



Pauline Parker and Juliet Hulme.

“Let’s kill mummy”

by R. Marc Kantrowitz, March 7, 2025

At 16, Pauline Parker found love. Fortunately for Parker, the feeling was mutual, with the year-younger Juliet Hulme returning her strong affections.

Meeting in New Zealand’s Christchurch Girls High School, the two created an intricate fantasy world in which only they existed. When their parents realized their bond, something had to be done. After all, it was the 1950s, and such strong same-sex attractions were forbidden signs of mental instability.

When Hulme’s parents decided to leave the country, the girls were thrown into a tizzy. They desperately wished to remain together but thought that Pauline’s mother would never allow her to leave with Juliet. To address the roadblock, they devised a remedy: murder.

Pauline Parker came from a blue-collar background, with parents who worked jobs in which their hands got dirty. Juliet Hulme, born in London in 1938 and emigrating to New Zealand a decade later, conversely led a more upscale life. Her physicist father worked as a rector for the University of Canterbury, and the family lived in a grand house.

Both girls suffered at times from debilitating childhood illnesses: Pauline from osteomyelitis, a bone infection, and Juliet from tuberculosis, which often required in-patient care and moving to warmer locales. Bonding over their ailments and sharing a love of books, the two came together.

In 1954, Juliet's family life hit turbulent waters with her father experiencing problems on his job and her mother engaged in a scandalous extramarital affair. Deciding to leave New Zealand, her parents further thought it wise to send Juliet, ostensibly for health reasons, to relatives in South Africa where the weather was warmer.

With their world crumbling, Juliet and Pauline plotted to stay together but came to the conclusion that Pauline's mother, Honorah, would never allow it. A plan was hatched.

On a serene Thursday afternoon, June 22, the weather was mild. Honorah and her daughter, Pauline, were sipping tea with Pauline's best friend, Juliet. They finished and the trio went on a leisurely walk down a secluded wooded path. Pauline dropped something. Honorah bent down to pick it up. As she did so, a broken brick encased in an old stocking rained down upon her, repeatedly and fatally.

The two girls ran back to the tea kiosk, screaming, "Please help us! Mummy is hurt, covered in blood!" The police came quickly. The girls' story of an accident quickly gave way to the physical evidence suggesting otherwise, including the extensive injuries suffered by Honorah and a half brick encased in a bloody stocking found under a nearby tree.

Pauline's diary sealed their fate. "[We] are thrilled by the idea. Naturally we feel a trifle nervous but the pleasure of anticipation is great. ... We decided

to use a rock in a stocking, rather than a sandbag. We discussed the moider [sic]. I feel keyed up, as if I were planning a surprise party.”

As for her cohort, Pauline wrote that “Juliet [is] worried but does not disagree violently.”

Murder charges were brought.

The trial, with backdrops of lesbianism, insanity, and the perceived precipitous decline of juvenile morality, mesmerized a stunned nation, in which outrages of such a magnitude did not ordinarily exist.



The two were found guilty but too young to be given the death penalty and were sent to separate prisons. After five years, they were released, changed their names, and moved away. Anonymity was their fate, if not salvation.

But then a film about the sensational murder, starring a soon-to-be major star making her debut, came out 40 years later.

Kate Winslet starred as Juliet, Melanie Lynskey played Pauline. The movie, “Heavenly Creatures,” was a well-received hit, winning over audiences and reviewers alike. With notoriety came curiosity.

Whatever became of the two young girls who seemingly had disappeared? Soon, the media sleuths were on their trail.

Epilogue

After their trial, the two girls apparently never saw each other again.

Pauline had moved to a small town in England, where she kept a low profile while running a children's riding school as well as working as a librarian. She married, had a son, and found religion. When she was outed, she moved to an even more remote village, this one in Scotland.

Juliet, who never wed, traveled around a bit more before also moving to Scotland. She worked a variety of jobs before settling into what she most loved, writing. In 1979, she published her first novel. Scores followed, with her becoming an acclaimed New York Times best-selling author with mountains of fictional crime-related books sold to millions of adoring readers.

No one realized that the author they so loved, Anne Perry, was the murderous Juliet Hulme.

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