

In a Nutshell

A close look at the life's work of Frances Glessner Lee

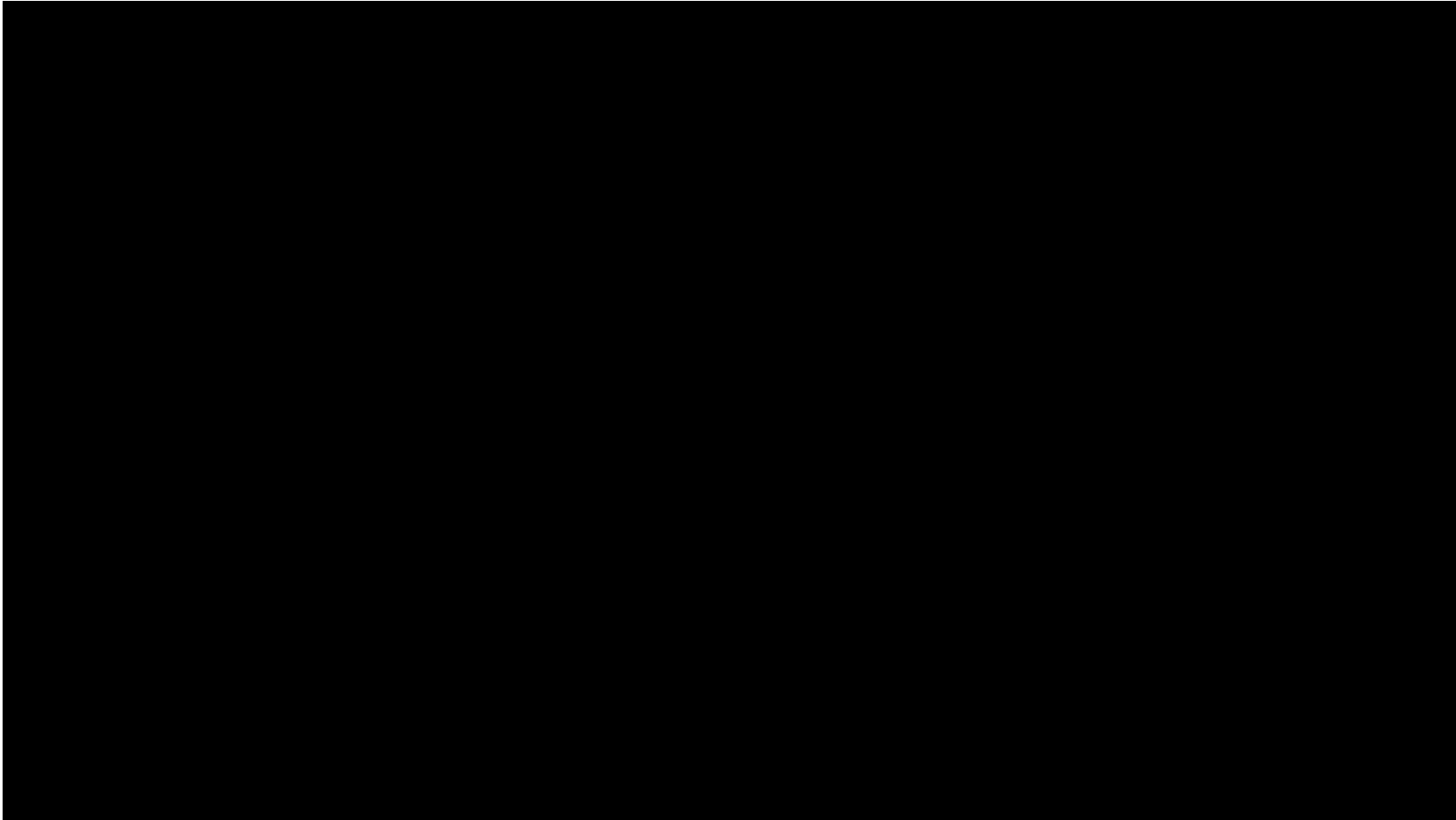
Jon Lee Rees

MSc (Open) Forensic Psychology & Criminology



CSI: Crime Scene Investigation

S.7 – The Miniature Serial Killer



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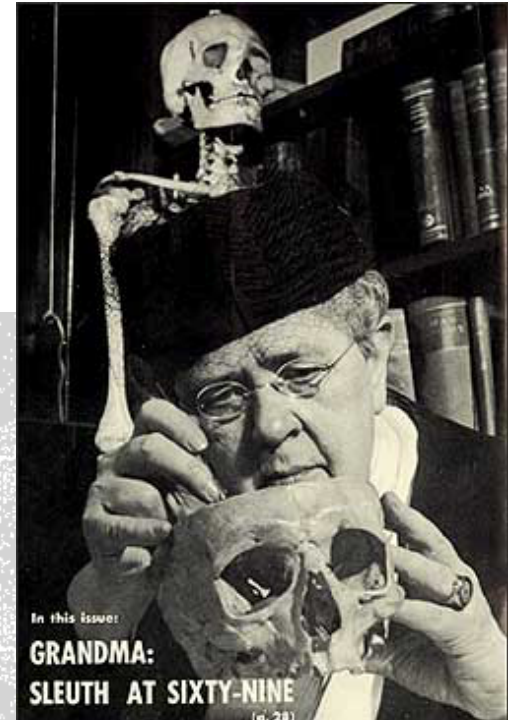
Truth is stranger than fiction...





Frances Glessner Lee

The Godmother of Crime Scene Investigation



In this issue:

**GRANDMA:
SLEUTH AT SIXTY-NINE**
(p. 28)

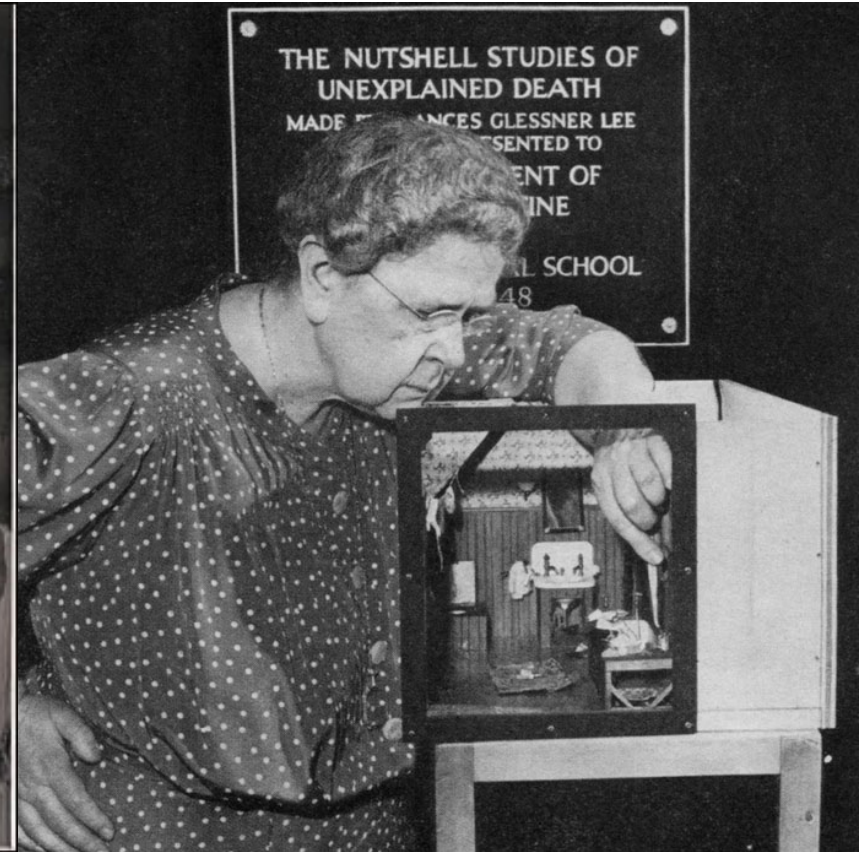
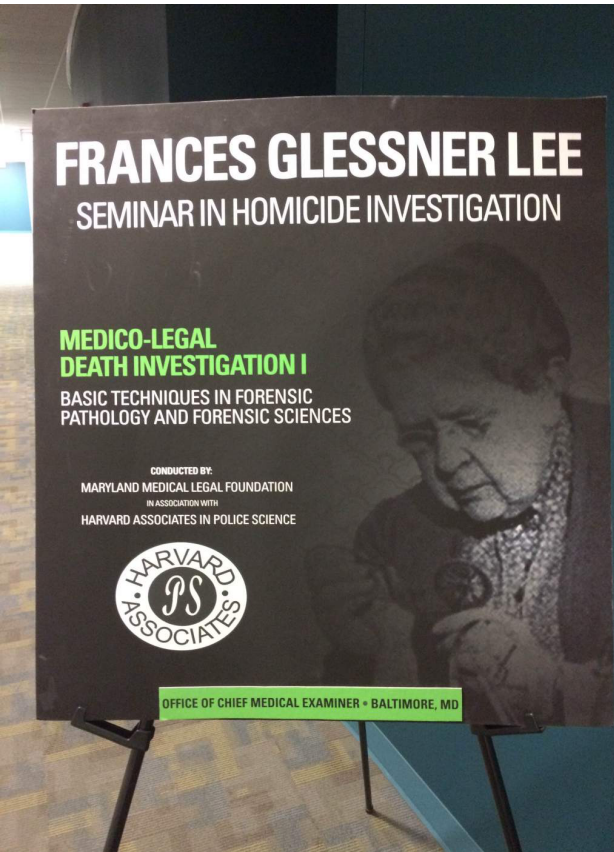
Frances Glessner Lee



Harvard Associates in Police Science (HAPS) Seminar



Legacy





The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death

A forensic investigation training tool





Burned Cabin

“Convict the guilty, clear the innocent, and find the truth in a nutshell”

- 18 highly detailed doll house miniatures.
- 1:12 scale (1 inch = 1 foot).
- Based on actual death scenes compiled from court papers, autopsies and statements from detectives and witnesses.
- Attention to detail so great that calendars are exact, windows open and fabrics and materials are realistically worn and weathered.
- Still used in training and seminars today by Maryland Medical Examiners Office in Baltimore – solutions are kept under lock and key





THREE-ROOM DWELLING

Reported to Nutshell Laboratories, Monday, November 1, 1937.

Robert Judson, a foreman in a shoe factory, his wife Kate Judson, and their baby, Linda Mae Judson, were discovered dead by Paul Abbott, a neighbor.

Mr. Abbott was questioned and gave the following statement:

Bob Judson and he drove to their work together, alternating cars. This was Abbott's week to drive. On Monday morning, November 1, he was late—about 7:35 a.m.—so, when blowing his horn didn't bring Judson out, Abbott went to the factory without him, believing Judson would come in his own car.

Sarah Abbott, Paul Abbott's wife, was also questioned and gave the following statement:

After Paul had left, she watched for Bob to come out. Finally, about 8:15 a.m., seeing no signs of activity at the Judson house, she went over to their porch and tried the front door, but it was locked and she knocked and called but got no answer. She then went to the kitchen porch, but that door was also locked. She looked in through the glass, and then, thoroughly aroused by the sight of the gun and blood, she ran home and notified the police.

The model shows the premises just before Mrs. Abbott went to the house.

N.B.: Dawn broke at 5:00 a.m. Sunrise at 6:17 a.m. Weather clear. No lights were lighted in the house. Both outside doors were locked on the inside.

The Training Exercise

- 90 minutes to examine a diorama
- Flashlight, magnifying glass and a sheet of initial witness statements.
- Present analysis of case – witness statements true or false, any medical evidence to gather, whether case was a probable homicide, suicide or accident



Three Room Dwelling



The Purpose

“The information supplied concerning each model is that which the officer would normally have when sent to investigate, together with the first statements obtained from one or more of the most immediate accessible witnesses. It must not be overlooked that these statements may be true, mistaken, or intentionally false, or a combination of any two or all three of these. The observer must therefore view each case with an entirely open mind. The Nutshell Studies are not presented as crimes to be solved—they are, rather, designed as exercises in observing and evaluating indirect evidence, especially that which may have medical importance.”



Woodman's Shack





Kitchen

The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death







Kitchen

Date: April 11, 1944

Deceased: Robin Barnes,
housewife

Witness: Fred Barnes, her
husband

“I went downtown at four o'clock to run an errand for my wife. After about an hour and a half, I came back and found the outside door to the kitchen locked. It was propped open when I left. I knocked and called but got no answer. I tried the front door but it was also locked. I went to the kitchen window which was closed and locked. I looked in and saw her lying on the floor. I called the police, who forced open the kitchen door.”

The model shows the premises just before the police forced open the door.





Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.

Kitchen

1. The Body - The medical examiner should check for signs of blunt trauma to the head to determine homicide or suicide. The ice cube tray and temperature of the contents of the refrigerator will help determine time of death.





Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.

Kitchen

2. The Stove - There is a pie just out of the oven. Additionally, all the gas jets are on. Her face showed the tell-tale reddish color of death by asphyxiation.





Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.

Kitchen

3. The Sink - There is a stainless steel pot in the sink and partially peeled potatoes littering the surface. Mrs. Barnes is clearly in the middle of preparing for something. Is it likely a person will stop in the middle of peeling potatoes to kill herself?





Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.

Kitchen

4. The Butcher Block - There is a glass and a rolling pin on the butcher block. She had just finished making a pie, flour covers the surface. Did the glass on the butcher block belong to the deceased or did she get a drink for someone else? If she was hit in the head before she expired, the police should check the rolling pin for evidence.





Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.

Kitchen

5. The Window & the Table - The pin in the window is out; who opened it? The table cloth is askew. In a kitchen where everything else is in place, this disturbed table cloth tells us something. Someone could've left the room through the window.





Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.

Kitchen

6. The Iron - the iron is on the ironing board. It could've been used to knock her out. The killer could've then turned on all the gas jets and staged the room to look like a homicide. Police should check the iron for evidence.





Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.

Kitchen

7. The Knife - The knife was very likely used to stuff the newspaper in the door; either by the deceased or her killer.





Kitchen

8. The Door - The two doors in the room have their edges stuffed with paper. They are also locked from the inside.



Robin Barnes is lying on the floor next to the refrigerator. The door is open and the ice cube tray is lying on the floor next to her.





Dark Bathroom

The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death







Dark Bathroom

Date: November, 1896

Deceased: Maggie Wilson

Witness: Lizzie Miller, a neighbor.

“I roomed in the same house as Maggie Wilson but knew her only from we met in the hall. I think she had ‘fits’ [seizures]. A couple of male friends came to see her fairly regularly.”

“On Sunday night, the men were there and there was a lot of drinking going on. Some time after the men left, I heard the water running in the bathroom. I opened the door found her as you see her.”

The model shows the scene as discovered by Lizzie Miller





Maggie Wilson is dead in the tub in the small, dark bathroom. The water runs over her face and her legs are splayed over the side of the tub.

Dark Bathroom

1. The Bottles & Glass - A bottle and an empty glass are knocked over on the bathroom rug. Investigators should dust these for latent prints. That would allow them to eliminate the presence of others in the bathroom.





Maggie Wilson is dead in the tub in the small, dark bathroom. The water runs over her face and her legs are splayed over the side of the tub.

Dark Bathroom

2. The Sink - The sink could contain evidence that she refreshed herself there, possibly as a result of illness from her disorder or alcohol.





Maggie Wilson is dead in the tub in the small, dark bathroom. The water runs over her face and her legs are splayed over the side of the tub.

Dark Bathroom

3. The Tub Stopper - The stopper is not in the tub, which would be logical for someone drawing a bath. She or her friends could've placed her here to revive her.





Maggie Wilson is dead in the tub in the small, dark bathroom. The water runs over her face and her legs are splayed over the side of the tub.

Dark Bathroom

4. The Legs - Her legs appear to be in full *rigor mortis* which indicates she may have been moved to the tub. Had she died here, her legs would fall in a more natural manner.





Maggie Wilson is dead in the tub in the small, dark bathroom. The water runs over her face and her legs are splayed over the side of the tub.

Dark Bathroom

5. The Body - The medical examiner should check the body for other signs of trauma, including water in her lungs or blows to the head. The ME will determine death by natural causes, intentional drowning or accidental drowning.





Red Bedroom

The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death







Red Bedroom

Date: June 29, 1944

Deceased: Marie Jones, prostitute

Witness: Mrs. Shirley Flanagan,
landlord.

“That morning, I passed the open door of Marie's room and called out ‘hello.’ She didn't answer so I looked in and found room as you see it. Jim Green, her boyfriend and client came in with Marie the afternoon before. I don't know when he left. I found her body and called the police.”

Witness: Mr. Jim Green, boyfriend,
client.

“I met Marie on the sidewalk the afternoon of June 28, and walked her to a nearby package store where we bought two bottles of whiskey. We went to her room and sat smoking and drinking for a while. Marie sat in the big chair and got very drunk. Suddenly, without any warning, she grabbed my open jackknife—I used it to cut the string on the bottles—and ran into the closet and shut the door. When I opened the door, she was lying there just like that. I left immediately.”

The model shows the premises as Mr Green found them.



Marie Jones is dead in the closet of her small room. Her throat has been cut and her head is lying on a cardboard box. The murder weapon is lying next to her body.

Red bedroom

1. The Rag & Bottles - There are two bottles of whiskey on the floor next to a table. Why are they knocked over? There is a rag, which looks like it's covered in blood lying on the floor next to the wall near the bottles. It should be collected, tested and blood typed for identification.





Marie Jones is dead in the closet of her small room. Her throat has been cut and her head is lying on a cardboard box. The murder weapon is lying next to her body.

Red bedroom

2. The Candy - An open box of candy is on the floor near the bottles. Who bought the candy? The fancy packaging could be traced back to the store. Are any missing? Do the contents of her stomach prove she had eaten them? At the very least, Jim should be questioned about them.





Marie Jones is dead in the closet of her small room. Her throat has been cut and her head is lying on a cardboard box. The murder weapon is lying next to her body.

Red bedroom

3. The Body - Are those bangles or were her wrists bound? The ME needs to check the angle of the wound on her neck to determine if it was self-inflicted. The ME should test her blood alcohol to corroborate Jim's story. Lastly, did she fall in a natural manner?





Marie Jones is dead in the closet of her small room. Her throat has been cut and her head is lying on a cardboard box. The murder weapon is lying next to her body.

Red bedroom

4. The Bureau & Glass - All her dresser drawers are open. Are they empty? There is a glass randomly in the middle of the floor near the dresser. That is odd. What is in the glass?





Marie Jones is dead in the closet of her small room. Her throat has been cut and her head is lying on a cardboard box. The murder weapon is lying next to her body.

Red bedroom

5. The Suitcase - Coupled with the open dresser drawers, it appears she was trying to leave in a hurry. What is in the suitcase?





Parsonage Parlor

The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death







Parsonage Parlor

Date: Friday, August 23, 1946

Deceased: Dorothy Dennison, a high school student

Witness: Mrs. James Dennison, mother

“On Monday, about eleven o'clock, Dorothy walked downtown to buy some hamburger steak for dinner. She didn't have much money in her purse. When she didn't to return in time for dinner, I called my neighbor who said she'd seen her walking toward the market, but hadn't seen her since. I also called the market and the proprietor said he had sold Dorothy a pound of hamburger some time before noon, but didn't notice which way she turned when she left. By late afternoon, I was really alarmed and called the police.”

Witness: Lt. Peale, police officer.

“On Monday afternoon, at 5:25 p.m., I took the telephone call from Mrs. Dennison at Police Headquarters, and at once took charge of the matter personally. The customary inquiries began and by Wednesday, a systematic search of all closed or unoccupied buildings in the vicinity was undertaken. It was not until Friday, August 23 at 4:15 p.m., that me and Officer Patrick Sullivan entered the Parsonage and found her.”

Additional Information: The temperature during the week ranged between eighty six and ninety two degrees with high humidity.





Dorothy Dennison is dead on the floor of the parsonage. There is a knife in her abdomen, her legs are slightly spread and her dress is pulled up. There is a hammer lying not far from her head. Blood has saturated the floor.

Parsonage Parlor

1. The Covered Chairs & Piano -

The furniture is covered as if nobody lives here? Where is the rector and who else has keys? Is there blood on the piano or the stool? It's possible she was attacked from behind while she sat there.





Dorothy Dennison is dead on the floor of the parsonage. There is a knife in her abdomen, her legs are slightly spread and her dress is pulled up. There is a hammer lying not far from her head. Blood has saturated the floor.

Parsonage Parlor

2. The Body - She is not lying in a natural position. Given the heat and humidity, the amount of decomposition will help determine time of death. The bite marks on her body should be photographed and impressions taken. Were they pre- or post-mortem?





Dorothy Dennison is dead on the floor of the parsonage. There is a knife in her abdomen, her legs are slightly spread and her dress is pulled up. There is a hammer lying not far from her head. Blood has saturated the floor.

Parsonage Parlor

3. The Hammer - Is there other latent evidence on the hammer, besides human remains? Is there a toolbox nearby? This will help determine whether the hammer was grabbed for convenience or was brought to the scene. Did the hammer kill her or was it the knife in her abdomen?





Dorothy Dennison is dead on the floor of the parsonage. There is a knife in her abdomen, her legs are slightly spread and her dress is pulled up. There is a hammer lying not far from her head. Blood has saturated the floor.

Parsonage Parlor

4. The Purse & Package - Both are neatly placed on the chair, as if she was not in a hurry to set them down. The condition of the hamburger should corroborate the timeline of the witness statements.





Dorothy Dennison is dead on the floor of the parsonage. There is a knife in her abdomen, her legs are slightly spread and her dress is pulled up. There is a hammer lying not far from her head. Blood has saturated the floor.

Parsonage Parlor

5. The Mail - The presence of mail further proves that nobody was currently in residence. Who is the mail addressed to? Who should be picking it up?





Sources & Further Reading

Death in Diorama

- www.deathindiorama.com

The Nutshell Studies of Unexplained Death

- Corrine May Botz

Of Dolls and Murder

- Documentary by Susan Marks

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