

The Lying Confession of the Cruel Monster

Pasquale, Who Pretends to Be Demented and Has Blocked Every Effort of the Detectives to Unravel the Mystery, Insists That the Child Is Dead--- But Is Little Blakely Alive and in Hiding With the Woman Whose Footprints Were Found Under the Ladder?

The Confession—Which Mrs. Coughlin Does Not Believe.

GENTLEMEN:

Around the last part of April, 1920, I had a room in the back part of the house on the first floor at No. 808 North Ninth street, Philadelphia, for three weeks. During that time I learned that the landlady was carrying a big roll of money with her all the time. So before I moved from that house, I had a pass key to open her room door. Then I went to room at No. 323 North Seventh street.

Then about a week later I came back to No. 808 North Ninth street and went and hid myself in a clothes closet in the landlady's room. That was about 8 o'clock in the evening, and at 10 the landlady went to bed.

Between 10:30 and 11 o'clock I came out of the closet, but in coming out I made a little noise because I had to force the door open and that woke the woman.

She sat up in bed and was just going to call for help when I bit her with a piece of lead that was in the closet. Then I took her roll that was on top of a dresser and went out. I didn't mean to kill her, but I did it just the same.

One night in the last part of May 1920, I came to Norristown from Philadelphia with the intention of raiding the telephone pay station on both the railroad and the elevated station over in Bridgeport, Pa. I missed the last car going back, so I made up my mind to walk as far as the city line, because I didn't want to stop in Norristown over night.

As I got a little way outside of Norristown I heard a baby crying and saw a light in a house on my left, so I went to look around the house and found the stepladder. Putting one on top of the other I could see a woman with a baby on her lap, sitting down in the baby's room. Then I saw a man come into where the woman and the baby were from another room. Then they put the baby to bed and turning the

light out they went to another room.

I went on my way because I had no intention of kidnapping any one; but it came to my mind later that it would be a good way to make some money by stealing that boy, then get some ransom from his parents.

So, a few nights later I went to carry out what I had on my mind. I took the car in Philadelphia, where I was living, and when I got a mile or so from the house I got off, and walked the rest of the way. When I got to the place where I had seen the boy there were still lights in the house. But after waiting for an hour or so the light went out, so I went to a new house they were building next door and got a carpenter's ladder and a coat that was in the new building and carried it to where the boy was.

Setting the ladder against the house, I put that old coat on me and pushing the screen up I went into the baby's room. I took the baby's milk bottle heater down on the ground, setting it on my left as I was facing the house.

Then I went back up and in the room and turning the bed cover I wrapped the baby up with the coat.

As I picked him up he gave a little cry, so I went right out of the window and after I got out I heard someone talking, so I thought the baby's little cry had awakened his parents and forgetting the hot water heater I started to run down the road toward Philadelphia.

After going for about half a mile I got to a country road that led out from the main road to my right, so, thinking that maybe they were going to follow me, I took that road, and after going for about a quarter of a mile I stopped to listen. But I didn't hear any one, so I sat down a while to look at the baby, and so I threw the coat aside. His head fell back and I found that he was dead. I killed him by holding him too tight around my breast a little too long.

So, not knowing what to do with him then, I took him down to the river because I didn't want to put him in the ground because I didn't want the dirt and worms to touch him. So I took him to the river and sat there by the track with the boy on my lap until I saw daylight coming.

Then, not daring to hold him any longer, I tied him with a string that I found on a wagon in the stone quarry nearby to a piece of rail that was stolen also in the quarry. Then I threw him in the river.

After that I went home and wrote my first letter to the boy's parents in Philadelphia.

Then I came back to Norristown to learn from the paper or someone that knew the name and address of the boy's parents so as I could mail the letter. I had to wait for the paper to come out, and when it did come out I went in a saloon across from the railroad station and wrote down the address and mailed the letter.

After that I was writing to the boy's parents as often as I could, whenever I was reading in the paper that they were worrying much, telling them not to worry about the child, that he was well and alive, just to keep them from worrying too much.

And I to get money for killing their child—I can't find a name strong enough for myself.

Now I am not trying to save myself, because it was I that killed the boy, but by pure accident did I kill him by holding him too tight against my breast, and had his face against me that he couldn't breathe.

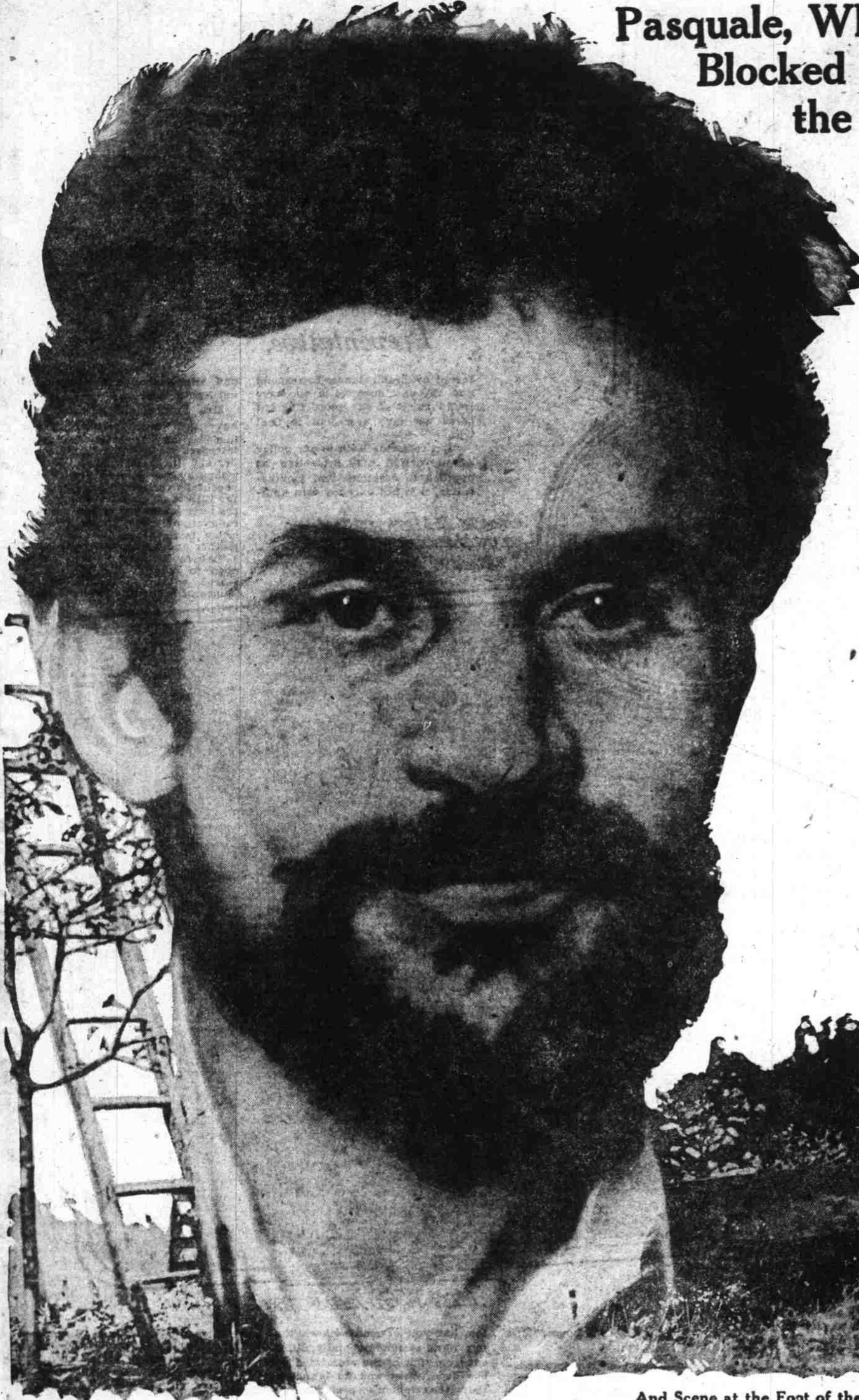
My intention was to go over to Swedeland and get a room for me and the boy. I have over \$300, and that was going to keep us going for a while until I could see if his parent was going to pay something.

If they were going to pay I was going to leave him in the elevated station in Bridgeport and call them up on the phone and tell them where to go to get him. And if they didn't pay I was going to turn him back to them the same, because I had no intention to do him any harm, and I didn't intend to keep him. If I could get the money or not the boy would have been returned just the same, but I am his murderer. I killed him.

AUGUST PASQUALE.

a child in the room, and when his prowlings awoke the little one and it uttered a cry he seized it and strangled it and hurried away with the dead body in his arms. If Pasquale came to the house with a kidnapping scheme planned out it is highly unlikely, the police insist, that he would have accidentally suffocated the child by wrapping it or hugging it too tightly.

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Life Size Portrait of August Pasquale.

And Scene at the Foot of the Ladder Where Dogs Tried to Follow the Footprints of the Kidnappers.

WHERE is little Blakely Coughlin, who was snatched from his warm crib on the night of June 1 last, in the nursery adjoining his parents' room in their country residence in Norristown, Pa., a suburb of Philadelphia?

Dead—the local and State police and prosecuting attorney feel sure.

"I murdered the baby," August Pasquale, the prisoner in the Norristown jail, confessed.

And yet, in spite of what the confessed kidnapper has said, Mrs. Coughlin, the mother of the thirteen-months-old child, hopes to regain her little one again.

"I do not believe Pasquale smothered my baby. He has proved to be a liar so many times that I will not believe what he says until the child or his body is found," she said on reading the confession.

The full confession of Pasquale is printed elsewhere on this page. There is truth in it, but some of it is not true. Is the baby still alive and in the hands of Pasquale's friends or accomplices? This is possible.

If little Blakely is alive, why should Pasquale pretend that he killed him?

Pasquale is a rather unusual person. The police are not quite sure whether he is a half-witted brute or a very cunning criminal.

It will be noticed that Pasquale in his confession voluntarily claims that he murdered the landlady in his Philadelphia home a few weeks before he kidnapped the Coughlin baby. But the police have inves-

tigated this boasted murder and know that he is lying about it—the old woman was not killed in the way he says and Pasquale did not kill her.

Why did Pasquale confess to this murder which he did not commit?

It was for the purpose of having the police look up his statements about the old woman and prove they were not true, they think. Nobody boasts of a murder he was innocent of except a crazy man. If Pasquale claims to be the hero of one cold-blooded crime which it is certain he did not commit, then, perhaps, he is lying about the Coughlin kidnapping and murder. It will be argued. Such confessions would confuse a jury and lay a foundation for Pasquale's lawyers to insist that any man who would boast of murders he did not do must be insane.

Did Pasquale from the very beginning start in to play the part of an irresponsible lunatic? In his letters to the distracted parents the man always signed himself "The Crank." But his negotiations were carried out with great shrewdness. So resourceful and adroit were his dealings with Mr. Coughlin that he wheedled out of him \$12,000 ransom and got the money without being caught, nor did he return the child.

While the State and the local police, telephone operators, post office employes and the whole neighborhood were alert, this

man Pasquale was clever enough to keep up an almost daily communication with the Coughlins by mail, by newspaper advertisements, and even over the telephone.

When Mr. Coughlin insisted upon proof that his mysterious negotiator was really the person who kidnapped the child, Pasquale replied that it was too dangerous to have the baby's photograph taken and that all the clothing that the child wore on the night of the kidnappers had been destroyed.

But as proof of the genuineness of his claims the man wrote a remarkable letter, giving an intimate description of baby-Blakely's room. He told how and where he had obtained the ladder, and as a circumstantial detail mentioned that one end of the ladder he had rested against a little flower pot on the lawn to keep it from slipping. He reminded Mr. Coughlin that the water container for heating the baby's milk was only half full on the night of June 1.

Very few kidnappers have been shrewd enough to carry on negotiations and secure their ransom money without being trapped. Pasquale did this successfully, and perhaps still has the child somewhere in hiding.

His greed, which prompted him to get still more money from Mr. Coughlin, landed him in the hands of the police. On his second attempt last August, when he demanded \$6,000 more, they caught him.

At once Pasquale began to act like an irresponsible man. He told all sorts of im-

possible stories, pretended to try to kill himself, confessed to things one day and denied them the next, and kept the detectives running about on wild goose chases. With circumstantial detail Pasquale explained just where he had buried the child's little body on his farm at Egg Harbor City—and the detectives took him along with them and dug up every spot the man indicated. Next came the confession that he had tied a cord and a piece of railroad rail to the body and thrown it into the Schuylkill River not far from the child's home. Which story is true or whether both are false and whether Blakely Coughlin is still alive are questions which cannot be answered with certainty.

Pasquale has given two very different explanations of why he entered the Coughlin house. At first he asserted that robbery was his only purpose and that he had no idea of stealing the child. But as he climbed the ladder and stepped into the room he waked up the little one and it uttered a cry. Then it was that he suddenly realized that the infant was more valuable than any other booty he was likely to find in the house, and lifting it out of its warm crib he hurried away with the little Blakely.

In the last confession, which is printed in full elsewhere on this page, Pasquale states that he was prowling abroad one night, intending to rob railroad and elevated stations in the suburbs of Philadelphia, when he saw a light in a house, and

creeping up on a step-ladder peered into the lighted room and watched a woman putting her baby to sleep. At that time the idea of kidnapping had never entered his head, he asserts. But thinking it over he was impressed with the fact that it would be an easy way to make money by stealing the child and holding it for ransom.

Which is the true story?

The police regard it as of very great importance to make certain just what was the man's purpose that night.

If Pasquale told the truth in his first statement, when he said he came to rob the house without any intention of kidnapping the child—then the police reconstruct the picture of what happened, and are convinced that little Blakely Coughlin was dead before he left his room. The police are inclined to believe that Pasquale came as a burglar and did not know there was