports. Another stamp was emblazoned



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with the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals logo. When Inspector Constable Terry Wright opened one of the suitcases, he realized it would be a long night.

Inside, amidst several business and pornographic magazines, copies of *Soldier of Fortune*, and a large amount of correspondence, were 18 photo i.d.'s, all with various names, ages, and nationalities. But only two different faces appeared.

Those same faces turned up on two genuine passports, a U.S. driver's license and two University of Virginia student identification cards.

At 10:30 that night, a clean-shaven Jens Soering was reunited with his companion in the interrogation room of the Richmond station. As soon as she saw his face, Elizabeth Haysom knew the game was up.

But for Wright and Beever, the game was just beginning.

Haysom and Soering were charged with conspiring to defraud Lloyd's Bank, Midland Bank, and anyone else who thought their checks were valid. In addition to "pulling refunds" at Marks & Spencer, they had purchased traveler's checks in Dover, nipping across the channel to France to report them stolen, then traveling by train to Belgium to cash them. And with the help of a single prop — an RSPCA collection box — they had gone door to door to the tune of another £60 or so. Their total take had been about \$9,000.

It was all in the diary. The two had traveled to Bangkok, where they had special-ordered 100 blank identification cards and several rubber stamps. Once back in England, they made the rounds of universities surrounding London, opening student checking accounts under false names. Elizabeth had many aliases: Julia Alexandra Holte, Caroline Jane Ferrell, Catherine Lynne Peake, Melissa Anne Tayler, Christina May Clarke, Sarah Elizabeth McKensie.

Marks & Spencer's no-argument cash refund policy is widely known in Great Britain, and the many stores in the metropolitan area are easily accessible by underground or bus. Acting quickly, the couple devised a schedule whereby they could cover the most stores in the shortest amount of time without ever repeating a disguise.

The pair had flown to Europe separately, arranging to rendezvous in Paris on the Champs Elysées, then apparently renting a car they intended to drive to Turkey and sell; an auto accident altered their plan, and they went to Austria instead. Elizabeth claims Jens fancied himself a first-rate would-be "assassin," buying expensive drinks in hotel lounges and insisting they

purchase matching luggage in which he packed a tuxedo, a Canon camera, and other luxury items he bought in Europe and Asia with what she says was his father's credit card. (The Soerings maintain they did not know their son's whereabouts until a few weeks after his arrest, their lawyer says; there has been speculation that the credit card belonged to Elizabeth's half-brother Veryan, but, like the Soerings, the Haysoms maintain they had no contact with their sister during this time.) Arriving in England, they came up with a plan: to carry out frauds and accumulate enough cash to start a business.

Throughout their sojourn, Elizabeth says, no matter how much criminal activity they engaged in, no matter how much pornography he indulged in, no matter how much he abused her or she abused herself through drug use, Jens still believed they eventually would lead a normal, law-abiding life together.

Terry Wright had the arduous task of leafing through the reams of correspondence the Richmond police had confiscated. For two days, he pored over the couple's letters to each other, and as he studied the diary in which the two had each made entries, a strong suspicion overtook him. Through Interpol, Wright sent a telex to Bedford Investigator Ricky Gardner.

"Are Elizabeth Haysom's parents dead?" the telex asked. "Were they murdered?" It was just the lead Gardner was looking for. Within a week, on June 6, 1986, Gardner and Bedford Commonwealth's Attorney James Updike Jr. were en route to London.

The Richmond Police conducted the interrogations at their Yankee colleagues' direction. Initially, Elizabeth was uncooperative and often unresponsive, but by June 8 she had become edgy. Late that Sunday evening, she rang the desk sergeant, asking to speak to Jens. Beever said she could not. She asked if Jens had admitted to the murders. Beever said he could not tell her. He closed the cell door and walked away.

Ten minutes later, Beever was summoned again. Elizabeth would tell her side of the story, provided she could speak to him alone - without Gardner.

She told the detective she and Jens had gone to Washington March 29, 1985, and that the next day, he had said he wanted to buy a butterfly knife for his brother's birthday. Told it was illegal to purchase such a weapon in D.C., they were referred to a Maryland store. After lunch, Jens said he was meeting some friends, and dropped her off at the movies, telling her to buy two tickets; she did so without wondering why. He told her to order two room-service dinners in case he returned in time. If not, he

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would pick her up after the midnight movie. This he did, announcing he had killed her parents. Beever asked to tape the story. It was 11:15 p.m.

Joined by Wright, Beever applied the same gentle pressure on Elizabeth that he used with his own young children at home. "You forged his signature [on the room service slip]."

"I did not. That's not an alibi at all," she said. "You know that. I know that."

Agitated, Haysom smoked nervously. "Look, I have enough guilt about egging him on, so to speak, with those wretched letters."

"You knew he was going to kill them," Beever persisted. "You led the poor boy to it."

"All right. I led him into it. I did everything. I did it myself."

"Don't be silly...Come on, now. I can't sit here all night, not getting an answer."

She said she would tell the truth: They had been discussing murder for about a month. Anticipating the confrontation, she said, Jens "went down there with the knife, with the possibility of killing them." She explained her father was possessive of her, that her parents hadn't approved of Jens. "I arranged the alibi," she said, defeated, "great alibi that it was." At the investigators' request, she drew a picture of the knife she said Soering used.

Around 2 a.m. she buzzed again. Fearing she had betrayed Jens, she wanted to set the record straight. "We did it together," she said, "and in some ways I'm more guilty than he is. He loved me beyond reason. It was my will that made him kill my parents, and he wouldn't have done it if he hadn't loved me so much and I him."

"Although I wasn't physically present, I was spiritually there."

During the same few days, Ricky Gardner questioned Jens, who said he had stabbed the Haysoms to death, then thrown two knives away; he would not say whether he had brought the knives with him. Asked whether Elizabeth knew why he was going to Loose Chippings, Soering paused. "I would have to say we had discussed it, but I don't think she or I were clear on what would happen at all."

Had he intended to kill them? "I had certain preconceptions, expected certain things, all right? But God knows, I was not set to kill them."

Jens told the investigators Elizabeth might try to provide an alibi for him, or to share in the guilt. "I'm afraid she might try to fabricate a story," he said. "But I assume the reason she might . . . is to take more blame to do me a favor." He denied her allegation that he had threatened her life if she told the truth.

The couple would serve a 12-month sentence for fraud, communicating mainly by letter. Initially missives of longing, their tone changed as the two began to air their different feelings on how to proceed. From the outset, Jens urged Elizabeth to follow his direction, saying their best bet was "to save my ass and hope somehow that will save yours." At his father's suggestion, Soering had decided to contest extradition to the United States, hoping for a trial in his native West Germany, where he would be tried as a juvenile and face a lighter sentence. Charged with two counts of first-degree and one count of capital murder, Soering was well aware that he faced the death penalty in Bedford County. "If I'm tried in Virginia, they'll fry me, you know, the electric chair," Soering remarked to Beever.

In November 1986, a packet of depositions arrived for Elizabeth from Commonwealth's Attorney Updike. In it were copies of the photographs investigators had taken at the murder scene. Face to face with the enormity of the act she tried to block from her mind, Elizabeth was horrified. She felt accountable for what had happened. After all, Jens said he had done it for her. What other motive would he have for stabbing two people he scarcely knew? Elizabeth began to fear the charges in the United States.

"I don't think you have anything to worry about," Jens wrote her, "especially since you're not even guilty." But in a December 1986 letter, she surprised him: She would not contest extradition, and she intended to plead guilty. "To be incarcerated for the rest of my life is utterly meaningless; I am engulfed by guilt, imprisoned by my own torments." By the time of their last court appearance together in February, Jens had to be restrained, so enraged was he by Elizabeth's decision.

Her extradition was approved on April 15, 1987, her 23rd birthday. She arrived at the Bedford County Jail on May 8, facing 20 years to life on each count of first-degree murder. Declared indigent, she was assigned two attorneys, Bedford's R. Andrew Davis, and Lynchburg's Hugh J.M. Jones III, and in preparation for her late-August trial, was examined by the University of Virginia's Blue Ridge Hospital Forensic Psychiatry Unit. She cooperated only to a point.

On August 24, at 8:30 a.m., Elizabeth Roxanne Haysom ascended the steps of the Bedford County Courthouse. Flanked by a bailiff and Sheriff Carl Wells, she moved slowly, her carriage regal, her gaze oblivious to the crowd of reporters and on-lookers.

She was not safe, however, from media cameras once inside the courtroom, where

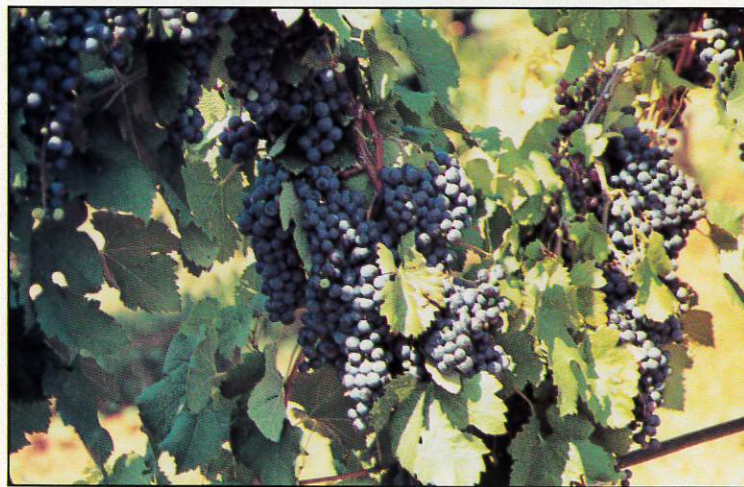
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videotape and still-photography equipment was set up as part of an ongoing experiment in the Virginia court system.

When proceedings began, Elizabeth sat frozen between her two lawyers, who were clad alike in tan summer suits and loafers. When she stood to enter her plea, she spoke so quietly that Circuit Court Judge William Sweeney asked her to raise her voice. "Guilty," she answered, once for each count of first-degree murder, "as an accessory before the fact."

Her plea surprised outsiders, but to most local observers, horrified she had been involved at all, it was exactly what they had hoped for. Because the community deserved to know, Sweeney said, he would permit Commonwealth's Attorney Updike to present his case in detail. Despite her guilty plea, Elizabeth could not escape hearing the story of her parents' murders once again, from the discovery of their bodies, with blood alcohol contents of .22, to the co-defendants' disappearance.

Updike reminded the court that Elizabeth had said in a police interview a year earlier, "I knew I couldn't do it, so when Jens said he'd do it, I didn't say no." He said Elizabeth had tried to implicate family and friends, and that she had lied on many occasions. Her and Jens' letters were read by Terry Wright, who with Ken Beever had traveled to Bedford to testify.

This time, Elizabeth could not avoid the eerie passages her boyfriend had penned during the 1984 Christmas season. "By the way, were I to meet your parents, I have the ultimate 'weapon,'" Wright read. Much of the document concentrates on mind control, and, taken in context, this seems to be the possible "weapon" in question. But in other passages, the meaning is less clear. "My God, how I've got the dinner scene planned out," and, "You know that certain 'instrument' for a certain 'operation' on somebody's relatives?" he asks himself. "use it on yourself."

When Elizabeth finally perused Jens' letter, she read for the first time that "every man is a potential 'war criminal,'" and has within him the impetus "to crush. This is the big horror," Jens wrote, "the taste of your ubiquitous enemy's blood that you drank in your sleep and drink every night."

"I have not explored the side of me that wishes to crush — I have yet to kill."

The defense entered only one piece of evidence at the close of the second day: a letter Elizabeth had written to attorney Drew Davis on June 25. "I do not wish to shirk or evade my charges with clever courtroom battles, nor do I wish to excuse or justify any role which I did play," she wrote. "This is not a matter to be decided by the Code of Virginia. There are prin-

ciples at stake which are more important for me than a verdict."

Outside the courtroom, Updike told reporters he would seek the maximum sentence: life in prison.

Court would resume for a sentencing hearing on October 6, when a pre-sentencing report would be entered and the defense could offer mitigating evidence.

Elizabeth Haysom's diagnostic sessions at Blue Ridge Hospital continued. Having stated her guilt, Elizabeth "seemed to feel she had nothing to lose," psychiatrist Lisa Hovermale recalls. "My initial impression [before talking with her] was that she was like Lady Macbeth and Jens was this schlepp who got schlepped along into something," she says. "It wasn't until after she pleaded guilty that I began to get an explanation" of some details of her confessions.

Jens had schooled her on what to say, Hovermale explains. "She was tutored in how to incriminate herself, and she did so willingly." Once these explanations surfaced, Hovermale found "no gross inconsistencies" in her statements. After much consultation and fact-checking, and a battery of tests, an identifiable psychological portrait emerged.

On the first day of the sentencing hearing, Elizabeth Haysom was as pale as the peach-colored dress she wore, and its long sleeves hid her handcuffed wrists as she entered the courthouse, a brown paper lunch bag in her hands. Groggy with a feverish cold, she shook hunch-shouldered in her chair as the first witness took the stand.

Several relatives and friends testified, and in turn a Bedford jail matron and a retired minister spoke as well. All said Elizabeth was remorseful, urging a sentence that would allow her to be rehabilitated and returned to society.

But it was Johnny Horton, an English construction foreman in snakeskin shoes and leather jacket and tie, who offered the most unusual analysis. A co-founder of Narcotics Anonymous in Great Britain, Horton was contacted in January 1987, when Haysom decided to stop using the drugs and alcohol readily available in the English prison system. A former addict himself, Horton had been jailed for armed robbery, drugs, and attempted murder. Having met with her about 30 times, he was sure "Liz" was sincere. "I used to be a con man," he said in a cockney accent, "and I can tell when someone else is doing the same. You can't con a con."

In cross-examination, Updike pointed out that it was not until Haysom realized she would be extradited to stand trial that she contacted N.A. — was this just an attempt to appear reformed?

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"You have to start sometime," Horton retorted.

To the surprise of many, Elizabeth Haysom was next to take the stand. She would testify for a total of five hours.

Many of the questions centered around the letters she and Jens had exchanged. "I overindulged myself in resentment and anger," she said of the Christmas epistle. "I got carried away — it was surreal, nonsensical, and ridiculous." In Elizabeth's own voice, the same passages Wright had read at the August hearing became the morbidly metaphorical whimsy she says she intended. The suggestion of voodoo, she said, "was a shot at Jens. I'm mocking him and his theories, not thinking about my parents." As for his response, she maintained that she had never gotten beyond the first several pages, and had seen the remainder for the first time just before the August hearing.

Elizabeth said a West German Embassy employee had contacted her, sending money and books, and telephoning to say Jens loves and needs her, that "his life is in my hands." (To the Soerings' knowledge, the allegation that this person is acting in an official capacity is false, their attorney says; and in fact, the employee contacted this reporter through a third party to deny that her actions were official.)

Updike grilled her about her childhood: Hadn't she enjoyed boarding school? Didn't she tell Howard the incident in Switzerland was not rape but indecent exposure? (She didn't recall talking with him about it, but their relationship was not close, and it is unlikely she would choose to confide in him.)

Updike then turned to another issue the pre-sentencing report had raised: whether Elizabeth engaged in a full-blown sexual relationship with her mother.

"I didn't put it that way," she said.

Elizabeth said her "aggressively affectionate mother had frequently slept in the same bed with her. "She was a lonely woman." This exchange was the only one that caused Elizabeth to abandon her even-tempered persona. "I don't think it's relevant," she said hotly. "If the newspapers choose to interpret it in sordid ways, that is their filthy mind. She did not sexually abuse me."

Months later, Elizabeth said although there had been no "genital contact" with her mother, "basically, it was two people cuddling in bed." This had gone on, she added, from the time she was little until the last weekend they spent together. "She abused my sexuality," Elizabeth explained. "Her behavior confused me, made me feel like a freak."

At some point, Elizabeth was questioned

about some nude photographs her mother had apparently taken of her when she was 19 or 20; though she had earlier contended she had been forced to pose, she downplayed their significance once she was under oath. Annie Massie, taking the stand for the prosecution, speculated the pictures were intended as models for Nancy's paintings.

Elizabeth did not deny she wanted her parents out of her life. "I had this ridiculous fantasy of their being dead," she said. "But not murdered."

She said it never occurred to her March 30 that Jens was going to kill her parents. People don't go around killing people. Jens Soering "acted of his own free will, she said. He had a four-hour drive."

Updike asked her to read an April 1985 letter to Jens. "The death of my parents freed me to choose to whom to give my love," she read. "I thought we did it so I could be free." At the time, Elizabeth told the court, Jens had persuaded her that she had actively encouraged him to kill her parents. But "it is my view today that Jens Soering would eventually kill somebody, but because of things I said and wrote to him, he killed my parents." When his first outburst of anger at the Haysoms had shaken her so in February, she had done "absolutely nothing, and that is why I am guilty," she said. "I feel like I should have known, or did know, or could have done something.

"I deserve life for what I've done."

Her testimony concluded, the defense then called Dr. Robert Showalter, who testified on behalf of the Blue Ridge Forensic Psychiatry unit he oversees.

Elizabeth Haysom, though "bright, competent," and sane, has "significant symptoms of psychological dysfunction," Dr. Showalter said. Referring to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, he diagnosed a Borderline Personality Disorder, "a kaleidoscopic confluence of at least three or four types of psychiatric symptomatology."

"Mmmm. That was a mouthful, wasn't it?" Updike quipped sarcastically.

"It's a very disturbing diagnosis," the doctor replied, proceeding to list the symptoms. "A pattern of unstable relationships" — as with her "seductively attentive, critically rejecting Mom," with Melinda, her "understanding, possessive friend," and Jens, with whom she "fluctuated between dependence and manipulation."

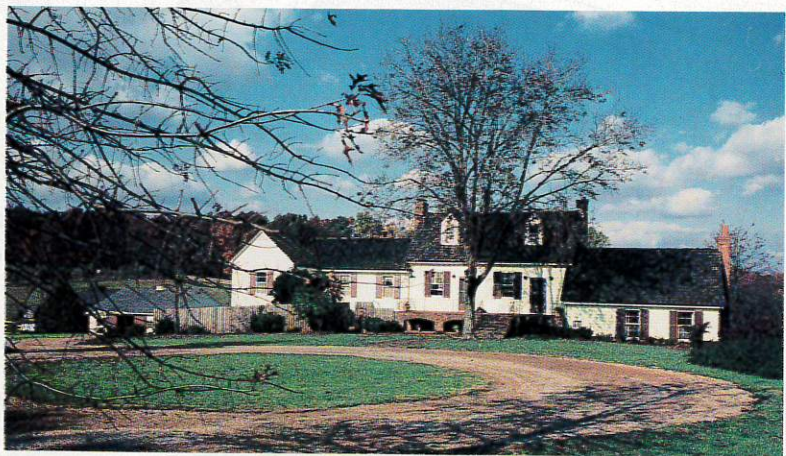
Impulsiveness — evident in her drug abuse and her 1983 disappearance. And identity disturbance — problems with "self-image, sexual orientation, and values."

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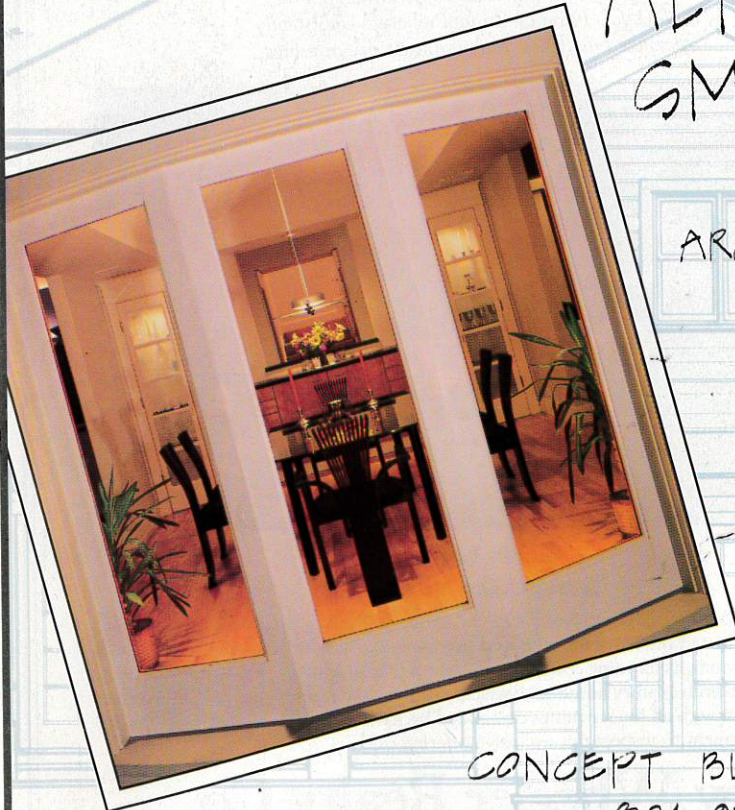


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"bizarre, fanciful, metaphorical thinking." For her, letters were an emotional outlet, not a means of "transacting business."

"The alibi," Showalter said, "was created after the fact."

Indeed, investigators had found no movie tickets among the co-defendants' numerous mementos. The pair had not saved the room-service receipt with the \$35.11 charge suggesting two meals might have been ordered the night of March 30. With the possibility of a large savings account just three weeks away, Elizabeth had more to gain with her parents alive for her 21st birthday. And had they waited for Jens' Volkswagen to arrive, there would have been no rental car mileage record to foil their plan.

In his final statement, Urdike questioned Elizabeth's remorse. "I'm sure sittin' down there [in jail] she's quite sorry," he said. But if she had been remorseful, why did she attend the funeral with Jens? Assist in his escape? Follow him to Europe? Make love to him?

"I cannot imagine a crime more vile than killing the person who gave birth to you," he told the court.

Haysom was not accused of murdering her parents. But in Virginia, accessory before the fact to first-degree murder carries the same weight as first-degree murder itself. In the eyes of the commonwealth, Elizabeth Haysom was a murderer.

Judge Sweeney returned within an hour to read the sentence. "Simply stated, I think that her parents would be alive today except for what she did and didn't do," Sweeney read. "I sentence you to 45 years in prison on each charge, the sentences to run consecutively, a total of 90 years."

Within a week, she was transferred to the Women's State Prison Facility in Goochland, Va.

At Goochland, a facility that looks more like a farm or college than a prison, Elizabeth is baffled by her circumstances at times. "I wake up in the morning and say, 'This is so bizarre.' It's beyond comprehension." The Commonwealth's case against her rested on her letters to Jens — "very intimate correspondence," she says, "yet it never mentions murder or killing." Though she says she did not actively plot to kill her parents, "a sufficient number of people believe it to make it true."

And yet she pleaded guilty. Said she deserved life.

"I think she threw herself on the sword," Blue Ridge psychiatric social worker Janet Warren says. "When someone dies, we feel guilty about all the things we said, even if they aren't murdered."

"But can you be punished legally for

psychological guilt?"

"I don't know why I said I deserved life," says Elizabeth Haysom. "Drew [Davis] said I'm my own worst enemy. I don't know what got into me. I tend to agree with people." In conversation, she laughs easily and often, crow's-feet forming around her blue eyes, her face far wearier than its 26 years. "But someone gave me a 200-year perpetual calendar, and I get a chuckle out of it because my sentence is a small chunk of that." In Virginia, a prisoner is eligible for parole after he has served either one-sixth of his sentence or 12 years, whichever is shorter.

But if Judge William Sweeney has anything to say about it, she will serve "a substantial portion of her sentence," a feeling he holds so strongly that for the first time in his career, he wrote the Virginia parole board to say so.

Offering a scenario for March 30, 1985, Sweeney says he imagines the couple discussed the idea of murder, but "as far as the acts themselves, I don't think she planned all that out. It was like 'Double-Dare You,'" he explains. "I think she was shocked he took the dare."

But did Elizabeth Haysom knowingly encourage Jens Soering to kill her parents?

"If not for her participation — whatever that was — Derek and Nancy Haysom would be alive," Sweeney maintains. "I don't think it makes a difference — knowingly or not."

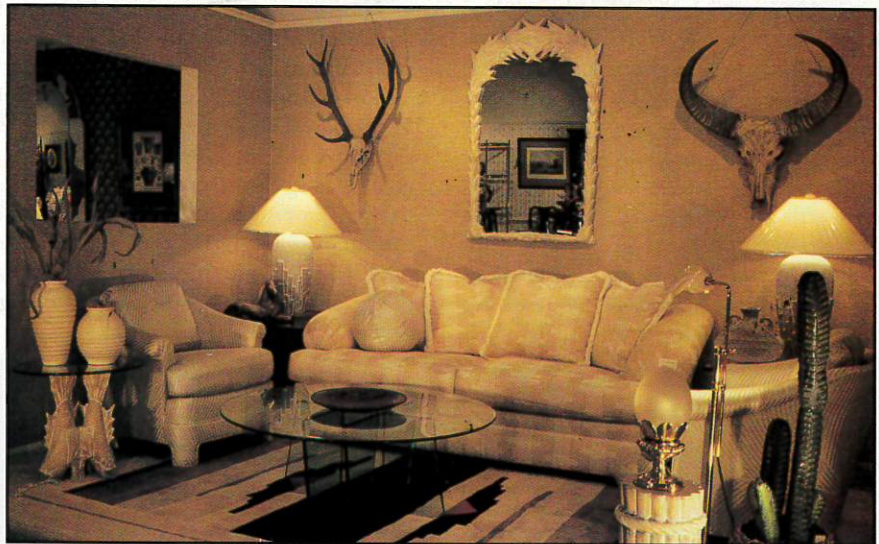
"That's more or less saying she can be guilty of her fantasies," Dr. Hovemale said in February 1988. Elizabeth's letters "were an expression of normal adolescent feelings. If she had taken them to her psychiatrist, she would have gotten a pat on the back, but to take them to Jens..."

The couple's inner tortures resonated as they found comfort in the illusion of oneness — the mythical inseparability of love — that had sustained them as children. "She and Jens were at the same level of psychopathology," the psychiatrist explains, "the same level of psychological disarray."

Alone in her cell, free of the pretense of the "obligatory shelf of Penguin classics" of her academic years, Elizabeth Haysom says she has reached beneath her persona to discover she is "the same person I always was."

In some ways, this is true. "Some really good men" have written to say they "know exactly how I felt," she says, and by January 1988, she had begun "a relationship" with one of them, spending her two hours of weekend visiting time getting to know him. He wrote almost every day, she told another male correspondent, whereas she received his letters only once a week.

And she is still an inconsistent storyteller, either because her past drug



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abuse has left her befuddled, or because her mind is simply playing back the truth as she would like it to be; it is hard to know for sure whether her latest version of her life will be the final one.

There have been changes, too. She has lost everything, disappointed everyone. Her parents are dead. "In some ways, it's all been worth it," she says. "I suppose there are easier ways to come to this," she begins, "but how do you describe the euphoria of truly independent thinking? Of reaching conclusions not dictated to you by well-

meaning parents or devoted soul mates?"

Having walked backward into the autonomy of adulthood, Elizabeth remains safe behind the protective walls of yet another controlled environment. "Being here doesn't make me a better person," she says. "It's not any kind of punishment, it's just running away from life." She recalls ordering flowers for an ailing friend during the summer in the Bedford jail. "You murdering bitch," the florist had said. "That's the punishment," Elizabeth says. "Being in prison is protection from that."

It irks her that Jens fails to understand her grief. "Jens has never once said, 'I'm sorry.' He said, 'Sorry we're involved in all this trouble,' but he never said, 'I'm sorry the most important people in your life are killed.'"

"I loved them," she says sadly. "They were my whole world. I feel that hole very much."

When the sentencing hearing had concluded, Lisa Hovermale sat down for a quiet word with her patient. She told Elizabeth she wanted to give her a hug, but that she was not going to, that it was not her job to comfort her.

Not surprisingly, Elizabeth remembers it differently. She remembers the doctor throwing her arms around her and bursting into tears.

But wasn't that unprofessional behavior for a psychiatrist?

Elizabeth Haysom raises her perfect eyebrows, delicate shoulders shrugging as she widens her eyes.

For more than three years, Jens Soering fought extradition to the United States from a London prison. Because a capital murder conviction could result in a death sentence, Soering's counsel argued that Great Britain, which has outlawed capital punishment, should refuse extradition unless given assurances that Soering's charges be reduced. When most appeals had been exhausted, Soering approached the European Commission on Human Rights, which voted that time on death row could result in a violation of Soering's human rights. After much protest, Bedford's Commonwealth's Attorney agreed to seek only first-degree murder charges, and Soering was returned to Virginia in early January.

Once here, Soering continued to hedge, and the trial date was moved to March 8 and then, as of this writing, to June 1. Soering's attorney moved to ban cameras from the courtroom; this request was denied. Neaton then asked that the trial be moved from Bedford County or heard by an outside jury; this was granted. Finally, Soering's counsel requested that Judge Sweeney, who had met the Haysoms, recuse himself; as this issue goes to press, the judge has yet to decide this issue.

Updike too has hedged, arguing that the capital-murder charge should not be reduced.

Whenever and wherever the case comes to trial, Elizabeth Haysom has said she will testify against Jens Soering. "I want him brought to justice."

Ed. Note: This article is based on court testimony and evidence as well as interviews with more than 30 people, including Elizabeth Haysom and several other principals in the case.

Amy Lemley was an Echols Scholar in the University of Virginia's Class of 1987.

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