

RANDOM HOUSE *e*BOOKS



Blood Rites

Jimmy Lee Shreeve

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About the Book

London, England, 2001: The dismembered torso of a five-year-old boy is found floating in the Thames, the victim of a Ju Ju ritual sacrifice.

New Jersey, USA, 2002: A Palo Mayombe sect temple basement is raided by police, who find human body parts and the remains of several animals seemingly sacrificed by worshippers.

Lima, Peru, 2004: The body of a decapitated baby boy is found on a hilltop, surrounded by flowers, a liquor bottle and a container of blood, apparently the victim of a ritual sacrifice to appease a pre-Columbian earth god ...
Welcome to the world of ritual sacrifice.

Around the world, humans are being trafficked, kidnapped, sold and enslaved, for the specific purpose of sacrifice. Mass-scale migration has seen these gruesome techniques exported from the land of the Aztecs - and finding their way into Britain and the US. Voodoo priests in London have been linked with ritual murders. And a recent leaked police commissioned report found that witchcraft, voodoo-related abuse and murder, is rife in the UK.

Jimmy Lee Shreeve takes us on a journey into the darkest corners of the world, following the initial investigations of Scotland Yard into the Thames murder, travelling to South Africa and then Nigeria, where the full horror of a wide 'export trade' in humans to Britain for sacrifice is unveiled. He unveils a depraved US-based Cuban religious cult

linked with a score of sacrifices and murders, and travels to Mexico, where a devotee of Palo Mayombe, Adolfo de Jesus Constanzo, was responsible for torturing and boiling in a cauldron more than a dozen victims. *Blood Rites* is a gruesome, disturbing look at the dark, sick world of twenty-first century ritual murder.

About the Author

Jimmy Lee Shreeve is a journalist who has written for the *Guardian*, the *Independent*, *The Financial Times*, *Midweek* and *The X Factor*, amongst others. He also hosts his own radio show - True Crime Hour - which has a dedicated following.

Picture Credits

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Jimmy Lee Shreeve

Blood Rites



arrow books

Dedication

To my wife Nicky:
'Like a wildfire and the scent of the night ...'

In memory of the writer William S. Burroughs
(1914-1997):
'Nothing is true, everything is permitted.'

Introduction: First Rites

‘He knows death to the bone – Man has created death.’

W. B. Yeats 1865–1939: *Death* (1933).

London, England, 2001: Headless and dismembered body of a 5–7-year-old African boy found in the Thames. Police believe the unidentified boy, who they nicknamed ‘Adam’, was sacrificed as part of a ‘Juju’ ritual.

New York, USA, 2000: Newborn baby girl, with umbilical clamp still attached, found floating in a jar of formaldehyde. Cops say she may have been sacrificed as part of a ritual by a 74-year-old Palo Mayombe sect ‘witch’.

Bochum, Germany, 2002: Murderous young gothic woman, known as the ‘Bride of Satan’, tells German court how Satan ordered her and her husband to hack a friend to death and drink his blood – in a grisly human sacrifice.

Lima, Peru, 2004: Decapitated baby boy found on a hilltop surrounded by containers of blood. Investigators believe the killing was a ritual sacrifice to appease a pre-Columbian earth deity.

These and other equally macabre news stories had been jumping out at me since 2000. I’d been picking them up from the wires since doing an article on human sacrifice for

a magazine I used to write for. It had become a kind of habit to collect stories of ritualistic killing, which, in my view, couldn't be described as murder – not strictly speaking, anyway. The motive didn't fit the usual models of jealousy, robbery or out-and-out craziness. Instead, it was about magick and sorcery. These killers weren't psychos. They were simply attempting to make their spells and magickal ceremonies more powerful – and this involved the offering of blood.

I'm not saying I didn't find these killings blood-curdling and abhorrent. I did. But it was more than that: I just couldn't believe what I was seeing. Like most people I thought human sacrifice went out with the Aztecs. Yet here it was going on today and uncomfortably close to home – in Britain, Europe and the US, as well as in more far-flung areas of the world.

Because I'm a freelance journalist, I knew that one day I would have to face these terrible cases head-on – dig deeper and uncover the reasoning behind them. While I found the crime aspect of the murders interesting, what really intrigued me were the beliefs that drove people to these extremes. I've had a certain amount of involvement with magick myself (which, I should state at the outset, is in no way as dark as it is sometimes painted) and the experience has left me with a curious combination of arch scepticism and belief in the magickal universe. My magickal heyday came during the 1980s when I used to hang out with a Voodoo doctor called Earl Marlowe (now passed into the great beyond). I used to play in a band with him in London. We played blues, reggae and calypso songs. We never made the big time. But we had a wild time playing around Britain's clubs and wine bars – even busking on pleasure boats from time to time.

Besides singing, Earl used to do spells and fortune telling for people – he had a hundred or so clients. He brought me in on this and used to call me his 'apprentice'.

It was a fascinating experience and gave me a good grounding in practical magick, which has been described as 'the art of manipulating reality to your own ends'.

I was already familiar with magick and mysticism, having first got interested at the age of 16, while working in an antiquarian bookshop in Northampton. Someone sold the shop a full set of the works of the mystic Aleister Crowley (who at one time was unfairly dubbed the 'wickedest man in the world'). I duly nabbed the books at a good discount and began to experiment with his techniques of mind expansion.

Because of my personal experience of magick and Voodoo I felt I had the right credentials to look into the all-too-common cases of human sacrifice that have occurred over recent years. I wanted to get a grip on the motivations of *why* people were doing it. To me, the whole deal seemed crazy and nonsensical. For example, in one case, in Malaysia, a spirit medium brutally sacrificed an American woman to a fearsome Hindu goddess to gain winning lottery numbers. He duly bought a lottery ticket and lost. How could the woman's death have been more in vain? And then, after the 'Adam' torso-in-the-Thames story broke, a Voodoo priest in London admitted that gangsters, murderers and rapists had asked him to perform ritual murder on their behalf, in a bid to protect them from the law. Wouldn't it have been easier to have just stopped committing crimes?

When you look into human sacrifice you soon discover it's *not* about logic. It's about superstition and belief. When someone is sacrificed they are usually offered up to deities or spirits as gifts – the idea being that the ritual sacrificer, or the person who has hired his or her services, gets a gift in return, be it riches or power, or some other material want. It's practical magick with a homicidal twist. But those who do it don't necessarily think they are doing

wrong; as far as they are concerned it is justified and it certainly ain't murder.

I began my investigations with the Adam case, which hit the headlines in September 2001. A little black kid had been hauled out of the Thames. He'd had his head and limbs cut off. Scotland Yard at first thought he was the victim of a sex killer and had been dismembered so the body couldn't be identified. But then a number of experts brought the cops to the shocking conclusion that the boy might have been sacrificed in a ceremony – possibly to protect criminals from the law – that had roots in the dark side of traditional African religion. It turned out Adam had been poisoned 48 hours before his death with the Calabar bean, a highly toxic vine from West Africa. This, said experts, would have left him paralysed but conscious while his throat was cut. At a memorial service for the boy, Commander Andy Baker, who headed the case, said: 'Just imagine your worst nightmare and that would be nowhere near.'

Shocking though the case was – and although I commend Scotland Yard's tenacity and dedication in trying to bring the killers to book – I had reservations about some of the conclusions they came to. A number of the experts they consulted, who insisted the boy's murder had been a witchcraft sacrifice, had been fundamentalist Christians, who seemed to see dark rites and 'Satan' in everything. They had an agenda, which arguably could have been to discredit traditional (non-Christian) African religion. If so, the Adam case provided a prime opportunity. The press, however, never once covered this aspect of the Adam case. I've made a point of covering it in full because I believe it should be brought to public attention.

You'll also read how I very nearly got arrested when I went to Scotland Yard to meet the leading detectives on the Adam case – and how a friend of mine, Canadian shaman Dr Crazywolf, did a ceremony on Hampstead Heath to set

‘Adam’s soul free’. After going into a shamanic trance and consulting with his guardian spirits, Crazywolf came to the conclusion that Adam had been sacrificed by evil witchdoctors in a ritual to make the boy’s soul their slave in the spirit world.

After the Adam case, I look at a particularly macabre occupation – that of ‘professional human sacrificers’, who have been known to operate in South America and Africa. One such professional from Peru, Máximo Coa, once described how he would typically ply his victims (usually female) with alcohol and cocaine, before cutting off their heads and using their blood to make ‘holy aspersions around the place’. It was said he raped his victims before dispatching them. There’s also the story of the so-called Devil Doctor of Lagos, another pro, who operated in Nigeria during the 1960s and 1970s. He reputedly sacrificed a British soldier in a chilling ritual called the ‘200 Cuts’. This involved making 200 cuts with a scalpel in the victim, done with the precision of a master surgeon, so the victim stayed alive and conscious throughout the ordeal. The 201st cut was the killing cut. An African colonel allegedly commissioned the grisly ritual. He attended the ceremony, laughing with undisguised glee at the gut-wrenching agonies suffered by the victim. He was also clearly aroused by the torturous ceremony – an observer noticed a large bulge in the crotch of his trousers ...

Satan plays a bigger part in this book than he did in the Bible. The ‘Dark Lord’ only has a minute mention in the holy book, yet a fair amount of blood has been spilt in his name. In one case, three youths in a small town in California, who were obsessed with Satan and death metal music, brutally killed a 15-year-old virgin, then allegedly had sex with her corpse. They killed the girl as an offering to Satan in the hope that he would make their own death metal band famous. The youths did get their 15 minutes of fame, only it was as depraved necrophiliacs. The boys

demonstrated how, in the wrong hands, Satanism can push those who follow its path to extremely negative behaviour. Undoubtedly they represent a small minority and it would be wrong to tar all Satanists with the same brush. That's why I make a distinction between Satanists who kill or indulge in antisocial behaviour, and those that are members of the Church of Satan, which was founded by Anton LaVey, author of *The Satanic Bible*. These latter types of Satanists aren't generally credulous, out-and-out believers in anything; instead they tend to mix elements of humanism and rationalism with their occult interests, and are invariably honourable and upstanding citizens (contrary to popular belief).

Besides this, I cover a spate of grave robberies that occurred in New Jersey in recent years. Skulls and bones were allegedly stolen by members of the Palo Mayombe cult – which has roots in Africa and is similar to Voodoo – for use in magickal rites. The bones would be put in large cauldrons, along with the rotting remains of sacrificed animals. On raiding a Palo Mayombe temple, suspected of having illicit bones, one cop said it had 'an odour that you keep with you – like your first DOA'.

There are also very recent stories of human sacrifice, such as the ritual slaying in February 2006 of two men by members of the Naula tribe who live on the remote Seram island in Indonesia. To this day, sacrifice is a central element of the tribe's culture. It's even required as part of the tribal marriage contract; the groom has the unenviable task of handing over a severed human head from another tribe to the bride's family.

My coverage is at times unconventional and outrageous – but, for me, this is the best way of getting to the heart of any story. To help bring insight into why it is people perform ritual sacrifice and to provide an overview of magickal thinking, I've included anecdotes from my own involvement in magick and the occult. I've also included

talks with experts on crime and ritual killing, some transcribed from my occasional 'True Crime Hour' radio show.

At the end of the book, I outline a very strange experience I had which led to my finding a workable model to explain the motivations behind the practice of blood sacrifice. It enabled me to bring together a number of disciplines - from hypnotherapy and split-brain research to theories on the evolution of consciousness - and come up with possible answers not only to why it is people are driven to sacrifice, but also to why they believe in invisible entities that can offer them rewards in exchange for blood. Clearly, I'm a journalist and amateur antiquarian, not a scientific researcher. So the theories I put forward in this book are intended to stimulate debate, and are meant to be catalysts, not the last word.

That said, are you ready to hit the blood-soaked road to Hades? And find out what deadly craziness *Homo sapiens* can sink to?

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Thursday, 1 May 2006
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Chapter 1: A Voodoo Orgy Of Madness

Torso in the Thames ... Hunting The Juju Killers ...
New Scotland Yard ... Visions of Doubt ... God Squad
... Fighting Victimisation ... Last Rites ... Fear and
Dread in Blighty ...

‘So many gods, so many creeds, so many paths that
wind and wind, while just the art of being kind is all
the sad world needs.’

Ella Wheeler Wilcox 1855–1919
The World's Need.

WHILE I'M A newspaper journalist with a rational turn of mind, I'm also an antiquarian with a long-time interest in magick (the additional 'k' signifying the occult and sorcery rather than conjuring). So when a little black boy was found dismembered in the Thames in 2001, apparently murdered as part of a sacrificial rite with alleged roots in West Africa, I knew I had to investigate the case. The journalist inside me wanted to get to the truth of the story, while the esoteric aspect of me wanted to find out if the magickal arts had been defiled by some sinister group practising ritual human sacrifice – which was what I feared.

So I set out on my quest, which would prove both a real-world journey and a visionary one. I was a cross between the fictional private consulting detective, Sherlock Holmes (who was of a strongly rational bent), and his creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (who had a strong spiritualist side). In other words, I was arch-sceptic and modern mystic rolled into one. For good or ill, this seemed like the best mindset

for digging into the terrible killing of the nameless boy, dubbed 'Adam' by police, whose torso had been cast into the ebb and flow of the Thames as an offering to a pagan deity.

Torso in the Thames

The story began on the afternoon of Friday, 21 September 2001. A slight chill hung in the early autumn air, like an impending curse. An IT consultant was walking briskly over Tower Bridge, on his way to a meeting, when a strange object bobbing around in the Thames below caught his attention. The object was brown and spherical, and was moving westward at some speed, caught by the river's strong seasonal tides. He thought it was probably a beer keg, thrown off one of the disco boats moored along the Thames. When he saw the object was wearing orange shorts, he concluded it must be a discarded tailor's dummy. But his interest had been caught, and he followed its progress. The next moment, as the current turned, the object shifted, revealing severed stumps of bone. He froze in horror. It was a human body. 'Jesus,' he breathed, as he rummaged frantically for his mobile phone and dialled 999.

A police launch recovered the remains from the river alongside the Globe Theatre in Southwark. In 20 minutes, the body had travelled just over one mile. Studies of tidal patterns suggested the body had been thrown into the river anywhere between Chiswick in the west and the Thames Barrier in the east. That gave police 30 miles of river to investigate, and experts were unable to say if the torso was thrown into the river from the south or north bank. What investigators did ascertain was that the torso had been in the water for up to ten days, that he was a black boy between 4 and 8 years old and that he had been murdered.

But there was a lot that baffled the forensics team. For one thing, bodies are usually dismembered either to hide

the victim's identity or to easily transport and dispose of the corpse. Yet in this case no effort had been made to weigh down or conceal the torso once it had been dumped in the Thames. What's more, the orange shorts made the torso stand out like a beacon. Equally puzzling was the finding that the shorts had been placed on the torso *after* the boy was killed (the legs could not have been hacked off with them on). Answers to these questions became apparent as the investigation proceeded.

The forensics team mapped a profile of the boy's DNA, which would be used to identify his parents if they were ever found. They also covered the torso in tape in an attempt to lift off any hairs or fibres that could have belonged to the killer. This drew a blank. Swab tests found no evidence that any sexual assault had taken place - which ruled out the homicidal pervert theory. Initial toxicology tests found the boy had recently taken a cough suppressant called Pholcodine, which can be bought over the counter at any chemist's. Because of this the police speculated that the murderer or murderers had taken care of the boy before killing him. 'It wasn't obvious then, but looking back on it now, it shows some sort of duty of care to this child,' Ray Fysh, a scientist with Britain's Forensic Science Service and forensic co-ordinator on the case, later told the *Toronto Star*.¹ Further analysis would reveal a toxic substance in the boy's intestine that would have played a key part in making the boy's death horrific beyond imagination.

The way the boy's limbs were cut off had the precision of a master butcher. The killer either used a set of heavy, razor-sharp kitchen knives, or one that was sharpened regularly during the dismemberment (which was done after the boy's death). 'They cut the skin, peeled the muscle back, and then cut through the bone. They never went through a joint,' Fysh said. He added that the boy had died from violent blood loss caused by a knife wound to the

neck, and that there was no blood in the lungs, which meant the boy probably died lying down or upside down. Another thing Fysh and his team discovered was that the first vertebra of the boy's neck was missing. They found this very odd and could come up with no explanation for it.

Scotland Yard detectives were equally baffled. They had no leads as to the identity of the boy, who they christened 'Adam'. They were also a long way from finding out who the killer or killers were and the motive for the murder. What sort of person would have committed such a crime – and why? It made no sense because it didn't fit the model of any conventional murder. Nothing seemed to add up. The only other case on their records that bore any similarity to this one occurred in 1969 in London, when police discovered the torso of a baby girl dismembered in much the same way as Adam. Though no one was ever arrested for the crime, many suspected the murder was part of an African ritual killing – a human sacrifice.

Could this have been the fate that befell Adam?

About six weeks after Adam's torso was found, this looked like a distinct possibility – a clue was uncovered that raised the prospect that the occult played some part in the boy's murder. Police searching for the rest of the body found seven half-burned candles wrapped inside a white cotton bedsheet, which had been washed up on the southern bank of the Thames. The name 'Adekoyejo Fola Adoye' (which has roots in the Yoruba tribe of West Africa) was written three times on the sheet, and cut into the candles. But this turned out to be a red herring. Police discovered that Adoye lived in New York, and that his London-based parents had held a perfectly innocuous thanksgiving on the banks of the Thames to celebrate the fact that he had survived the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Such riverside services with a simple offering are common among Christian Yoruba believers.

Despite this setback, police still suspected that Adam's killing had a witchcraft motive. So they turned to Dr Richard Hoskins,² a specialist in African religions at King's College, London, for advice. He confirmed their suspicions: 'The case of Adam is definitely a ritualistic killing. There is no doubt in my mind,' he said. 'The remarkable thing is that he was brought from Africa to the UK specifically for the purpose.' Shocking though Hoskins' statement is, it is no surprise when you consider just how common ritual sacrifice is in Africa. Official figures state that around 300 ritual slayings of humans are performed every year in South Africa (with police only managing to investigate 40 or 50 of these); about the same number are killed annually in Nigeria, where the victim's blood is offered to gods, spirits or ancestors. What's more, according to Europol estimates, there have been at least nine cases of ritual killing across Europe in the past fifteen years or so. Hoskins believes others are bound to happen as more African immigrants enter European countries.

Scotland Yard were now firmly on the trail of Juju³ - a generic term for traditional African magick and religion - which they were certain was the motive for the killing of Adam.

Not long after the Adam case hit the headlines, I decided to find out for myself whether there was any truth to the possibility that this was a human sacrifice with roots in Africa. From my experience of traditional African spirituality, I knew that Juju encompasses many different beliefs and practices, but is essentially pagan and involves the worship of many gods and spirits, as well as ancestors.

The well-known spiritual paths of Voodoo, Hoodoo, Santeria and Macumba grew out of Juju when slaves were transported from Africa to the Caribbean and to North and South America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Juju shamans and witchdoctors are highly skilled herbalists who treat the ailments of rural and city dwellers

alike. Although they don't take the place of conventional doctors, they are often seen as the more powerful healers. But Juju practitioners don't just treat medical problems; they also help people with material and worldly issues, such as the need to gain more money, attract love, or wreak revenge on an enemy. This is done by casting spells and performing magickal rituals. Sometimes this involves the sacrifice of an animal, other times herbal concoctions are enough.

A small minority of practitioners, however, believe that the most powerful magick comes from the sacrifice of a human. The late Idi Amin of Uganda, for example, is believed to have extensively employed black magickians, working in the African sorcery tradition. One account claims that Amin abducted a British soldier, and then employed one of the most powerful sorcerers for hire in Africa, at the time, to slowly skin the abductee alive in a ritual to capture his soul, and make it a slave for Amin.⁴

Stories such as these, along with the figures quoted earlier, made it a distinct possibility that Scotland Yard were correct in thinking Britain had got its first definite case (in modern times, at least) of ritual human sacrifice. But I wanted to get the opinion of a practitioner of African magick and religion. Through some contacts who had known Earl Marlowe,⁵ the Voodoo doctor I was associated with during the 1980s and early 1990s, I tracked down a 'root doctor'⁶ in the Stoke Newington area of north London. His name was Edmond Labady and, while he wasn't in any way involved in nefarious practices, I was told he'd have a good idea of what was going on. At the time, Labady lived in a typical north London terraced house - Edwardian and spacious with solid, thick walls. Ivy and honeysuckle weaved around trellis works in the small front garden. At first glance nothing gave away the fact that Labady was a practitioner of magick in the African and Voodoo traditions. Closer scrutiny, however, revealed sections of angular

symbols painted around the frame of the front door. I recognised them as being a mix of Voodoo veves (ideograms representing the various spirits and deities of Voodoo) and symbols from other magickal traditions, including ancient Egyptian inscriptions.



I rang the bell. A few seconds later Labady was ushering me into his lounge. He was in his sixties and his glossy and only slightly greying hair was slicked back from his forehead. His piercing eyes and neatly trimmed goatee beard gave the impression of regality, as if he were in

control of his own little kingdom. After he'd made me a black coffee, into which he dropped a couple of capfuls of dark rum, I asked him if he thought Adam could have been the victim of a ritual human sacrifice.

'That's the way it looks to me,' he replied. 'Some bad work is going down. Evil people calling the spirits for very selfish ends.' He lit a cigar, mused for a moment, then said: 'It could well have African roots. I've travelled to West Africa on and off, in search of my roots and magickal knowledge and stuff like that, and I know that ritual killing is rife, 'specially in Nigeria. Yeah, lots of Nigerians get killed by headhunters,' he said. 'These people - they cut out the body parts and sell 'em to Juju priests, so they can use 'em in their potions.'

'What are these potions used for?' I asked.

'For all sorts of purposes,' he replied. 'For politicians to get elected or to attract riches, to protect people from sickness, accidents and spiritual attacks [curses]. Mostly body parts are used for moneymaking. People see it as a way of getting rich quick. Some think a ritual with human blood or body parts can bring 'em money and wealth. But it's not just in Nigeria, it goes on in Ghana, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Uganda. That's the way it is.'

Labady added that there had been so many ritual killings in Lagos in 2001 that *The Punch*, a Nigerian national newspaper, ran a story with the headline 'Ritualists lay siege to Lagos'. As far as he was concerned, it would be no surprise if the murder of Adam turned out to have been a human sacrifice. With many Nigerians and other Africans making their homes in Britain, he said, it was inevitable that a few practitioners of the dark side of sorcery would have slipped in too - possibly looking for new clients and new territories.

After leaving Labady, I headed over to Alexandra Palace, the majestic Victorian exhibition centre which lies close to

Wood Green in north London. It's somewhere I used to go to relax, partly because – being set in nearly 200 acres of parkland – it is one of north London's main green lungs, and also because it offers views right across the city. You can sit back and lose yourself in the sheer size of the metropolis and muse on what the millions of people are doing. Some will be successful and wealthy, others poor and needy, the majority somewhere in between. Some will be cruel and violent, others kind and considerate. And some will be killers who have never been caught. The human animal is very diverse and sometimes very dangerous. And all are represented in the urban sprawl of London. But I was on a mission to find out more about a new breed of killer in Britain – the ritual sacrificer. So I grabbed a large Plymouth gin from the Phoenix Bar and sat outside the Palace to think about what Labady had said.

The police were saying the Adam killing was the worst, most chilling murder they'd ever come across. There was no disputing that. But I couldn't help thinking that, in some sense, the killing of Adam was not murder. After all, the perpetrators probably believed they were offering the boy as a gift to the gods. They didn't necessarily see the killing as wrong. It was part of their spirituality. Macabre and grotesque it surely was, but a genuine belief system nonetheless. Most people would call it a terrible travesty of spirituality. Yet 2,000 years ago, in Britain, the ancient Celts piled sacrificial victims into huge wicker men and burnt them alive. A few hundred years later when the then pagan Anglo-Saxons colonised Britain, they regularly sacrificed animals and, on occasion, humans (but these were typically criminals or enemies they'd captured). The more I thought about it, the terrible, savage killing of Adam was beginning to bring to light a serious clash of cultures. Ancient shamanism was shaking a stick at the comfortable values of the West – making us feel decidedly edgy and bringing out the deep-rooted fear and dread many of us feel

of Voodoo and sorcery. As I took a final sip of gin and got up to head home, I started to think that the cultural implications of this case could well have an underlying impact on our society for years to come.

As it was, the Adam case didn't shock the nation as much as it might have. The story got overshadowed by the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center on 11 September 2001. People the world over were reeling at the sheer audacity and enormity of the attacks - not to mention the massive loss of life. And the media naturally ran the ins and outs of that fateful day for weeks to come. So the Adam story pretty much came and went - until early 2002 when, due to the efforts of the Scotland Yard press office, the media jumped on the story and began exploring it in detail. One revealing piece cropped up in the *Daily Mail*^{[L](#)} in November 2002. Part of the article included an interview with a 72-year-old Voodoo priest called Malcolm Toussaint, who moved to England from Haiti in the 1950s. Echoing the comments made to me by Edmond Labady, he told the *Mail* that ritual killings are far more common than most people think. Toussaint then helped recreate the likely events that led to Adam's death. The boy's journey, he said, would have begun in Africa, where he probably lived in a small village in Nigeria. Toussaint went on to say that some people in very poor areas of Africa, of which there are many, sell their children to sacrifice hunters - wealthy individuals who seek out children to buy and sell on to witchdoctors and others wishing to perform ritual killings to improve their fortunes, place hexes or to protect themselves from the law.

The sum offered for the boy, said Toussaint, would have been around £2,000, at least four times the average annual income in Nigeria. He didn't think the sacrifice hunter would have spelt out to the boy's parents that the money was in exchange for their son's life. But they wouldn't have been under any illusions about why a rich stranger wanted

to take their son to England, although they would probably have told themselves that he would be reincarnated into a better life. To get Adam to go with the rich stranger, they would have told him he would be well fed and would get a good education in England, which would help him to earn a lot of money. And that one day he'd return home to visit his family as a successful man.

Once in England, continued Toussaint, Adam would have been taken to a derelict house where he would have been given a sedative to keep him calm. His clothes would have been removed and, half an hour before the start of the ceremony, the boy would have been strangled by the Juju priest. Then, having summoned the spirit Elegua, the spirit which grants access to the supernatural realm, and asked for permission to perform the ritual, the priest would have started the hour-long ceremony. First, using a razor-sharp knife, the priest would have gouged out the boy's brown eyes, a Juju symbol of independence. He would then have sliced off the penis, which is believed to represent eternal life. It would then have been preserved in an alcoholic spirit like white rum and burned for good luck at a later date. After that, the priest would have cut open Adam's neck and would have sucked out a mouthful of warm blood from the gaping gash to make sure it was pure. The boy's head would then have been sliced off because it symbolises intelligence and the arms and legs would have been removed as they represent creativity and mobility.

Chillingly, Toussaint concluded by saying the killing of Adam wasn't the first of its kind in Britain. Human and animal sacrifices, he claimed, have been going on regularly in London ever since he moved there more than 40 years ago. He even claimed that gangsters, murderers and rapists had asked him to perform ritual sacrifice for them – but he wouldn't do it.

Hunting the Juju Killers

The Juju angle certainly took Scotland Yard by surprise. They weren't used to the occult as a motive for murder – money, jealousy and sheer viciousness made more sense. This was why, six months after Adam's torso had been discovered, detectives investigating the case had flown 7,000 miles from London to South Africa. One of the locations they visited was a 'muti'⁸ or medicine market in downtown Johannesburg. The British press recorded how Commander Andy Baker, a balding, middle-aged man with a determined face, picked through the piles of monkey skulls, baboon hands and scaly lizard tails on the various stalls. He could well have been thinking that this was a hopeless case. After all, the FBI had said it couldn't be solved. And the truth was, the odds were against cracking it, what with the wall of silence and the unique motive that lay behind the macabre child killing.

It was now 22 April 2002. Baker was with his colleague Detective Inspector Will O'Reilly, who has the world-worn look of TV detective Columbo (and, when in Britain, even wears the classic beige raincoat). Despite the complexities of the case, neither was about to give up. They were determined to bring the perpetrators of this terrible killing to book. The two policemen mingled with regular muti customers, who happily sifted through decaying animal parts and jars of congealing fats. Baker and O'Reilly were accompanied by officers from the Pretoria-based Occult Related Crime Unit (ORCU) – originally set up by long-standing detective Colonel Kobus Jonker (now retired). The unit was the scourge of muti practitioners across South Africa. The stallholders were clearly uneasy. So when Baker asked one peddler of alternative medicines what was in his potions, he met with an evasive reply. 'It is powerful stuff, guaranteed to cure all ills,' was all the peddler would say.

As they walked around the muti market it became increasingly clear how significant traditional medicine and witchcraft are to sub-Saharan life. The items on sale – stomach-churning to most Western eyes – included weasels impaled on sticks, dried bats, the rotting carcass of an eagle wrapped in yellowing newspapers and the decomposing skull of a cheetah cub. All were intended for use in shamanistic rituals to cure health problems, attract love, sex and money, or to curse an enemy. In the soaring heat, the stench of the market must have been overpowering. The two London cops had entered a world ruled by spirits and sympathetic magick. A far cry from the logical and rationalistic world of policing. In this world, a run of bad luck, illnesses such as AIDS, poverty or a failing relationship would be put down to the wrath of a spirit. Such problems are often dealt with by conducting an occult ritual using herbs, potions and animal parts. Rituals typically involve the sacrifice of an animal – a chicken, goat or whatever is readily available. But most chillingly of all, the ritual sacrifice of humans – mainly children – is not uncommon. It is seen as a highly potent form of sorcery. Shamanism here is not of the variety touted by dewy-eyed new age enthusiasts in the West. More often than not it is bleak and loveless, with little regard for the sanctity of human life. Many Africans live in fear of witchcraft because of the ritual murders that can follow in its wake. As the police officers surveyed the muti market, Captain Lynne Evans of the occult unit reportedly took them to one side and quietly told them: ‘You could probably get human body parts down here if you knew what to ask for and how to ask for it.’

Later that day, Baker and O’Reilly met former South African President, Nelson Mandela, who had agreed to make a pan-African appeal for information about the London child murder they were attempting to solve. Baker said after the meeting: ‘Mr Mandela is a highly respected,