

[Transcript] Sword and Scale Nightmares / The Hole

It's the day before Thanksgiving, 1986.

Giusefina Rivera leans into the passenger window of an 87 Cadillac Coupe de Ville that has stopped in front of her.

She notices the driver's fancy watch and jewelry, and after agreeing to a price of \$20, she returns with him to a neighborhood that doesn't seem to really match the flashy car they were just driving in.

The man pulls out a strange half key.

He says he had to split it into two pieces, and that half of it stays in the front door lock to prevent anyone other than him from coming in.

Upstairs in the front bedroom money is exchanged, and they have sex on the man's waterbed. Then, the man grabs Giusefina by the neck and begins choking her until she goes unconscious. She wakes to find her hands cuffed as the man leads her to a dilapidated basement with a hole dug into the floor.

He shackles her ankles with metal clamps connected to a chain, then he applies crazy glue to the bolts so she can't turn them.

The man explains to her that all he ever wanted was to have a big family.

He'd lost contact with the children he'd fathered in the past, but now he tells her he is going to claim his patriarchal destiny.

His goal?

Capture 10 women, impregnate them, and raise the family as his own.

As if to illustrate his dedication to the cause, he then rapes Giusefina, beats her with a stick, and forces her into the basement hole he's already dug.

Giusefina lays there, alone and scared in her makeshift prison for what feels like days. But she's not there alone for very long.

Soon, she would hear another girl's voice, and then another set of footsteps coming down the stairs, and then another, and then another, and then another.

Welcome to Sword and Scale Nightmares, True Crime for Bedtime, where Nightmare begins now.

Decades earlier, a young Gary Hydenick was born to mentally disturbed parents.

His father would lock him outside and beat him, for peeing his pants.

And before his alcoholic mother committed suicide, she trained her kids to steal money to help pay for her booze.

Of course, his father denied the abuse, and recalled how much his son Gary loved the military. In the 1960s, Gary dropped out of high school and joined the army, expecting battle training, but instead serving as a medic for 14 months.

While stationed in Germany, Gary claimed the army gave him LSD, and shortly thereafter he stopped obeying orders and convinced doctors he was suffering from a mental breakdown.

He was honorably discharged, with the official diagnosis of Schizoid personality disorder.

There are questions about whether or not Gary was faking his symptoms, simply because he wasn't enjoying his assignment in Germany.

Make no mistake, this truly depraved man had a personality disorder, alright?

But he was also intellectually speaking, quite brilliant.

His IQ of 148 placed him in the top half of 1% of the population.

And yet, people who knew Gary in the 1970s would observe that the women he spent time

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with were mentally impaired.

Despite his genius mind, Gary was clearly surrounding himself with people who would never question

his authority, people he could easily take advantage of.

At the end of the decade, one of the women Gary was dating had a sister in a mental institution.

They went to visit her one weekend, signed her out for a day leave, and brought her back home with them.

Once there, Gary kept the sister locked in a storage bin.

When the hospital finally retrieved her, they discovered she had been sodomized and infected with gonorrhea, both vaginally and orally.

Gary was arrested, took the stand in his own defense, and pled not guilty.

And because the victim was mentally handicapped, she couldn't testify.

Gary was convicted not of rape, but of false imprisonment, and was sentenced to just three to seven years in prison.

During the four-plus years he spent behind bars, he remained stoically quiet, not speaking until he was paroled in 1983.

Which brings us more or less to when we open today's story.

Neighbors of Gary Haydnick's house in North Philadelphia would describe him as an eccentric oddball, one who had acquired hundreds of millions of dollars from wise stock investments.

Others noted Gary's gregarious nature, some even going as far as to call him distinguished.

Gary had become something of a local celebrity.

In the years after leaving the army, he formed the United Church of the Ministers of God, and became an ordained minister.

While the church was actually used as a way to avoid paying taxes, mentally handicapped clients at the nearby Elwin Institute were taken in by Gary's generosity, and began attending weekly Sunday services from the home Gary purchased after his release from prison.

Behind closed doors, several women with intellectual disabilities considered themselves wives to Gary, coming and going from the house as they pleased, and often engaging in group sex.

Another member of Gary's congregation, and also a patient at the nearby Elwin Institute, was a 24-year-old African-American woman by the name of Sandra Lindsay.

Gary gifted a car to the man who first made the introduction, and later offered him \$100 if he would impregnate Sandra.

His warped plan worked for a time, and she did get pregnant during one of their group sessions.

But then Sandra had an abortion.

When Gary found out he was furious, then offered her \$1,000 to have his baby.

When she declined, Gary took matters into his own hands.

Sandra had previously told her family about the bishop of a nearby church, that he was always buying McDonald's for her and her friends, and that he was going to take all of them to an amusement park.

But on December 3, 1986, Sandra left to pick up menstrual cramp medication and never returned.

Down in the basement, sex worker Josephina Rivera was about to become acquainted with her new cellmate.

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It was immediately clear to Josephina that Sandra had intellectual disabilities and likely didn't stand much of a chance.

But Gary calmly said that he'd known Sandra for years, and that she once told him she'd have his baby, but she just kept backing out.

In those early days, the women were occasionally fed crackers and water, and whenever someone came to the house or if someone was misbehaving, the two women were forced to squeeze into the shallow basement hole, where a piece of plywood was placed on top with heavy weights.

While no one seemed to care Josephina was missing, it would only be a matter of time until Sandra's family would come looking for her.

But Gary had a plan for that, too.

A few days before Christmas, Sandra's family received a festive holiday card and Sandra's own handwriting, telling them she was fine and not to worry.

Gary touched the card with gloves on and drove from Philadelphia to New York to mail it out.

When the card was handed over to the police, they concluded that there was no evidence or stress in the handwriting and started looking in the wrong state.

From this time, the third woman was brought into Gary Hydenick's basement dungeon.

Nineteen-year-old Lisa Thomas was walking to a girlfriend's house when Gary once again lured her in with an expensive car and an offer to take her out for a meal.

Like the others before her, Lisa spent time on the upper floors of Gary's house, not knowing what awaited her before suddenly being attacked, handcuffed, and confined down below.

Lisa would recall later the terror she felt as she watched Gary count the links between her ankle chains, making sure her legs could spread wide enough for him to rape her.

There was forced sex almost every single day, with Gary doing as he pleased and constantly blasting the radio to keep the outside world out.

January 1987 was right around the corner and the deranged, sadistic mission of Gary Hydenick was just getting started.

On January 18, 1987, psychotic mastermind Gary Hydenick entered his sex slave dungeon, carrying two items you might not expect, Chinese food and a bottle of champagne.

He wanted everyone to celebrate the birthday of Josefina, the first woman he'd captured just two months earlier, and seemingly the only one getting continued special treatment.

Gary had been busy the first three weeks of the new year.

In that time, two more women were brought to this place considerably worse than hell.

On January 2, the extremely uncooperative 23-year-old Deborah Dudley was locked up in the basement and screamed for help all night long to no avail.

Then on the 18th, presumably while shopping for Josefina's birthday cake, Gary returned with an 18-year-old sex worker named Jacqueline Askins.

That's five women being held captive for those keeping track, and with each new addition, the group dynamics began disintegrating into even more horrifying circumstances.

One of the newer arrivals, the relentless 23-year-old Deborah, constantly questioned Gary's authority, resulting in beatings not only to herself, but later for the entire group.

It eventually became a perverse type of military unit.

Gary would put one woman in charge whenever he left, and when he returned, misbehaviors

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were reported and punished accordingly.

The women were kept in their bottomless uniforms, and at times forced to have sex with each other, occasionally gifted a baby wipe for cleaning up.

And then there were the screwdrivers.

Gary didn't want his captives to know whether or not he was alone in the house, and he certainly didn't want them to hear a passing neighbor attempt to call for help.

To remedy this, he would wrap tape around their mouths and then slowly force a screwdriver into their ear canals until blood was drawn, leaving several of them with permanent hearing damage.

By the end of January, gone were the days of rice and stale hot dogs.

With so many mouths to feed, the financially prudent Gary turned to dog food, beating his prisoners until they ate it.

And that's when things got really bad.

In early February 1987, Gary's second hostage, the mentally handicapped Sandra Lindsay, made a terrible mistake of getting caught while trying to move the plywood that was covering their basement pit.

As punishment, she was suspended by her handcuffed wrists from a hook that Gary had installed in the basement rafters.

Sandra hung in that position for days, all the while savagely beaten and force-fed by the other women.

Even as a fever consumed her, eventually causing her to lose consciousness.

At first, it looked like she was sleeping, but as her head dropped down with her arms still suspended overhead, Sandra suffocated to death.

Gary told the women she was faking it, removing her from the hook and kicking her lifeless body into the pit.

Later, he retrieved Sandra's body, and the women soon heard the distinct and terrifying sounds of power saws.

In the days that followed, the foulest odors imaginable came wafting into the basement whenever Gary came downstairs.

And when 23-year-old Deborah Dudley continued misbehaving, she was brought upstairs and shown what happens to the women who don't do, as Gary says.

Deborah reported back on an even worse nightmare than any of the women could have possibly imagined.

She observed Sandra's arms and legs wrapped in the freezer, her ribs and hip bones roasting in the oven, and her head cooking in a pot on the stove.

Gary made it clear to Deborah that unless she changed her attitude, she would end up just like this.

You would think by now that someone in the neighborhood would do something about the power tools or the blasting music, or in this case the smell of burning flesh.

It's been reported that a neighbor did contact the police, and the arriving officer acknowledged this strange odor, observing through the back window something boiling in a large pot.

But Gary came outside just in the nick of time, saying he fell asleep while cooking a roast, and the officer left without filing a report.

One in the basement, the first woman Gary abducted, Josephina, was now the one regularly

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administering the punishments, often exempt from it herself.

It seemed to the other women that Josephina had become something of a confidant, the perennial favorite even allowed to sleep upstairs in Gary's actual bed.

Every nightmarish day bled into the next until March 17, 1987.

Gary had enlisted Josephina to help him implement his latest torture device.

After stripping one end of an extension, and perhaps in honor of St. Patrick's Day, the particular day he decided to kick things up a notch, Gary asked Josephina to hook up the hose to the kitchen sink and flood the basement hole.

The other three remaining women, Deborah, Lisa, and Jacqueline, were then forced to wade in the water.

Gary drilled air holes in the plywood board and once again placed it over the women, weighing it down with sandbags.

Only submerged in a water-filled coffin, the women watched as the bare wire dipped through the air hole and made contact with the chain.

So now, whenever one woman got shocked, all three did at the same time.

Huddled together, they begged Gary to stop whatever it was he was planning.

He said he would stop if they'd all keep quiet.

But as usual, it was Deborah that continued crying out, refusing to listen.

Gary and Josephina lowered the frayed wires through the plywood once again.

Only this time, they made direct contact with the chain's closest to Deborah, forcing her to take on most of the voltage.

Deborah screamed out, convulsing spastically until the last of her stubborn spirit was drained from her body.

She fell face down into the water and the other two women knew immediately that she was dead.

Later, Gary made sandwiches for everyone and said, weren't you glad it wasn't one of you?

In the days that followed, Gary ordered Josephina to write a note that read, Gary Hydnick and Josephina Rivera electrocuted Deborah Dudley on March 17 in the basement of 3520 North Marshall Street by electrocution.

He then removed Josephina's handcuffs and told her she no longer needed them.

As the note she signed would make her an accomplice.

She also warned her that even if she did try to go to the police, he would simply go to court and act crazy, explaining to her, there's a law that if a person acts crazy for a certain amount of time, they'll throw the case out.

Josephina did as she was told, and before joining him on a road trip through the countryside outside New Jersey, Josephina helped Gary remove Deborah Dudley's body from the freezer and deposited her corpse somewhere in the pine barrens.

Now fully convinced of Josephina's loyalty, the following day Gary suggested the two of them hit the streets and go cruising together for Deborah's replacement.

But Josephina was secretly playing the long game.

By now she'd gained Gary's trust, even at the cost of her own soul.

She wasn't just planning to find Gary another hostage, she was also planning her escape.

March 24, 1987, almost four months exactly to the date Josephina Rivera first leaned into

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Gary Heidenich's white Cadillac.

Prior to that date she'd been a sex worker, and now four months later she was riding shotgun in the same car, prowling the very same streets, looking for the same girls she used to hustle alongside.

It wasn't long before she recognized and pointed out 24-year-old Agnes Adams.

Gary made Josephina a tantalizing offer.

He told her that if she made the introduction and helped get Agnes back to the house, he would let Josephina contact her family.

And of course, Josephina proved herself to be a worthy companion yet again.

Since Agnes was stripped down and chained up, Josephina pleaded to Gary that he keep his word and allow her to see her family.

In exchange, she added that she would personally deliver him yet another quote unquote wife for his collection.

The same day, March 24, Gary and Josephina arrived near her apartment, and Josephina explained that after she met with her family, she would go to a girl's house that she knew and that Gary should meet them both at a nearby gas station.

Incredibly, Gary dropped her off, then pulled his car over to the designated location, eagerly anticipating the new flesh he'd soon be mating with.

In the meantime, Josephina sprinted to her apartment, reuniting with her boyfriend and hurriedly trying to explain everything that she'd just endured.

Her boyfriend wanted to confront Gary directly, but fortunately, they just called police instead.

At first, the arriving officers didn't believe Josephina's outlandish story of captivity, torture and sexual depravity, but then she showed them the scars around her ankles and explained to them that Gary was just sitting there at the gas station this very moment, waiting for her to return.

Guns drawn, the officers approached Gary's Cadillac, and when Gary exited the vehicle with his hands up, he asked them if they were there regarding child support payments.

Josephina confirmed Gary's identity to the officers, telling them that he killed two girls, cut up the bodies, and made the other girls eat them.

She added there were other girls still in the basement, and it wasn't long before officers saw for themselves that everything Josephina had told them was true.

A human forearm in the freezer, yellow, fatty substances on the stove and in the oven, raw meat in the food processor, passed the blaring television down into the basement.

The officers saw two women half naked and chained to a soil pipe.

They seemed to be in shock at first, eventually crying out, or saved, or saved.

The officers asked if anyone else was in the house, and they gestured to the piece of plywood now covered with soil-filled plastic bags, huddled underneath was terrified twenty-four-year-old Agnes Adams, the last woman Gary hide Nick would ever kidnap.

Huddled to his home just a few hours earlier that very same day.

Ultimately, police found twenty-seven pounds of body parts inside Gary hide Nick's house, and as the media began constant coverage of the case, rumors of forced cannibalism persisted.

It's unclear if the body of Sandra Lindsay was fed to his prisoners or just to his dogs, but Gary's lawyers seemed to deliberately confuse the issue, depending on how it suited their case.

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One thing is certain, the body of Deborah Dudley, who had been electrocuted for her unwillingness to give in to Gary's demands, was later found in the New Jersey State Forest she'd been deposited into the previous week.

When the case came to trial in June of 1988, Gary's lawyers tried to make him look like a Charles Manson, and argued that their client was insane at the time of the murders in the hopes of avoiding the death penalty, but jurors had just heard the horrendous testimonies of Gary's surviving victims, and Gary was clearly sane enough to amass a fortune in the stock market, hold weekly religious ceremonies for a congregation, and cover the tracks of his brutal crimes time and time again.

After sixteen hours of deliberation, Gary hide Nick was convicted on eighteen charges, including multiple counts of first-degree murder, kidnapping, rape, and aggravated assault. For his crimes, he was sentenced to death, but in the years leading up to his execution, Gary maintained his innocence.

In addition to saying at trial that the women were already living at the house before he moved in, Gary later told the public, quote,

"You people think I committed murders that I have not committed, and I have refused to appeal my case.

I still refuse, even though I can prove my innocence.

I resent this kind of shit being done to a disabled veteran."

Gary added later to his lawyers that he actually wanted to be executed, proclaiming that killing an innocent man might end the death penalty.

All of this coming from someone who tried to kill himself while incarcerated on more than fifteen different occasions, including hanging himself in a jail shower, as well as multiple overdoses on stockpiled, anti-psychotic medication.

But finally on July 6th, 1999, more than a decade after his deranged four-month reign as Dungeon Master, Gary Hydenick was put to death.

According to a Department of Corrections spokesperson, Gary spent part of his final afternoon quietly

listening to country music.

His last meal was two slices of pizza and two cups of black coffee, and he was put to death via lethal injection.

Twelve witnesses watched as a curtain revealed Gary lying on a gurney eyes closed.

He had no final words, and unlike the death chamber he created in his own basement, this one was clean, the administration of death, swift, and quiet.

As the poison worked its way through Gary's body, witnesses described his face as turning a deep red, then graying to match his salt and pepper beard.

When it was clear the monster had finally been put down, another witness said out loud what everyone else was probably thinking.

Thank you, Jesus.

And what of Josephina Rivera?

Well, she truly was a victim, like all the rest, and never considered for any crimes.

To the other women, she had become the boss of the basement, a pet captive with Stockholm Syndrome clearly out of control.

They wondered, how could she leave the house with him, and yet never cry out for help.

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Josephina will have to live with the impossible decisions she was forced to make while being held captive.

Whether or not you agree with those choices, once she escaped, she immediately helped save the lives of Lisa Thomas, Jacqueline Askins, and Agnes Adams.

You can call her an accomplice, a co-conspirator, or even a murderer, but the more accurate term may be hero.

Wise enough to understand that shouting in public risked all of their lives.

Gave enough to get close to the enemy, and tough enough to do whatever it took, all in the name of freedom.

If you enjoyed the show, please consider joining plus at [swordandscale.com slash plus](https://swordandscale.com/plus).

But if you can't, consider leaving us a positive review on your preferred listening platform.

Sweet dreams, and good night.