

The Fury lurks in the shadows

Paul Thorne often relived the horrific July day that had entirely reshaped and trashed his life. It had started particularly badly, with his Nick, his father berating his mother, Janice for burning Nick's breakfast toast. The building company owner had particularly required a decent breakfast for all of the activities he had in store for Natalie, although Janice was obviously not aware of that fact.

'Stick another couple of pieces of bread in the toaster and hurry up about it, for fuck's sake woman. I need to be in the office early this morning. There's a big delivery of Italian marble coming in and I need to personally check it before signing it off,' Nick shouted.

He kept quiet about the real reason for his earliness, which was to safely lock the office door to capture all of his fun with his secretary on his high definition camcorder before his workmen showed up for work. He had tucked the camcorder into his briefcase for the first time, primed for action. He'd decided to look into the possibility and logistics of selling copies of their sex tape online, despite it not yet existing.

He dreamed about perhaps using the money to fund drinks and meals out with some of his future online women who might need a bit of bribery to agree to meet him. He'd started to feel the urge to visit a larger variety of women again, having lately restricted his attentions to Natalie and Claudette. Not to arouse his wife's suspicions, he occasionally forced himself to pay slight attention to Janice in their unhappy bedroom. His sexual appetite was vast and Nick reckoned he owed it to himself and the women of the world to spread his formidable talents even thinner.

He believed it was now time to devote as much attention as possible to the myriad of nubile, not yet sampled online women that he fully intended to start meeting up with again for sex. He missed fooling around on his laptop and webcam late into the night. His habit had only recently been curtailed after Janice had nagged, whinged and cried, deeply suspicious of his nocturnal activities. He was also beginning to tire of Natalie after years of fun with her, intending to limit their office antics after he'd shot the sex tape with her, unbeknownst to the love-struck female.

'Janice can stuff it. I'll start mucking about online again whether she likes it or not. Who knows, I might even be able to develop a nice little internet side-line by selling my sex tapes online, shot with the other various women who'll be gagging to meet me, not just those featuring Natalie and me. As long as I keep my face out of frame, I

should be able to get away with it. Maybe I could wear a mask, blur my image or something,' he mused as he impatiently waited for Janice to fix his breakfast as she always did.

'I'm so sorry Nick, but that was the last slices of bread. I was so busy on the tills yesterday, I forgot to pick up another loaf,' Janice replied wearily, bracing herself, knowing he would not leave the matter there judging by the glowering grimace of disgust spreading over his face, his hands forming into petulant fists.

'What? How could you bloody forget? You're surrounded by loaves of bread all day. What a stupid bitch!' he shouted, opening the kitchen door to let the acrid smell of burnt toast out of the kitchen into the overgrown garden. 'You haven't even bothered to mow the sodding lawn for weeks. You get home hours earlier than I do, so surely you can run the mower around the lawn now and again.'

He naturally kept the real reason why he was so often late home from work from Janice. Work was his playtime. He believed he needed it to give him enough strength to continue with his mockery of a marriage.

'I always have to cook our dinner when I arrive home from work and look after Paul when he returns from school. My day's so tiring, mowing the lawn is the last thing I feel like doing.'

'You're such a lazy waste of space! I can't remember a time when you haven't been tired,' he shouted.

His miserable wife's anaemic, freckly face annoyed him so much he wanted to slap it, hard. Paul cringed at the table feeling guilty to be eating the last of the toast thereby depriving his father of his preferred breakfast and causing a row. The young boy tried not to catch Nick's eye so as to avoid trouble, a ruse he had adopted over the years.

'Of course, precious Paul gets to eat toast,' Nick sneered, who had always unjustly blamed his wife for loving her only child far more than her abusive spouse although nobody else would blame her.

Young Paul was definitely a mummy's boy, liking nothing better than cuddling with her on the sofa to cheer her up whenever Nick was out. He certainly would never have let his other eight-year-old friends at school know about his cuddle time with his mother in order to avoid their taunts and jibes. Paul pitied his weak mother and wished he was tall and muscled like his father so he could force him to stop being so vile to him and his defenceless mother. He would often anxiously lie in bed listening to his father shouting abuse at his mother, fantasising about smashing the bully over the head with his mother's iron or the heaviest saucepan that came to hand. It made

Paul smile to visualise the comical look of surprise that would have appeared on his father's face as he slid down the wall, like in some of the cartoons the boy enjoyed watching after school.

The morning of the burnt toast incident, Janice's mind was still preoccupied, remembering Nick's embarrassing antics during the previous weekend when he'd behaved so lewdly with her sister, Sofia by making suggestive comments to her. He'd then pushed his luck much too far by running one rough hand up Sofia's thigh when they were both washing the dishes in her mother's kitchen. However, Janice would never dare to have brought that subject up now, not with her husband being in such a foul mood yet again, although it was rare for him to be in a good mood.

She tried to remember the last time they'd both smiled, let alone laughed. Her husband's laughter was usually tinged with a sneer of derision or outright hatred. It wounded Janice that Nick's laughs with her were so unlike his warm laughter whenever he was in Sofia's company.

'There's plenty of milk in the fridge for you to have a nice bowl of cereal,' Janice said, handing him a packet of Corn Flakes which he roughly shoved back at her. He loathed it when she referred to things as 'Nice,' as though they were living in fifties Britain. The word made his skin crawl, especially when Janice said it.

'You know I can't stand boring cereal. Get out of my fucking sight. I can't bear to look at your stupid face,' Nick bellowed, causing a familiar knot of panic to form in his son's stomach. 'What are you staring at you little wimp? At least you managed to eat toast this morning. Shut up with your bloody whining! You sound just like your mother. Now fuck off to school before I slap you so hard you hear bells ring,' shouted his father, deflecting his cruelty onto his only son after punishing his wife with it, a practice he was often guilty of. Paul knew better than to say a single word when his father was in such a particularly foul mood.

The three deeply unhappy souls went their separate ways. Paul caught the bus to his school whilst Janice drove off to the supermarket where she worked on the tills. Nick drove off to his builder's yard with the intention of ravishing Natalie. The adrenaline generated from arguing with his family always made him feel particularly aroused and more eager for sex than usual. His thoughts wandered to formulating the punishment he would inflict on Natalie if she'd forgotten any of the sexual paraphernalia he'd ordered the compliant girl to pack in her large, zip-up bag. He remembered to slip a couple of household candles inside the car's dashboard, fearing

she would forget to pack those items. He particularly wanted to experiment with dripping hot candle wax onto Natalie's bare skin followed by rubbing ice cubes onto it from his office's small but adequate icebox. Wealthy Margaret, a lover from his past, had taught him that little trick, although her perfumed candles were from Harrods and not cheap, white household candles like the ones Janice bought, although the cheap variety would suit his purpose.

'They're good enough for Natalie,' he thought, picturing her face wincing in exquisite pain as each drop of wax dripped erotically onto her body.

After sating his lust on a visibly troubled, unusually unresponsive Natalie for half an hour before work, followed by a shockingly, problematic, eventful day, he was now driving the tearful office girl back to her mother's house. With confusion running wildly through his brain after what Natalie had told him a few hours earlier, he then drove to the local off-licence to pick up a couple of sorely needed bottles of whisky.

Not caring whether or not the alcohol tipped him over the legal alcohol limit for driving, Nick ferociously twisted off the cap of one of the bottles and took two long swigs of the burning liquid. The booze would hopefully help him to tolerate looking at his wife's pained, martyred expression as they sat through another mind-numbing session of evening television. Naturally, Nick was always the one to choose which programme they watched despite normally finding fault with whatever they ended up watching.

Before curtailing his internet exploits, his mind would never be devoted to listening to the television, but would be occupied instead with planning his internet fun for later that night. Back in his internet days, that he fully intended to start up again, Nick could only tolerate sitting edgily with Janice for an hour or so before slinking off to find guaranteed excitement inside his den.

On this particular evening, Nick craved a stiff drink even more than usual after what had happened earlier at work with Natalie. He was desperate to block out all of the problems churning over in his over-active brain, difficulties that he had to admit were of his own creation. He'd been planning to spend a few hours in his den trawling the internet for fresh conquests for the first time in a while, but what Natalie had told him had killed his sexual appetite stone dead.

Natalie had seemed unusually edgy all day which had disappointed Nick, who'd been particularly looking forward to a fun, adventurous time shooting a pornographic video with her. She normally laughed uproariously at her employer's jokes, being eager

to please the man she adored, but that day she merely smiled weakly as though she'd barely heard his words. Her mind was elsewhere.

'Maybe I'll put her behaviour down to women's troubles. Come to think of it, she normally would've been out of action a few weeks ago due to her period. Oddly enough, she's had sex with me every day at work for the past six weeks. Thank Christ she's on the pill, or I'd start thinking the daft cow's pregnant,' he thought, looking at her furrowed brow and drooping mouth. It seemed to be impossible for her to look him in the eye. 'Surely she's not been cheating on me and wants us to finish? No, that can't be the reason. The daft bint's obviously completely smitten with me.'

Natalie had eventually stunned and horrified him with her disastrous news. Whilst placing his afternoon mug of tea and biscuits onto his desk with trembling hands, she spilt half of the hot, brown liquid into his lap, then burst into tears.

'What the hell's wrong with you, you clumsy mare? You've had a face like a slapped arse all day,' Nick said, the scalding tea rapidly turning cold, feeling increasingly unpleasant on his crotch, further dampening his ardour. 'At least I'm wearing black trousers, so the stain might not show too much.' He was suddenly fearful of what she was struggling to tell him, part of him already knowing what she was about to say before the words left her trembling lips.

'I've been really dreading telling you this, but I'm afraid I'm pregnant,' Natalie said, her head tilted so far down that her words were barely audible. Still unable to look him directly in the eye, she mopped her tear-stained face with a tissue. Nick's fists opened and closed as he struggled with gut-churning emotions. He suffered a flashback to the time years earlier when Janice had devastated and disappointed him with news of her unplanned pregnancy.

A minute passed before a visibly shaken Nick, head in his hands, could even speak. It seemed like an eternity to Natalie. He was rapidly weighing up all his options, searching for a possible escape route. Eventually, he managed to stammer, 'What? Are you sure? I assume it's mine? For all I know you could have been knocking off any guy at weekends as well as fucking me and whoever else you fancied during the week.'

'Yes, I'm completely certain I'm pregnant and yes, of course it's yours. I took a pregnancy test and after it showed positive I didn't want to believe it, so took another one last night. It sadly also showed positive. So sorry, boss. Must have forgotten to take my pill,' Natalie replied, copious tears pouring down her face and taking her mascara with them in salty black rivulets.

‘How could you be so fucking stupid? You’ll have to get rid of it. No time to talk about it now. I have to visit a client on site in a minute. Jesus, Natalie, pull yourself together. Stop blubbing like a big baby and wash your stupid face. You look an awful sight,’ he said whilst pulling a bottle of whisky from the desk drawer as the distraught girl walked to the toilet to repair her streaked face and blow her runny nose.

He was in dire need of alcohol to try to recover from the enormous shock and to take the edge off his abysmal dark mood. To compound his despair, he would soon be grovelling to the client he was visiting because there’d been a serious mess up on the extension Nick’s firm was building for him. Nick felt more in the mood to punch someone rather than having to eat humble pie. ‘Could my life get any worse?’ Nick wondered.

‘Fuck! Fuck! Fuck!’ said Nick as his life did indeed become worse on realising there was only about an inch of whisky left in the bottle. Not bothering to find a glass, he dejectedly took one swig from the bottle, but it was not sufficient. He gulped the remainder down in one hit. Needing far more alcohol to feel even partly recovered from the earlier devastating shock, Nick planned an urgent stop at the off-licence on his way home to renew his supply. The meeting with the bombastic client had turned out even worse than he’d feared. He would more than likely end up in court.

Once home, Nick sat gloomily sipping his whisky whilst mulling over plans of how best to deal with Natalie and the unwanted baby. Sacking the girl felt a good option as he might not be able to abide the thought of having sex with her ever again after the baby had been aborted, which was something he decided to arrange as soon as possible. The whisky was jumbling his thoughts until they were reduced to nonsensical gibberish, but this did not stop him drinking. Everything was a blur, the faces on the television turned into unrecognisable monstrosities with fuzzy edges surrounding objects in the living room.

He could hear his wife’s annoying voice droning on interminably in the kitchen as she talked to her sister, Sofia. No doubt they were moaning about him flirting with Sofia again after he had drunk too much at the family gathering at his in-law’s house the previous weekend. Nick had been so drunk, he’d briefly forgotten where he was, confusing Janice’s younger sister with Natalie. Thinking he was in the office, he’d run his hand up Sofia’s thigh whilst they were in the kitchen.

The arrogant man was used to doing whatever he liked,

whenever he liked with Natalie, forgetting he could not take the same sexual liberties with his prudish, beautiful sister-in-law. It was too late to rectify his mistake by the time it registered on his booze-addled brain. The damage had been done.

Sofia had immediately flinched, roughly slapping Nick's wandering hand away, glaring as she growled through tight lips, 'How dare you! Stop acting like a stupid drunken moron for once in your life.'

Sofia would have said and done much more, but it was a family occasion. She shied away from upsetting her mother by causing an ugly scene, especially as the poor woman's husband was acting extremely forgetful of late, which added extra strain on her. Sofia was completely sick and tired of Nick's unwanted attentions and was determined to ring her beleaguered sister the following day to try to resolve the upsetting situation with Nick once and for all. Sofia vowed to demand that Janice should take better control of her wayward husband in future. Being around the pest made her cringe and it was impossible to relax around him, not knowing what tasteless thing Nick would say or do to her next.

True to her vow, Sofia called Janice during their lunch breaks at their respective jobs. After Sofia had informed her sister all about her husband's wandering hands and sexual innuendos, Janice replied with, 'Angry and upset as I am by what Nick's done to you, I'm just so scared of what he'd say or do to me if I confront him over his disgusting behaviour.'

'If you don't find the courage to tell him to stop acting like a pig then I'm not willing to see you or Paul again if Nick is there. It's so unfair and unacceptable that I can't ever relax when Nick is around me. It's down to you to make sure that he treats me more respectfully,' Sofia replied, exasperated by Janice's reluctance to defend her sister's honour, born out of fear of her husband.

'Okay, if it's the only way for me to still be able to see you with Nick around then I suppose he must be told. I doubt it'll go well so wish me luck,' Janice said, dreading Nick's response.

She waited three days before broaching the awkward subject to Nick, so great was her terror of her husband's temper. A tearful, trembling Janice eventually complained to a disdainfully sneering Nick about his boorishness detailed in Sofia's angry telephone call. As expected, Nick bellowed and verbally abused his wife for daring to open her mouth, but Janice felt some relief that at least he hadn't hit her and had now been reprimanded, meaning Sofia would still agree to see her.

The last thing unhappy Janice needed was to lose the love and support of her only sibling. Every day for the next couple of weeks, the two red-heads telephoned each other at some point to work out how best to solve the problem of Janice's errant husband's lewd behaviour.

On the same evening that Nick had been devastated to discover he'd impregnated his secretary, Sofia had telephoned her sister to inquire how she was faring. 'You really should seriously consider leaving the idiot, Jan. You've tolerated his vile nonsense for far too long. It's getting worse as time goes by, not better,' said Sofia, tired with repeatedly giving the same advice to her sister in different ways. She'd become increasingly bored with her own voice during each repetition and frustrated by her sister ruining her own and her son's lives by remaining with such a disgusting specimen of manhood.

Janice made her usual pathetic response, infuriating her sister by saying, 'Yes, I know I should leave him, sis, but Paul needs both a father and a mother. Where would Paul and I live and what would we do if we eventually left Nick? It's a terrifying prospect.'

'Anything's better than being physically and verbally abused by that bastard. Don't tell me all the terrible things he's inflicted on you and then expect me to believe staying with him is a sensible option. Poor Paul must surely be badly affected by witnessing the atrocious atmosphere between his parents. A child needs to feel safe and loved to be able to thrive, not feel fearful and at risk. You must urgently weigh up the pros and cons of keeping your only son in such a toxic, negative atmosphere or starting a new life far away from that crazy man. I know which option I'd jump at taking for everyone's sake,' Sofia said, irritated by the sound of her own voice uttering the same words to Janice for the umpteenth time.

'Yes, deep down I know you're right, but I just can't think straight enough to know how to leave him. I must get off the phone soon. I've not even started cooking our supper yet. Nick will be livid again if it's not ready pretty soon. He's in a particularly foul mood today for some reason. Never seen him so drunk. The whole place stinks of whisky,' said Janice, trying to talk as quietly as possible because Nick and Paul were both in the living room, one staring blankly at the television with the other working on school homework.

'Oh, sod the creep. I've not had a chance yet to tell you all about the great night out I had with the girls from the salon last night to celebrate Natasha's birthday,' Sofia replied, wanting to childishy spite the brother-in-law she so despised, little guessing what grave danger she was inadvertently placing her older sister in.

Nick was more ravenous than usual for that time of day. He'd eaten no breakfast thanks to Janice burning the last slices of toast, neither had there been time for lunch with him having chosen to lock the office door and feast on Natalie instead, followed by half a bag of crisps he'd discovered in his office drawer.

His office girl had then dropped her bombshell pregnancy news onto his plate, completely destroying his already dire day. So many negative emotions raged around Nick's hungry body, fuelled by an indecent amount of alcohol, he was clueless what to do for the best. The sound of his son's sniffing whilst he sat diligently working on his homework at the table behind him was adding to Nick's dangerously high stress levels. He prayed he'd feel better after a proper meal, even though it would not in any way solve his mounting problems.

'So where's my food then? Bloody whiney Janice hasn't even started preparing dinner yet,' thought Nick as there were no smells coming from the impressively appointed kitchen. There was only the sound of her droning voice trickling through to him as he sprawled on the sofa endlessly drinking. A muddled thought popped into his brain, 'She must be punishing me for that drunken faux pas with Sofia. I'll bloody well show her she's making a huge mistake to disrespect me.' He cracked his knuckles which was always a sign of trouble ahead. Inside a whisky fog, Nick staggered into the kitchen.

Young Paul looked up anxiously from his geography textbook, knowing only bad things could follow when his father was in such a drunken state. On hearing his father's raised, slurring voice, the boy prepared himself for another raging outburst from the impossible man. Sure enough, his father could be heard ranting furiously. There was a sudden, dull thud followed by another much heavier one. Janice was caught off balance by a blow from the telephone receiver and then bashed her head again on the corner of the kitchen table, where the worst damage to her skull was done. The silence that followed sent a cold river of terror coursing through Paul's veins, as he dashed into the kitchen to try to help his mother. The boy stood statue still, not believing the ghastly sight before him.

'That'll bloody teach you to stand around gassing to Sofia when you should be cooking my fucking tea. Your stuck-up tart of a sister should keep her beak out of our business,' Paul's father bellowed like an inebriated bull, his breath smelling sour from far too many whiskies as he lurched backwards and forwards in an effort to stand still.

Nick was so drunk that it was impossible for him to absorb the

severity of the outrage he had just committed. Detached from reality, he fully expecting Janice to eventually scramble to her feet and dutifully cook his food. It was not the first time Nick had floored her with a blow and still managed to escape any trouble so he thought nothing much of the incident. Janice did not stir, but Nick had lost the capacity to realise he should call an ambulance. He pushed past Paul, staggered in a hazy cloud back into the living room, poured another large whisky and fell heavily back onto the sofa to wait for his evening meal to appear.

Although only a young boy, Paul knew his father would be too drunk and incapable to improve his prostrate mother's desperate situation. He took one look at the ever-spreading puddle of dark blood leaking from his motionless mother's ears and decided to ring for an ambulance having remembered seeing people do that on television.

He picked up the bloodied landline telephone that lay beside his mother, fighting back a desire to vomit from fear and dialled the number to summon aid.

'Which service do you require?' a lady asked in a brisk but friendly voice.

He ignored her question and blurted out, 'My dad has bashed my mum's head really hard with this phone and now she's not moving at all. There's blood all over the kitchen floor,' Paul whispered quickly so his father couldn't hear him. Paul was canny enough to realise that his paralytic father would only make the dire situation even worse if he decided to return to the kitchen. The scrawny dark-haired boy realised the longer the drunken monster stayed in the living room, the better it would be for everyone.

'What's your name, dear?' she asked.

'Paul ... Paul Thorne,' he replied in his high voice.

'I'll send an ambulance straight away, dear, once you've told me your full address and postcode. Do you know it?' said the woman's calming voice, not mentioning that she fully intended directing the police there as well as an ambulance. It sounded like yet another domestic violence incident, her third one during that shift.

Paul was not entirely sure of his postcode, but despite his fear, he luckily remembered seeing a letter on the work top. He grabbed it and read out the address to the kind-sounding lady in the voice he used whenever asked to read aloud in class or during his school's morning assembly. Her voice started to soothe the traumatised boy until he noticed the puddle of blood had spread all the way over to the oven. His panic level shot skyward and he started to sob,

struggling to keep the sound of his whimpering as quiet as he could so as not to alert his father's unwanted attention.

'Help is on its way, Paul. You've done really, really well. Be a good boy and unlock the front door if you can so that the ambulance people can help your mother,' the switchboard woman calmly said, grateful the child seemed to have his wits about him. The terrified boy sounded so young that her heart went out to him. She would naturally stay on the line until the ambulance arrived in case Paul needed her advice.

Having placed the bloodied telephone receiver on the kitchen table, he found he could not touch his mother, even though he wanted to, because the sight of the blood radiating out from her head horrified him. He stood rooted to the spot with his arms by his sides, staring at the prone body in disbelief, praying with every fibre for her to be alive. He was desperate for his father to stay out of the kitchen until help arrived. Paul could hear the clunk of a glass bottle hitting the rim of a glass tumbler as Nick poured another large measure of whisky. It was accompanied by the sound of inappropriately incongruous comic singing coming from a programme that the drunkard happened to be watching.

Nick seemed to have wiped out every detail of what he'd just inflicted on his wife. He gradually slid into a whisky induced, snoring slumber. Loud knocking at the front door rudely awakened him. He had slept through the sound of the ambulance's siren, but the noise had alerted Paul to rush to let the ambulance men inside to hopefully save the day.

Two short ambulance men rushed past Paul after he'd pointed them in the direction of the kitchen. They set about searching for vital signs of life in the woman lying bleeding on the tiled floor.

Paul smiled slightly through his tears when he overheard one of the men say, 'I've found a pulse.'

'Come on, mum. You can make it,' Paul whispered to himself. He was grateful his father had still not made an appearance in the kitchen and felt slightly safer now the two ambulance men were busying themselves with his injured mother. They reminded Paul of the brightly coloured, Lego ambulance men he used to play with, mixed with a dash of super hero so they were bound to make everything alright again.

'What the bloody hell's going on?' boomed Nick, leaning in the doorway of the kitchen, swaying dangerously and clutching a whisky bottle and glass. Paul froze, knowing nothing good could come from his father's presence.

Quickly weighing up the tricky situation, Sam, the older of the two ambulance men, decided that Paul's father was dangerously drunk and, from what the switchboard lady had told him, he appeared to be guilty of the vicious attack on the seriously injured woman. Sam knew he needed to keep the thug calm until the police arrived, which Sam hoped they'd be doing shortly.

Luckily, Nick failed to clearly see the damage he'd done, so dense was his alcohol haze. If the culprit had managed to notice his wife's injuries, Sam feared he might sober up sufficiently to realise the serious trouble he was in and try to escape arrest. Confident that his colleague was dealing well with the medical emergency, Sam took Nick back into the living room and distracted him with small talk until the police arrived.

'Wish my wife would hurry up with the bloody food. I'm starving,' Nick said to a surprised Sam.

'I'm sure it'll be on the table soon,' Sam reassured him, speculating just how much alcohol this man must have drunk to make him so oblivious of his predicament to not question why there was a stranger in his living room.

In his profession, Sam was used to dealing with drunks, but this one really took the biscuit. Nick leaned forward, almost falling onto the coffee table in his attempt to pour himself another whisky.

'I think you've had enough whisky for one night, don't you, sir?' Sam said, slowly reaching out in an attempt to take the bottle from the drunkard.

'Who are you, my bloody mother?' Nick shouted petulantly, hiding the bottle behind his back like a naughty child.

'Please yourself,' thought Sam as he noticed the flashing blue light of a police car as it pulled up outside the house. From the look of the unconscious female, Sam knew they needed to wheel the patient out to the ambulance to drive her to the hospital as soon as the police had been briefed on what had recently occurred.

Sam let the two officers into the house and quickly filled them in on what had happened, much of which they were already aware, then returned to attend to the wounded wife and distraught child, the latter of whom seemed to be going into shock. Paul was crying uncontrollably, screaming for his mother and shuddering as if freezing cold.

When Nick caught sight of the two police uniforms, he sobered up enough to have a brief flashback to what he had done to his wife. He panicked. One of the officers was busy trying to calm Paul sufficiently to glean some information from the boy that might help

the police inquiry which would surely follow.

The other policeman walked towards Nick, who suddenly smashed the whisky bottle in a fit of panic and wildly stabbed the jagged glass into the neck of the startled officer, severing a main artery. Everyone, including Paul, witnessed the fountain of blood spurt and spray over the living room furniture and light green carpet. The critically wounded officer was jerking around like a puppet on the floor as the ambulance men, who luckily had not had time to drive off to the hospital with Janice, rushed to his aid. Tragically, they were unable to prevent the dying policeman from breathing his last breath despite desperate attempts to staunch the dramatic flow of blood. The shock of the vicious attack had triggered the unfortunate wounded officer's ongoing heart condition, killing him.

The remaining police officer managed to force Nick into an arm-lock and handcuff him. With his arms trapped behind him, Nick slumped onto the blood-splattered sofa, the fight draining from him as it dawned on him that he was in the worst trouble imaginable. He could see his son's screaming face and everything became all too clear. It seemed it was all over for Nick Thorne within the space of a few hours. Police reinforcements had been summoned to deal with the aftermath and they arrived just as the ambulance arrived at hospital with Paul's injured, still unconscious mother, plus the lifeless body of the policeman. P.C. Stoddart had been a loving husband and father to two young sons, one disabled, according to the television news report later that night.