



Famous Trials: Thrill-Killers (Penguin Specials)

Alex McBride

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From the legendary *Famous Trials* series of real-life courtroom dramas, two classic murder trials abridged and refreshed as Penguin Specials for modern readers, selected and introduced by Alex McBride, author of *Defending the Guilty*

Thomas Cream, erstwhile Sunday school teacher and serial poisoner, has an unsettling air and wonky eye. He also happens to be a doctor, which provides him with ample means and an ideal cover for his murderous activities. His victims are vulnerable young women, whose trust he gains with drinks and trips to the music hall, before offering them pills or swigs from a medicine bottle. A few hours later, they are dying in agony.

The Honourable Thomas Ley, meanwhile, has an even better disguise: he's the former Justice Minister for New South Wales and a successful businessman, albeit with a shady past. Rumours abound when a political opponent disappears without trace and a business partner winds up at the bottom of a cliff.

Neither killer can help themselves - and this, in the end, leads to their downfall - and both defy our comprehension. Brilliantly reconstructed here, their trials, in 1892 and 1947, reveal a deeply sinister conundrum: by the time you've discovered the secrets in their heart, it's inevitably much too late.

The legendary *Famous Trials* series set the benchmark for historical crime writing with its accounts of the most notorious and intriguing criminal trials of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Expertly reconstructed from court transcripts, these often sensational narratives have gripped generations of readers since they first appeared in 1941. In this digital edition, two of the very best *Famous Trials* have been selected, introduced and further abridged by criminal barrister and author Alex McBride to provide modern readers with the most compelling versions yet of these court-room classics.

Alex McBride is a criminal barrister. His book *Defending the Guilty: Truth and Lies in the Criminal Courtroom* was shortlisted for the 2010 Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger for Non-Fiction and is available in Penguin. He has written for the *Guardian*, *Independent*, *Prospect* and *New Statesman*, and has contributed to various BBC programmes, including *From Our Own Correspondent*.

'Expert, authoritative, hilarious - an insider's fearless account of life at the criminal bar'*Times Literary Supplement* Books of the Year on *Defending the Guilty*

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