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**HEADLINE: LONELY MARION'S STASH OF CASH LED SCISSORS
KILLER TO HER DOOR;**

David Asbury sentenced yesterday for the murder of hermit Marion Ross

BYLINE: Iain Ferguson And Charles Beaton

Hermit Marion Ross signed her own death warrant by keeping thousands of pounds in her house.

Marion, 51, had bundles of notes stashed in tins and boxes all over her home.

The haul was spotted by brutal killer David Asbury when he worked as a labourer on an extension to the bungalow in Kilmarnock, Ayrshire.

On January 6 this year he returned to steal, conning his way in by telling Marion his car had broken down and he needed to phone his mother.

Marion struggled when he tried to rob her, and he went berserk.

He forced her to the ground, sat on her - crushing her ribs - then lashed out with scissors.

Marion was stabbed in the eye. The wound went through her skull and into the brain.

Six-footer Asbury also thrust the scissors into the spinster's throat, leaving them embedded up to the handles.

Police quickly decided the murder must have been committed by someone who knew Marion.

There were no signs of forced entry to the house, suggesting she opened the door to the killer.

And Marion, who was very security-conscious, would never have let a stranger in.

For some time her cousins, James Campbell and his brother William, were under suspicion.

Then Asbury's mum phoned police to say he had disappeared.

He fled his home a week after the murder, leaving a suicide note, a gold crucifix and instructions on where to find his money.

Asbury returned safe and well the next day.

Police found out he had worked on Marion's bungalow extension a year earlier.

They searched his bedroom in Castle Drive, Kilbirnie, and found a house-shaped tin biscuit box crammed with pounds 1400.

Some of the cash was in the "peculiar" kind of pounds 100 bundles Marion made when she worked as a bank clerk.

The defence claimed several times that the tin belonged to Asbury, and the police had tried to frame him by taking it to the mortuary where Marion's body lay and putting her fingerprint on it.

Asbury insisted he had only gone to Marion's home to phone a garage to fix his car. He claimed he had left her alive and well.

And he said he wrote the suicide note because he was "a wee bit depressed and not thinking straight" - not because of guilt.

Police who interrogated Asbury were shocked by his coldness.

One said: "He appeared to be devoid of pity. The whole episode was of annoyance value to him - he thought it was just a joke."

But yesterday, after a 13-day trial at the High Court in Glasgow, the jury took less than two hours to convict him by majority of murdering Marion and stealing the tin and money from her.

Asbury, who has never shown any remorse for the murder, was stone-faced as he was sentenced to life. His mum Amelia sobbed in the public benches as he was led away in handcuffs.

Later, former friends of Asbury claimed he had changed in the last year.

One said: "It was no secret he'd become involved in the local drugs scene. He changed quite dramatically from the intelligent, quiet young man he'd been."

Marion was known in Kilmarnock as a strange, solitary figure. She worked in the Royal Bank of Scotland for years, before taking early retirement after mental health problems.

Marion spent much of her time shut away in her home, but she would sometimes venture out on pointless spending sprees.

Her strange lifestyle left her with cash to spare.

She rarely spent money on normal items like clothes, and ate little food.

And because she inherited the house from her parents, she had no mortgage.

She once paid cash for TWO houses worth almost pounds 80,000. Both were later sold.

A neighbour said: "Another time she splashed out around pounds 20,000 on a Honda car, even though she rarely drove. She later sold it.

"She was an eccentric lady, and often wore the same clothes for weeks on end.

"At other times she rarely left the house, and she had very few visitors."

Marion also shelled out thousands on the extension, even though her home was already too big for her.

She hired a Kilbirnie building firm run by Asbury's grandad Nimrod, bringing her into contact with her killer.

Marion never ventured far from home. She bought most of her groceries from a nearby filling station.

Elizabeth Campbell, whose husband James is Marion's cousin, said: "She was a very quiet, lonely woman who kept herself to herself.

"We would only really meet her at family funerals and even then she rarely spoke.

"Even if we were passing her house and chapped her door she wouldn't let you in. She was a real recluse."

Marion, an only child, lived with her parents and inherited their home when they died.

Elizabeth said: "Her mum had Marion under her spell.

"To my knowledge Marion had no friends, and that was largely due to her mother's influence."

At one point Marion moved to her own flat ,but returned to her parents after her mum fell ill.

They died several years ago, and Marion's own health began to fail.

Neighbours believe she may have come off medication because her mother wasn't there to make her take it.