

'Pomare's gift for complex plots and drum-tight tension shines'

BENJAMIN STEVENSON

J.P. POMARE 17 YEARS LATER

Who *really* killed the
Primrose family?



'A rare talent who continues to turn out crime masterpieces'

HERALD SUN

PRAISE FOR *THE WRONG WOMAN*

‘Bump it to the top of your must-read list immediately’

ANNA DOWNES

‘The pay-off is criminally good . . . As always, Pomare keeps the best surprises until last. Prepare for a late night’

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

‘An expertly plotted mystery with echoes of Lee Child. I raced through it and missed it once I finished’

ALLIE REYNOLDS

‘Deftly plotted, pacy and sharply written. Twists come out of nowhere and the high drama of the final few chapters is edge-of-the-seat stuff’

NEW ZEALAND WOMEN'S WEEKLY

‘J.P. Pomare has given us another juicy small-town read . . . Expect plenty of twists and turns in this thriller’

WOMAN'S DAY

‘Fresh and complex . . . Delivers on every front’

ARTSHUB

‘An engrossing tale of investigation and discovery, which will keep the reader fascinated to the end’

CANBERRA TIMES

‘The definitive J.P. Pomare whodunnit . . . rich with red herrings and clues alike, drip-fed to the reader, enticing them to unravel the mystery. Pomare is, in every definition, a masterful page-turner’

GOOD READING

PRAISE FOR *THE LAST GUESTS*

‘Carefully constructed, chilling and compelling, Pomare’s latest creation will keep you guessing right up to the last page’

ROSE CARLYLE

‘A twisty thriller with an ending I didn’t see coming’

MEGAN GOLDIN

‘*The Last Guests* is a brilliantly executed siege set-piece that keeps readers guessing until the final few pages’

GREG FLEMING, stuff.co.nz

‘A twisty thriller . . . Possibly not one to read in your rented holiday cottage. I’ll certainly be checking the light fittings at my next beach holiday rental’

THE AGE

‘This is a rip-snorting read that burbles along on fine prose, from a novelist who while still early in his career has already stamped his mark as a masterful storyteller. An excellent read from a must-read author’

GOOD READING

‘Chilling . . . Should keep readers up at night. Pomare knows how to keep the pages turning’

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

‘An emerging master of the taut and fast-flowing psychological thriller’

ARTSHUB

PRAISE FOR *TELL ME LIES*

‘Some startling surprises towards the end and a dark, thoughtful conclusion will keep you frantically turning the pages’

CANBERRA WEEKLY

‘A thrilling story about a celebrated psychologist who gets too close to a patient’

WHO MAGAZINE

‘J.P. Pomare spins another intriguing tale in his latest thriller’

READER'S DIGEST

‘A deliciously tight and twisty tale that is guaranteed to keep you turning the pages into the wee hours. If you enjoy your psychological thrillers at a breakneck pace . . . then add this to your wish list’

GOOD READING

‘A twisty tale full of suspense and mystery’

NEW IDEA

‘*Tell Me Lies* is a fast-paced mystery thriller’

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

‘A whodunnit with a limited number of possibilities that encourages the reader to guess between them’

HERALD SUN

PRAISE FOR *IN THE CLEARING*

‘Pomare’s books are testament to the fact that he could be one of the most exciting literary thriller authors to come out of the country’

SATURDAY PAPER

‘*In the Clearing* is written with a technical aplomb that proves *Call Me Evie* was no fluke’

THE AUSTRALIAN

‘Will keep you on the edge of your seat and wide awake until you’ve raced to the end. A true psychological thriller that is totally believable and which will stay with you long after you’ve finished’

HERALD SUN

‘There are lots of premium crime-fiction offerings this summer, but this bloodcurdling exploration of the asphyxiating grip of a cult on its followers deserves to be at the top of your pile’

NEW DAILY

‘A very fine thriller from a very fine author’

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER

‘If J.P. Pomare’s *Call Me Evie* was a slow-burner of a psychological thriller, his follow-up, *In the Clearing*, is a pared-back firecracker’

BOOKS+PUBLISHING

PRAISE FOR **CALL ME EVIE**

‘A whip smart debut from our newest thriller star’

NEW ZEALAND HERALD

‘Almost nothing will turn out as it initially appears in this devastating novel of psychological suspense’

PUBLISHERS WEEKLY (starred review)

‘Read this one with the lights on, and keep Pomare on your radar’

KIRKUS REVIEWS

‘I felt pure dread reading this book. Enjoyable, exquisite dread’

SARAH BAILEY

‘It’s a tight, compulsive, beautifully written thriller with echoes of Gillian Flynn, with characters that keep you guessing and a plot that keeps you turning the page’

CHRISTIAN WHITE

‘A striking and suspenseful read’

SYDNEY MORNING HERALD

‘Will have you guessing and second-guessing until the very end’

HERALD SUN

‘A one-sitting kind of book, ideal for readers who enjoy fast-paced thrillers that keep them guessing’

BOOKS+PUBLISHING

‘Pick this one up when you have plenty of time as you’re unlikely to put it down after a few pages’

DAILY TELEGRAPH

ALSO BY J.P. POMARE

Call Me Evie

In the Clearing

Tell Me Lies

The Last Guests

The Wrong Woman

Home Before Night



J.P.
POMARE
17 YEARS
LATER

Who *really* killed the
Primrose family?

 hachette
AUSTRALIA



Published in Australia and New Zealand in 2024
by Hachette Australia
(an imprint of Hachette Australia Pty Limited)
Gadigal Country, Level 17, 207 Kent Street, Sydney, NSW 2000
www.hachette.com.au

Hachette Australia acknowledges and pays our respects to the past, present and future Traditional Owners and Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises the continuation of cultural, spiritual and educational practices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Our head office is located on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation.

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A catalogue record for this book is available from the National Library of Australia

ISBN: 978 0 7336 4964 6 (paperback)

Cover design by Alex Ross Creative
All cover images courtesy of Alex Ross, except texture image courtesy of Shutterstock
Author photograph by Leah Jing McIntosh
Typeset in 12.1/16.5 pt Adobe Garamond Pro by Bookhouse, Sydney
Printed and bound in Australia by McPherson's Printing Group



The paper this book is printed on is certified against the Forest Stewardship Council® Standards. McPherson's Printing Group holds FSC® chain of custody certification SA-COC-005379. FSC® promotes environmentally responsible, socially beneficial and economically viable management of the world's forests.

For my brothers, Ben, Kent and Leon

There are those who believe in my innocence
and those who believe in my guilt. There is no
in-between.

AMANDA KNOX

I believe that, by and large, New Zealanders enjoy
a fair and effective criminal justice system. However
mistakes are possible in any system that relies on
human judgement.

STATEMENT OF INNOCENCE AND APOLOGY
FOR WRONGFUL CONVICTION OF TEINA PORA
THE HONOURABLE AMY ADAMS
MINISTER OF JUSTICE



PART ONE



Detective Marsden: Can you describe to us what happened this morning?

Jo Blackwell: Well, I woke up suddenly. I don't know how long I was asleep for but it was late.

Detective Marsden: And what woke you?

Jo Blackwell: Well, umm. I heard screams, these animal screams, you know. Like nothing I've ever heard before. I knew someone was in trouble so I sat up and shook my husband, Paul. I figured there was a fight at the house. I didn't want to interfere but the screams were so loud and so desperate that I thought I better call the police.

Detective Marsden: You called the police as soon as you heard the screams?

Jo Blackwell: Well, maybe I waited a minute or two. Paul thought I might have been hearing things, then he heard them too.

J.P. POMARE

I called the Primrose house but no one answered, then I tried Gwen's mobile but she didn't pick up. By that stage, the screams had stopped. But then I heard them again.

Detective Marsden: Okay. And were these screams also animalistic? Or different?

Jo Blackwell: A bit different, just this long, winding scream. I put my dressing gown on and we wandered down the driveway. We can see their house from there, we're directly across, you see. We thought we'd wait for the police because we didn't know what was happening – we didn't want to be seen. After a few minutes, we heard sirens. The fog was really thick but then we saw a man come out of the property. We could sense something was wrong. He didn't seem to notice us but he came out of the gate and went off down the road.

Detective Marsden: Can you describe the man you saw?

Jo Blackwell: We both recognised him. He used to live there – we'd see him on his skateboard some days. He was Māori. He was their chef. Maybe Paul's height.

Detective Marsden: Did you see anyone else? Or any vehicles?

Jo Blackwell: No, just him. Just that man. He was stumbling. Dark patches on his clothes. It looked like he had blood on him. We sort of froze. We didn't know what to do. Then you all turned up and Paul ran over to tell you but by then the chef was long gone.



TK

HUMILIATION: THAT WAS one motivation offered by the prosecution. The shame of rejection drove Bill to stab each member of the Primrose family with his chef's knife. Or *wrath*: he did it in a fit of rage because Simon and Gwen Primrose fired him and withheld his final paycheck. *Lust*: Bill's infatuation with their teenaged daughter grew to an obsession. He'd sent her lewd notes and couldn't live knowing he would never have her. Or a sort of *psychosis*: Bill was drunk, unstable.

Endless possible motives, that's what the prosecution had – and circumstantial evidence for every one of them.

But if you believe Bill's version of events, he simply found the bodies, heard the sirens and panicked, fleeing from the crime scene. Wrong place, wrong time.

I spent three years of my life trying to figure out what really happened and concluded that two facts should have created reasonable doubt:

One, Bill Kareama has experienced lifelong severe asthma.

Two, Bill Kareama did not have an inhaler on the night of the murders.

But the jury did not agree: when he was on trial, they decided the second fact was a lie, or seemed to believe a young man with severe asthma was capable of running three kilometres in twelve minutes *without* an inhaler.

It's true that Bill did not do himself any favours the morning of the murders: at approximately 6 am, he walked 900 metres from his flat, past The Pope sports bar, past the strip of shops and the service station, to the Morning Star bakery on the corner of Pope Terrace. As he made his way there, he placed a shopping bag full of ashes into the skip beside the BP. The ashes were once the clothes he'd worn the night before, when he was at the Primrose house. At the bakery, he sat and ate a mince and cheese pie, staring out into the quiet street. It also didn't help that he'd cut his nails to the quick, shaved his head, bleach-cleaned the flat he'd recently started renting and destroyed his mobile phone.

These acts alone do not make him a murderer but they sure as shit didn't help his defence. Because most people don't really understand what trauma, fatigue and drug-induced chemical imbalances in the brain can do to someone's behaviour. Behaving strangely after exposure to death and extreme violence should not automatically get a man locked up for twenty-five years.

There were other issues with the original trial too, and if Bill ever got his retrial, it's likely he'd win for a number of reasons. First, the question of procedural fairness and sub judice. Second, the police failed to consider, let alone investigate, any other potential suspects. Third, the coercive interview techniques used on Bill.

But there would be no retrial. Today I read that he's now been in prison for seventeen years – it was reported in the Sunday paper, his face on page three, a recent shot from inside. It sucker-punched me, and for a moment, I was back there, meeting Bill. The first thing I noticed about him that day was his size – the photos in the press

17 YEARS LATER

didn't seem to capture it. He was big but lean. The second thing I noticed about Bill Kareama was his unusual calmness.

As I drive from my parent's place in Rotorua back home to Auckland, I feel the pull of Cambridge. Just like before. I can't shake it. So I take the familiar turn-off and head out toward the house. I park outside a pair of iron gates set within a stone wall bordering the property – the sort you might find in the British countryside. I get out and approach the gates, and feel a funny sort of nostalgia as I look through. I hadn't exactly forgotten, but it had been a while.

A wide driveway splits the generous garden, leading to the expansive frontage of a stately home that looks more country manor than New Zealand farmhouse. The surrounding grounds have long since been sliced and diced, each portion auctioned off, built on. The density of suburbia has closed in on what was once a small number of properties with serious acreage, the surrounding landscape now blighted with townhouses. All that remains of the Primrose estate is that grand old house. Last time I was here, you could barely see the house through the tall grass and unruly hedges. Now it's tidy, well maintained, with hedges trimmed tight and lawns buzzed close. The new owners have done a good job.

I promised myself I'd move on, put this place behind me. So why am I here? Promises are funny like that – once you break one, the rest don't seem to matter.

Tyres on gravel. I turn to see a Mitsubishi Pajero slowing, turning into the driveway. I step away as the gates begin to open and the vehicle pulls in and then stops.

I look in and smile, but the woman behind the wheel isn't smiling back. The window lowers.

'Leave us alone.'

Each syllable is bitten off with such rage I'm struck silent for a moment.

'Sorry?'

‘You heard.’

‘I was just admiring the ho—’

‘I know what you’re doing,’ the woman says. I see the tiny spider veins in her cheeks, she can barely meet my eye. ‘Go on, clear off or I *will* call the police.’

‘Sure, sorry,’ I say, exhaling. I take one more look up at the house. It’s perfect – you could almost believe nothing bad ever happened here. I take my keys from my pocket and walk back to my car. Why did I come here? I shake my head. I remind myself that I don’t owe Bill Kareama anything. Not a bloody thing.