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**'Dark Passage' Author**  
**'Black Dahlia' Murder Analyzed by David Goodis**

Although David Goodis has written a great number of murder-mystery series, he is best known for his recent novel, "Dark Passage", which appeared as a serial in the Saturday Evening Post and is being filmed now as a Warner Brothers' motion picture. For many years a student of criminal psychology, Goodis formulates his conscious. He states that in his many years of obtaining first-hand information of homicide cases, he has been particularly interested on the deeper urges which motivate murder. In the following article he offers his own personal analysis of the "Black Dahlia" case, based on a careful study of all facts thus far brought to light.

By David Goodis

In algebraic equation, the unknown quantity is “X”. To arrive at “X” we manipulate the known mathematical symbols until a certain number fulfills all the qualifications of “X”.

The same applies to murder. In a murder case, “X” is, of course, the identity of the killer. But to discover that identification, to establish irrevocable proof, homicide experts must run the gamut of procuring evidence, both concrete and circumstantial, in addition to demonstrating motive and intent.

Thus far the “Black Dahlia” case offers a perplexing problem as regards to latter elements. This is due mainly to the fact that the victim was no ordinary personality. In the “Black Dahlia” murder, the road that leads to “X” is the road that winds through dark and shadowy depths – the road of the subconscious.

In Subconscious mind

There was something in the subconscious mind of Elizabeth Short that ultimately found its way to external display. Whatever this was, whatever ghastly, bizarre form it took, it resulted in abnormal, maniacal murder.

It was a sadistic murder. The killer actually enjoyed what he was doing. He took his time about it. He gloated over it. When he was finished, he was satisfied and pleased. Yet a significant fact presents itself – he did not go select a second victim.

This leads to an important assumption.

The killer was no ordinary sadistical killer, such as “Jack the Ripper” of London, whose victims were many, who continued his blood thirsty business even as the police combed the city in frantic search.

In the “Black Dahlia” affair, the killer demonstrates extreme psychotic tendencies – the kind of tendencies that can be brought to surface only by excessive external stimulation. This therefore, becomes a case where in two unusual personalities met each other, lit the abnormal effect on each other, lit the fuse for a box of mental dynamite.

INSANE AT THE TIME

This killer had that dynamite inside himself. It may have been there for years – dormant, waiting- it probable that he didn’t even know it was there. The way he went at his task shows conclusively that he was completely insane at the time. But when the fit – and it was probably a schizophrenic fit – had reached its breaking-point, the killer was no longer a raving madman, but a cold, calculating murderer. He took strategic steps to cover his crime. He washed away the blood, he changed his clothing, he obliterated his tracks methodically, cleverly.

Pure logic points to the fact that the victim was murdered in a deserted shack or remote area, probably on the outskirts of the city. We know, therefore, that the killer had a car. And as we again

examine the subconscious mind that one night he would meet someone whom he would want to kill in precisely the same manner he eventually killed Elizabeth Short.

He knew exactly what he would do if and when that meeting occurred. He would lure the girl into his car. He would take her to that “place”. He would slaughter her. All this, mind you, in his subconscious.

#### APPROXIMATE PICTURE

To submit an exact description of what took place that night, is, of course, impossible. But it isn't too difficult to draw up an approximate picture of the proceedings.

The man – and I am certain it was a man – met her on the street or in a bar. They talked. They found each other interesting. Somewhere along the path of their conversation they fell into the channel of an erotic subject. It grew. Within the mind of the man it expanded and formed a chain between the conscious and the subconscious.

Suddenly he was insane – completely. But Elizabeth Short did not notice this. She was intrigued by the man. There was something about him that magnetized her particular personality. When he invited her to his “place”, she offered no argument.

Now just what happened to set off the spark? What gesture did she make? Perhaps an unusual way of lighting a cigarette or smoking. Perhaps the way she held a highball glass. Perhaps the pattern of her dress. Or the way her hair was arranged. Some “little thing” that has utterly no significance in the lives of normal people, but which was magnified a million times in the distorted mind of the killer.

#### GESTURE OR WORD

It amounts to a choice – whether it was a gesture or the spoken word that started him off, it could have been something like this –

“...a lot of blood.”

“...seen a dog tearing a cat to pieces.”

“...never heard nothing like that before.”

Her subconscious mind has expressed something that made contact with his subconscious.

She didn't know it, but at that moment she was literally asking to be murdered.

And the murderer himself didn't know it, but for a long, long time he had been looking for the “Black Dahlia”. It was the tragic misfortune of Elizabeth Short that she fitted all the eerie requirements.

This is a case wherein the killer must be baited rather than hunted. And this brings us back to the algebraic equation. Our symbols, however, do not involve the usual technical factors of murder, such as the geography of the crime, the time element, the material pieces of evidence. Inasmuch as this case was activated by an abnormal mind, the process of deduction and ultimate arrest must be analyzed with the ultimate aim of placing her in a psychological category of micro- proportions.

## IN NATURE OF TRAP

This category must be arranged in the nature of a trap. As much as the killer wants his freedom, he would much prefer to meet another "Black Dahlia". He probably doubts that another exists. But suppose another one did? And suppose he found out about it? Would he suspect that this was a trap? Probably. And yet his lunacy would be dominant. He wouldn't be able to resist the temptation.

Sooner or later he would be sufficiently stimulated to catch a look at this new "Dahlia". Upon seeing her, upon checking to make sure he was on safe ground, he would approach her just as he approached Elizabeth Short. A wire-recorder, carefully arranged, would listen to the ensuing conversation leading to the ultimate invitation to visit the "place". Plain clothes men would move in at the feasible moment.

This technique of arriving at "x" is probably the most difficult and complex in the book. It must be handled not only with delicacy, but with hair-line precision. Either the equation balances or doesn't balance. There's no guess work in algebra.