



## Psychiatry & Behavioral Science - 2017

### I28 Killed to Be Saved ... A Rare Case of Salvific Matricide From Demonic Possession

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After attending this presentation, attendees will understand the importance of the existential narrative that underlies the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim, as a means of understanding how rare criminal events can occur.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by serving as an example of how the individual life path is influenced by an infinite number of more or less pathological relationships.

The “demonic” theme has not disappeared from the cultural representations of the sacred, the spiritual, the religious, and are understood as attempts to draw causal connections in order to defend man from the unknown, which has always inspired terror. It seems like a paradox, but the more rational society becomes, the more humans seem to need to tap into the universe of the irrational, the sacred, and the supernatural. If this complex cultural and anthropological horizon is combined with psychiatric disease, the scene is set and the risk factors for becoming perpetrators or victims of crime will increase.

This presentation introduces the case of a matricide by a 60-year-old woman, a graduate in psychology with a family history of psychiatric disease and a complex sentimental relationship. The woman was diagnosed with bipolar affective disorder with maniacal symptoms, drug abuse, and had undergone two previous obligatory health treatments. She then began to adopt spiritual therapy, recommended to her by a friend, and suspended traditional drug therapy, using cannabis and alternative therapies. In May 2015, she went to her mother’s home for a “therapeutic vocation” (to look after her mother), bringing with her a medicinal syrup recommended by the spiritual therapist for her mother, who suffered from respiratory disease. At the mother’s home, she suffered an episode of acute psychotic decompensation in which she became convinced that an evil spell had been cast over the home. This became a fixed idea, and she suffered mood changes and pathological bursts of excitement. On the morning of the homicide, convinced that there were objects evoking negative presences, she created havoc in the home, believing that the devil was concealed inside her mother’s throat (because of her respiratory problems). In the throes of an agitated mystical frenzy, she placed a holy card and a rosary into her mother’s throat. A second holy card was later found crumpled in her mother’s mouth, imprinted with the words, “Satan leave this house, leave my mother and my sister.” At the coroner’s autopsy, numerous excoriations were seen on the face (due to the violence of the aggression), evident hematomas in the back of the mouth, particularly in the pharyngeal region, blood in the bronchi, as well as areas of pulmonary emphysema alternating with areas of atelectasia; these led the specialist to conclude that death was caused by asphyxia due to obstruction of the upper airways (internal asphyxia).

The choice of homicidal mode is particularly suggestive: suffocation with a “sacred” object, the holy card. The victim had a typical paradoxical psychotic profile; to chase away the demon, to extinguish and definitively silence the demonic spirit voice, and to save her from evil, the mother was killed with the use of a sacred object. There are an infinite number of more or less “pathological relationships” around us that affect choices, life paths, and chances



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of fulfilment. Some, definitely abnormal, can certainly have a stronger effect on the life story of an individual; however, crime (and matricide is no exception) is potentially the result of many factors.<sup>1</sup> Identifying the cause as mental disease is not enough; only the analysis of the entire relationship between the perpetrator and the victim can contribute to discerning the background leading to such remarkable, shocking events.<sup>2,3</sup>

### Reference(s):

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### Matricide, Devil, Asphyxia