JEFFERY

DEAVER

ESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *THE COLD MOO*

THE SLEEPING DOLL

A NOVEL

THE SLEEPING DOLL

JEFFERY DEAVER

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After changes upon changes, we are more or less the same.
After changes we are more or less the same.

—Paul Simon, "The Boxer"

THE SLEEPING DOLL

SEPTEMBER 13, 1999

'SON OF MANSON' FOUND GUILTY IN CROYTON FAMILY MURDERS

SALINAS, CALIFORNIA—Daniel Raymond Pell, 35, was convicted today on four counts of first-degree murder and one count of manslaughter by a Monterey County jury after only five hours of deliberations.

"Justice has been done," lead prosecutor James J. Reynolds told reporters after the verdict was announced. "This is an extremely dangerous man, who committed horrendous crimes."

Pell became known as the "Son of Manson" because of the parallels between his life and that of convicted murderer Charles Manson, who in 1969 was responsible for the ritualistic slayings of the actress Sharon Tate and several other individuals in Southern California. Police found many books and articles about Manson in Pell's house following his arrest.

The murder convictions were for the May 7 deaths of William Croyton, his wife and two of their three children in Carmel, Calif., 120 miles south of San Francisco. The manslaughter charge arose from the death of James Newberg, 24, who lived with Pell and accompanied him to the Croyton house the night of the murders. The prosecutor asserted that Newberg initially intended to assist in the murders but was then killed by Pell after he changed his mind.

Croyton, 56, was a wealthy electrical engineer and computer innovator. His Cupertino, Calif., company, in the heart of Silicon Valley, produces state-of-the-art programs that are found in much of the world's most popular personal computer software.

Because of Pell's interest in Manson, there was speculation that the killings had ideological overtones, as did the murders for which Manson was convicted, but robbery was the most likely reason for the break-in, Reynolds said. Pell has dozens of prior convictions for shoplifting, burglary and robbery, dating back to his teens.

One child survived the attack, a daughter, Theresa, 9. Pell overlooked the girl, who was in her bed asleep and hidden by her toys. Because of this, she became known as the "Sleeping Doll."

Like Charles Manson, the criminal he admired, Pell exuded a dark charisma and attracted a group of devoted and fanatical followers, whom he called his "Family"—a term borrowed from the Manson clan—and over whom he exercised absolute control. At the time of the Croyton murders this group included Newberg and three women, all living together in a shabby house in Seaside, north of Monterey, Calif. They are Rebecca Sheffield, 26, Linda Whitfield, 20, and Samantha McCoy, 19. Whitfield is the daughter of Lyman Whitfield, president and CEO of Santa Clara Bank and Trust, headquartered in Cupertino, the fourth largest banking chain in the state.

The women were not charged in the deaths of the Croytons or Newberg but were convicted of multiple counts of larceny, trespass, fraud and receiving stolen property. Whitfield was also convicted of hampering an investigation, perjury and destroying evidence. As part of a plea bargain, Sheffield and McCoy were sentenced to three years in prison, Whitfield to four and a half.

Pell's behavior at trial also echoed Charles Manson's. He would sit motionless at the defense table and stare at jurors and witnesses in apparent attempts to intimidate them.

There were reports that he believed he had psychic powers. The defendant was removed once from the courtroom after a witness broke down under his gaze.

The jury begins sentencing deliberations tomorrow. Pell could get the death penalty.

Monday

Chapter 1

The interrogation began like any other.

Kathryn Dance entered the interview room and found the forty-three-year-old man sitting at a metal table, shackled, looking up at her closely. Subjects always did this, of course, though never with such astonishing eyes. Their color was a blue unlike sky or ocean or famous gems.

"Good morning," she said, sitting down across from him.

"And to you," replied Daniel Pell, the man who eight years ago had knifed to death four members of a family for reasons he'd never shared. His voice was soft.

A slight smile on his bearded face, the small, sinewy man sat back, relaxed. His head, covered with long, gray-black hair, was cocked to the side. While most jailhouse interrogations were accompanied by a jingling soundtrack of handcuff chains as subjects tried to prove their innocence with broad, predictable gestures, Daniel Pell sat perfectly still.

To Dance, a specialist in interrogation and kinesics—body language—Pell's demeanor and posture suggested caution, but also confidence and, curiously, amusement. He wore an orange jumpsuit, stenciled with "Capitola Correctional Facility" on the chest and "Inmate" unnecessarily decorating the back.

At the moment, though, Pell and Dance were not in Capitola but, rather, a secure interview room at the county courthouse in Salinas, forty miles away.

Pell continued his examination. First, he took in Dance's own eyes—a green complementary to his blue and framed by square, black-rimmed glasses. He then regarded her French-braided, dark blond hair, the black jacket and beneath it the thick, unrevealing white blouse. He noted too the empty holster on her hip. He was meticulous and in no hurry. (Interviewers

and interviewees share mutual curiosity. She told the students in her interrogation seminars, "They're studying you as hard as you're studying them—usually even harder, since they have more to lose.")

Dance fished in her blue Coach purse for her ID card, not reacting as she saw a tiny toy bat, from last year's Halloween, that either twelve-year-old Wes, his younger sister, Maggie, or possibly both conspirators had slipped into the bag that morning as a practical joke. She thought: How's this for a contrasting life? An hour ago she was having breakfast with her children in the kitchen of their homey Victorian house in idyllic Pacific Grove, two exuberant dogs at their feet begging for bacon, and now here she sat, across a very different table from a convicted murderer.

She found the ID and displayed it. He stared for a long moment, easing forward. "Dance. Interesting name. Wonder where it comes from. And the California Bureau . . . what is that?"

"Bureau of Investigation. Like an FBI for the state. Now, Mr. Pell, you understand that this conversation is being recorded?"

He glanced at the mirror, behind which a video camera was humming away. "You folks think we really believe that's there so we can fix up our hair?"

Mirrors weren't placed in interrogation rooms to hide cameras and witnesses—there are far better high-tech ways to do so—but because people are less inclined to lie when they can see themselves.

Dance gave a faint smile. "And you understand that you can withdraw from this interview anytime you want and that you have a right to an attorney?"

"I know more criminal procedure than the entire graduating class of Hastings Law rolled up together. Which is a pretty funny image, when you think about it."

More articulate than Dance expected. More clever too.

The previous week, Daniel Raymond Pell, serving a life sentence for the 1999 murders of William Croyton, his wife and two of their children, had approached a fellow prisoner due to be released from Capitola and tried to bribe him to run an errand after he was free. Pell told him about some evidence he'd disposed of in a Salinas well years ago and explained that he was worried the items would implicate him in the unsolved murder of a wealthy farm owner. He'd read recently that Salinas was revamping its water system. This had jogged his memory and he'd grown concerned that the evidence would be discovered. He wanted the prisoner to find and dispose of it.

Pell picked the wrong man to enlist, though. The short-timer spilled to

the warden, who called the Monterey County Sheriff's Office. Investigators wondered if Pell was talking about the unsolved murder of farm owner Robert Herron, beaten to death a decade ago. The murder weapon, probably a claw hammer, was never found. The Sheriff's Office sent a team to search all the wells in that part of town. Sure enough, they found a tattered T-shirt, a claw hammer and an empty wallet with the initials *R.H.* stamped on it. Two fingerprints on the hammer were Daniel Pell's.

The Monterey County prosecutor decided to present the case to the grand jury in Salinas, and asked CBI Agent Kathryn Dance to interview him, in hopes of a confession.

Dance now began the interrogation, asking, "How long did you live in the Monterey area?"

He seemed surprised that she didn't immediately begin to browbeat. "A few years."

"Where?"

"Seaside." A town of about thirty thousand, north of Monterey on Highway 1, populated mostly by young working families and retirees. "You got more for your hard-earned money there," he explained. "More than in your fancy Carmel." His eyes alighted on her face.

His grammar and syntax were good, she noted, ignoring his fishing expedition for information about her residence.

Dance continued to ask about his life in Seaside and in prison, observing him the whole while: how he behaved when she asked the questions and how he behaved when he answered. She wasn't doing this to get information—she'd done her homework and knew the answers to everything she asked—but was instead establishing his behavioral baseline.

In spotting lies, interrogators consider three factors: nonverbal behavior (body language, or kinesics), verbal quality (pitch of voice or pauses before answering) and verbal content (what the suspect says). The first two are far more reliable indications of deception, since it's much easier to control *what* we say than *how* we say it and our body's natural reaction when we do.

The baseline is a catalog of those behaviors exhibited when the subject is telling the truth. This is the standard the interrogator will compare later with the subject's behavior when he might have a reason to lie. Any differences between the two suggest deception.

Finally Dance had a good profile of the truthful Daniel Pell and moved to the crux of her mission in this modern, sterile courthouse on a foggy morning in June. "I'd like to ask you a few questions about Robert Herron."

Eyes sweeping her, now refining their examination: the abalone shell necklace, which her mother had made, at her throat. Then Dance's short, pink-polished nails. The gray pearl ring on the wedding-band finger got two glances.

"How did you meet Herron?"

"You're assuming I did. But, no, never met him in my life. I swear."

The last sentence was a deception flag, though his body language wasn't giving off signals that suggested he was lying.

"But you told the prisoner in Capitola that you wanted him to go to the well and find the hammer and wallet."

"No, that's what *he* told the warden." Pell offered another amused smile. "Why don't you talk to him about it? You've got sharp eyes, Officer Dance. I've seen them looking me over, deciding if I'm being straight with you. I'll bet you could tell in a flash that that boy was lying."

She gave no reaction, but reflected that it was very rare for a suspect to realize he was being analyzed kinesically.

"But then how did he know about the evidence in the well?"

"Oh, I've got that figured out. Somebody stole a hammer of mine, killed Herron with it and planted it to blame me. They wore gloves. Those rubber ones everybody wears on *CSI*."

Still relaxed. The body language wasn't any different from his baseline. He was showing only emblems—common gestures that tended to substitute for words, like shrugs and finger pointing. There were no adaptors, which signal tension, or affect displays—signs that he was experiencing emotion.

"But if he wanted to do that," Dance pointed out, "wouldn't the killer just call the police *then* and tell them where the hammer was? Why wait more than ten years?"

"Being smart, I'd guess. Better to bide his time. Then spring the trap."

"But why would the real killer call the prisoner in Capitola? Why not just call the police directly?"

A hesitation. Then a laugh. His blue eyes shone with excitement, which seemed genuine. "Because *they*'re involved too. The police. Sure . . . The cops realize the Herron case hasn't been solved and they want to blame somebody. Why not *me*? They've already got me in jail. I'll bet the cops planted the hammer themselves."

"Let's work with this a little. There're two different things you're saying. First, somebody stole your hammer *before* Herron was killed, murdered him with it and now, all this time later, dimes you out. But your second ver-