

A JOURNEYMAN TO GRIEF

Maureen Jennings



McCLELLAND & STEWART

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McGraw-Hill & STEWART

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For Iden

And this time for Christina and Scott
and all the good folks at Shaftesbury Films

Henry Bolingbroke:
Nay, rather, every tedious stride I make
Will but remember me what a deal of world
I wander from the jewels that I love.
Must I not serve a long apprenticeship
To foreign passages, and in the end,
Having my freedom, boast of nothing else
But that I was a journeyman to grief?

—Richard II, Scene III

CHAPTER ONE

JULY 1858

She glanced over her shoulder to see if he was coming. What could he be doing? He'd been gone more than half an hour, and all he'd had to do was pick up the forgotten tobacco pouch from the hotel room and come right back. They had planned to take the steamer boat across the Falls, but they would miss it if he didn't hurry. She shaded her eyes against the sun, but the road was deserted except for a lone carriage that was approaching slowly, the horse's head drooping wearily. She consulted the gold fob watch that had been her father's wedding present to her. It was a beautiful and extravagant gift, but the giving of it was marred by her father being in his cups and barely able to utter his congratulations, so that when she did consult the watch, her pride in its richness was tainted by her disappointment in him.

She shifted back on the bench. To her left, she could see a rainbow arching over the high-flung spray of the cascading water. She had been excited to come here for her honeymoon, but the week so far had been less than happy. Initially, she had been self-conscious, sure that the other guests were staring at them in disapproval. When she confessed this to her husband, he was dismissive rather than kind, but she clung to his words: "You are the most beautiful woman in the room. The men covet you and the women are envious. Nobody knows. They think you are a Spanish countess."

She longed for him to say more, but in the short time they had been married, she had learned not to press forward with any discussion he didn't want to have. When he was courting her, he had been tender and solicitous, but nothing, not even her Aunt Hattie's blunt warnings about "man's nature" had prepared her for the roughness of their conjugal relations. She couldn't hide her discomfort, and he was impatient with her. "I wouldn't have expected such coldness from you of all people." She had cried so hard the first night that he had finally relented and teased and tickled her into a precarious laughter. This morning, she'd woken to find him sitting on the edge of the bed, looking at her. He had kissed her fiercely. "Today, I want you to wear your best blue silk gown, your largest crinoline, and your big hat with the peacock feathers. You will be the belle of the promenade."

So she had, and laced herself with unnecessary tightness that she now regretted on this hot day. Another quick check of the watch. What could be keeping him?

She heard the soft jingle of a horse's bridle and looked over her shoulder again. The carriage had halted and a man was coming across the grass toward her. He was heavy-set with a full untrimmed beard and moustache. His clothes and skin looked grubby. She fancied she could smell his stale sweat, but that impression might have been born only later, when he was on top of her. Somehow, from the

first, her flesh knew who he was even though her mind would not accept it. Ever afterwards, she scourged herself for not immediately running toward the protection of the few visitors who were hanging over the railings watching the water. But then he was talking to her and she made the terrible mistake of listening.

“Ma’am, I must ask you to accompany me. I have bad news. Your husband has been taken ill. He’s in your hotel.”

She gasped. “What has happened to him?”

The man shrugged. “I can’t say. All I know is I was sent to find you and bring you to him at once. The doctor’s been summoned. You’re staying at the Grand, ain’t you?”

She nodded, not taking her eyes from his face, from the mouth that was smiling at her so falsely. Suddenly he stepped forward, and in one swift movement he pulled her from the bench. In a ghastly parody of an embrace, he crushed her against his chest so that her hat was almost knocked off her head, her nose and mouth were smothered, and she couldn’t breathe. She felt herself being carried into the carriage and thrust inside.

There was another man within whom she couldn’t see because she was shoved to the floor face down and at the same time something was stuffed in her mouth. It was vile-tasting and leathery, like a glove. The man pinned her with his knee, and in a moment he’d tied her hands behind her back. The carriage lurched forward.

CHAPTER TWO

APRIL 1896

Professor Broske was late arriving, and his audience was becoming restive. In the past week Murdoch had been suffering another bout of insomnia, and now he yawned, wishing he was at home dozing in front of the fire, instead of here in a lecture theatre with Dr. Julia Ogden. Not that he'd had much choice in the matter, as she was not an easy woman to refuse. Her usual companion to such events was her father, Dr. Uzziel Ogden, but he was confined to bed with a fever, and yesterday she had telephoned Murdoch at the police station and asked if he would accompany her to the Toronto Medical School.

"If you don't, I shall be relegated to the seats at the rear of the room with the other women. Professor Broske is a highly respected authority in his field, and I couldn't bear to miss anything. Besides, his topic for tonight is the physiology of fear. As a police officer, you might find it useful."

So here Murdoch was, in a room jammed with privileged and well-connected young men, all of them, he assumed, the sons of rich fathers. He'd glimpsed only a handful of women, and they were indeed seated at the back.

The door to the stage opened, and the eminent man swept in, followed by two student assistants wearing holland aprons and wheeling small trolleys. Broske was bewhiskered, balding, and short, and he exuded confidence and assurance. He strode to the podium, held up his hand for silence, and addressed the audience. His voice, lightly accented, was as resonant as any actor's.

"Good evening, gentlemen, and I am glad also to welcome the members of the fairer sex who are gracing us with their presence." He took a monocle from his breast pocket. "The topic of tonight's lecture is fear. I shall be conducting a few experiments, but I will not ask for volunteers so none of you have anything to fear on that account." The audience laughed dutifully. "I 'ave no doubt there is no one in this room tonight who has not at some time in their life experienced the emotion of fear. We are all, I'm sure, familiar with its manifestations, such as heart palpitations, shortness of breath, pallor, trembling, flight, sometimes immobility. Even I experienced a tremor of the 'and as I prepared to meet you. Such an emotion is not termed 'stage fright' for nothing." He paused for his little joke to take effect. "I should add, 'owever, that although the experience of fear in all its many varieties is universal and connects us to the greater family of mankind, we should keep in mind that certain races are more naturally afraid than others and women are more fearful than their brothers."

Murdoch wondered how Dr. Ogden, who, in his opinion, possessed an unparalleled coolness of disposition, was reacting to her hero's statement. As far as he could tell without blatantly staring

her, she was unmoved.

~~His hands tucked beneath the tails of his frockcoat, the professor moved away from the podium and began to pace back and forth. He spoke now as if he were dictating a letter, his tone slight and abstracted. "In lesser degrees, these physical effects may be useful to us. If threatened, those men, even women, who are normally of a timid or placid disposition may be roused to defend themselves. However, we who carry this fragile machine of our body about with us continually ought to remember that any shock that exceeds the usual measure may prove fatal. I can adumbrate several instances of men, women, and children who have literally been frightened to death."~~ He stopped to scan the rows in front of him, and such was the power of his personality, Murdoch wondered for a moment if he were trying to illustrate his point.

"Let us remember that fear is a disease to be cured. The brave man may fail sometimes, but the coward always fails."

A bespectacled young man sitting close to the front raised his hand. "Excuse me, sir. I have a question."

The professor frowned. "Can it wait? I usually take questions at the end of the lecture."

"My query seems apropos to the moment, sir, if you don't mind."

"Very well."

"If, as you say, fear is a disease and yet you have also reminded us that we have all experienced fear, are you then saying that all of us in this room are, to a greater or lesser degree, in a state of ill health? And if that is the case, what may we do to effect a cure for ourselves?"

The smallest titter rippled through the audience, as nobody was going to risk an outright guffaw until they saw how Professor Broske reacted.

He smiled and some of the tension left the air. "First, we must understand that the physiologic responses we experience when we are afraid are reflex movements." He wagged his finger in the direction of the young student. "If I were to publicly berate you for your impertinence, which I have no intention of doing, dear fellow, your heart would start to race, the pupils of your eyes would no doubt dilate, and the inspirations of your breath would be curtailed. Those reactions would be beyond your power to control. And let me hasten to add, no shame lies in that direction. Courage of character is another matter entirely. It can, and should be, taught. Let me say that courage springs from three sources: nature, education, and conviction."

Murdoch glimpsed several students scribbling earnestly in their notebooks.

Broske continued. "There is a culture which heredity transmits to the brains of our children. The future and the power of a nation do not lie solely in its commerce, its science, or its army but are also formed in the hearts of its citizens, the wombs of its mothers, and the courage or cowardice of its sons."

There was an outburst of applause in which Dr. Ogden joined heartily. Then Broske snapped his fingers at one of the assistants, who promptly wheeled his trolley forward. On it were a small electric battery and a glass jar that Murdoch could see contained frogs trying desperately to climb out. They were scrambling over one another in their haste but unable to get a grip on the smooth glass. The professor adjusted his monocle.

"Paradoxically, gentlemen, to understand the functions of the brain, you must first understand what it does and does not control. For instance, as I have said, our reflexes are controlled by our nervous systems and will continue to operate even if the brain is removed."

He picked up a large pair of scissors while the assistant reached in, removed one of the frogs, and handed it to him. With one snip, Broske decapitated the creature and laid the body on the tray. He dropped the head into a bin.

He took a brown bottle from the tray. "Watch what happens when I drop a small amount of the

vinegar onto the leg.” The frog’s rear leg jumped.

“~~Even though the brain is obviously no longer functioning, the nervous system is intact,~~” said Broske. “The frog will continue to react for two or more hours, even though death has supposedly occurred. Another, please.”

Murdoch felt a nudge in his side from Dr. Julia Ogden.

She whispered, “Surely this isn’t bothering you, William? It is only a frog, after all. You’ve seen far worse.”

She was right, but Murdoch had never seen live creatures dispatched with such callousness in front of an audience before. None of the medical students in his vicinity seemed to be troubled, and he wasn’t about to turn around and gawk at the female students at the back of the room to see how they were faring.

“I’m all right, ma’am,” he whispered, trying to focus on what the professor was saying.

In the next half-hour, Broske decapitated four more frogs, and their headless bodies lay on the white, blood-stained cloth while he used various techniques to demonstrate how the nerves could be made to activate the muscles of their legs. Murdoch glanced at the big clock on the wall. How much longer? Finally, to his relief, Broske swept the dead frogs into the bin and rinsed his hands in a basin of water held by one of the assistants.

“These are simple experiments that can be repeated with various creatures, including warm-blooded ones. Professor Goltz, of whom, no doubt, you have heard, brought a dog, part of which had the brain removed, to the International Congress of Medicine in Milan. It was quite remarkable to see the animal react to stimuli. However, for our purposes, we must illustrate our point with human subjects.” He nodded to one of his assistants. “Fetch the boys, if you please.”

“I hope he doesn’t intend to cut off their heads,” Murdoch said to Dr. Ogden, who frowned at him.

The other assistant set up two chairs facing the audience, then wheeled forward the second cart on which sat an electric battery with wires attached and four cylinders covered with blank paper. The first helper, who had the thin, mangy look of a hungry fox, returned, bringing with him two boys about ten or eleven years old. They wore identical grey serge suits and cloth caps, but one was dark-skinned, the other fair and blond. They both looked apprehensive.

Broske smiled warmly and indicated the chairs. “Please take a seat, boys. I’d like you to put your caps and your jackets on the floor beside you.” He addressed his audience. “These young gentlemen are residents of your St. Nicholas orphanage. I’ve promised them, what you call, a bang-up feast after our little demonstration, so they were quite eager to come for a night out, weren’t you, lads?”

They both grinned obediently, but Murdoch suspected that they were no longer so eager. The two assistants were busy getting the boys ready for Broske’s demonstration. First, they tied a band around each boy’s chest. A stiff wire led from the front of each band to a metal stylus attached to one of the cylinders on the cart, which had been wheeled between the chairs. Neither child uttered a word but each watched anxiously.

“Don’t worry, my fine gentlemen,” said the professor. “This apparatus is quite harmless and will not cause you a soupçon of pain. It is called a pneumograph, and it measures the degree of inspiration and expiration at any given time. That’s a fancy way of saying, it measures how much air you breathe in and out.” He nodded to his assistants. “Switch on the battery, if you please, Mr. MacKenzie, so that these poor chaps can see, there is nothing to fear.”

The assistant turned on the battery, and the cylinder began to rotate slowly.

“First of all,” said Broske, “we take a reading when the subject is breathing normally. Ah, there you are, the young negro’s inspirations are rather shallow. The other boy’s are more normal.”

Murdoch was close enough to see that the stylus attached to the cylinder was making zigzags on

the paper.

“Continue, gentlemen,” said Broske to his assistants, and quickly they attached bands to the wrists of each boy and hooked the dangling wires to the stylus on the second cylinder. The professor called out to the assistant who was strapping the coloured boy’s wrists to the arms of the chair, “That looks a little too loose. It needs to be quite snug.”

The problem was corrected.

“Take a reading, if you please.”

The assistant flicked another switch on the battery, and the cylinder began to move, the stylus making a similar pattern to that of the pneumograph.

“Excellent. Let that run for a moment or two. Now fasten the clamps.”

The assistants brought forward two stands and placed them directly behind the chairs. Each was equipped with leather clamps.

“These are simple stands that photographers were in the way of using with their subjects when the taking of a photograph required the subject to be absolutely still for a rather long time,” said Broske. “They ensured that nobody moved and blurred the shot. For the purposes of our experiment, it is important that the boys do not move their heads.”

The boys were fastened into the clamps so that they were looking straight ahead. The cylinder continued to rotate.

“Now, my fine lads, I am going to ask each of you in turn some simple questions. All I want you to do is answer clearly and, of course, with truth. As you speak, the instruments will record your heartbeat and your breathing. That is it, no more and no less. Now then, our good Sambo here. What is your name?”

“Archie King, sir.”

“Why are you living in the St. Nicholas home?”

“I am an orphan, sir.”

“No parents? No papa or mamma?”

“No, sir. They’re both dead since I was five.”

“And from what did they die, young sir?” Broske’s tone was jocular.

“I dunno ’zactly. I think it was fluenza.”

“How long have you been in the orphanage then, young Archie?”

The boy paused. “Three years.”

Broske was walking up and down in front of the two chairs while he was talking. He was looking at the boys.

“And our little blond friend. What is your name?”

“Jim Anderson, sir.”

“And why are you in the orphanage, Jimmy?”

“My father was took with the consumption, and my mam couldn’t look after us good enough so she placed us at St. Nick’s. She’s coming to get me and me sister as soon as she can.”

“How commendable.”

The professor turned around and briefly inspected the recordings on the cylinders. He addressed the coloured boy.

“Are you happy at the orphanage, young Archie?”

“Oh yes, sir. Quite happy.”

Suddenly, Broske leaned over the boy. His expression changed to one of utter ferocity and he bellowed, “Liar! How dare you think you can deceive me!”

Archie was powerless to move away.

The professor’s face was only a few inches away from the boy’s. He yelled, “Your parents die

from whisky poisoning, not influenza.”

~~Archie tried to shake his head, but he couldn't.~~

“I don't—”

“Be quiet! You are going to tell me nothing but lies. How can a happy boy set fires?”

Archie's eyes were wide with terror and his bottom lip started to tremble.

“Your superintendent told me you set a fire to one of the rooms. Isn't that true?”

“No, sir. I never did.”

“Liar again. Tell me the truth.”

“It is the truth, sir.” Archie tried to shrink away. “I never set no fire.”

Broske swirled around and spoke to the other boy. However, this time his voice was at a normal pitch.

“Jimmy, tell me. Is your friend, Archie King, a liar?”

The boy looked terrified and stuttered out, “I, I...don't know, sir.”

The professor stared at him for a few moments, then he beamed, stepped away from Archie, went over to Jimmy, and ruffled his hair.

“Enough. I shall not maintain this misery a moment longer. You and Archie have been most helpful in my little demonstration, and as I promised, you shall get the best supper of your lives. Mr. MacKenzie, Mr. Sutherland, you can disengage the apparatus now.”

They removed the clamps and bands that were holding the boys, neither of whom moved from their chair. Broske picked up a wooden pointer. His audience remained silent.

“I will now show you the results of the pneumograph and the pulsometer.” The assistant removed the roll of paper from each cylinder and stretched them out. “When I berated Archie, his inspiration was sharp and sudden, as you can see here on the graph.” He tapped the spot with his pointer. “Interestingly, the expiration did not immediately follow. The lad was actually holding his breath for a few moments. This is a typical response to fear.” Another tap. “Then there were four more quick inspirations, each quite shallow. Also typical. You can see here on the graph where the heartbeat jumped considerably. That was, of course, when I raised my voice and startled him. It continued to beat rapidly.” He pointed to the second roll. “Now, here are the results from young Jim Anderson. You can compare the two. His pulse rate increased when he witnessed his pal getting what he believed to be a severe scolding. Then when I asked him a question, no doubt anticipating he would be likewise treated, his breathing became rapid. Not as much so as the other boy, but certainly considerably more than before.”

Murdoch thought his own heart rate had increased when the professor had raised his voice so unexpectedly. He wondered if Dr. Ogden's had. He'd have to ask her.

Broske continued. “Archie King, the coloured child, is by virtue of his race disposed to be fearful and sensitive. If I had reversed the order of scolding, his pulse would probably have accelerated at a greater rate even than that of the other boy. But they are good lads. I have known grown men fall worse, involuntarily evacuating their bladder and even bowels. Now, are there any questions?”

A veritable forest of hands shot up, but Murdoch didn't have the opportunity to hear what the students wanted to know. A familiar figure, large and imposing in his cape and policeman's helmet had appeared in the aisle beside him. It was Constable Crabtree. He leaned over and whispered into Murdoch's ear.

“I'm sorry to interrupt, Mr. Murdoch, but an urgent call has just come through to the station. A man's body has been discovered over on Mutual Street. It looks to be a homicide. Sergeant Seymour has sent Constable Fyfer over to investigate, but he thought you should go too. He seemed to think you wouldn't mind too much at being called away.”

Murdoch grimaced. Seymour had heard him moaning about having to accompany Dr. Ogden

some bloody silly lecture. He tapped her on the arm.

~~“I’m afraid I have to leave, ma’am. A police matter.”~~

“What a pity.”

Some of the nearby students gazed curiously as he stood up, but the others were completely absorbed by an animated discussion with the professor. The two boys remained in their chairs, and Murdoch was close enough to the stage to see the tear stains marking the coloured boy’s cheeks. His fellow orphan looked pale.

Murdoch followed Crabtree out of the hall.

“I just hope those lads stuff themselves.”

“I beg your pardon, sir?”

“Never mind, George. I’ll tell you about it later.”

CHAPTER THREE

Once outside the building, Murdoch took a deep breath of the cool night air, which had the merest hint of spring. The macadam was glistening in the lamplights from a recent rain.

“Where are we going?”

“The stables are at 73 Mutual Street.”

They set off at a brisk pace along Gerrard Street, quiet at this time of the evening.

“Boring talk, was it, sir?”

“Far from it. It was quite riveting, really. Blood, drama, suspense. What more could you ask for. A damn theatre couldn’t have provided more entertainment.”

Crabtree gave him a curious glance. “Like that, was it, sir? That’s medical students for you.”

Murdoch shuddered. “All right, George, tell me what you know about the case.”

“Not much more than I’ve said, sir. The victim is a man named Daniel Cooke, who owns a liver stable on Mutual Street. It was one of his stable hands that found him. There’s a telephone in the office, so he called us right away.”

“Why does that name sound familiar?”

“About three months ago we received complaints that one of his cabbies was mistreating the horses.”

“That’s right, I remember now. You investigated, didn’t you, George? What came of it?”

“Nothing really, sir. I met Cooke the once when I went to check things out, and he seemed a bit jumpy but that could have been nerves. You know how people can get when they see a police officer. He owns about a dozen horses, as I recall, and they all seemed in good health. Not that I am an equine connoisseur, you understand, but there wasn’t enough evidence to lay a charge.”

“And no identity of the complainant?”

“No. It was a man’s voice, but he refused to say who he was. He called three times, I believe. I thought somebody was just making mischief.”

“Did Cooke have a family?”

“I don’t know if he had children, but there is a Mrs. Cooke. I met her too. Quite a tigress, I must say. She was furious about the accusations, might ruin their reputation, that sort of thing. She didn’t seem that concerned whether they were true. She made all sorts of unpleasant threats to me as if I was the one responsible for stirring up trouble. It was no use trying to explain to her I was only doing my job.”

“How old a man was Mr. Cooke?”

“He was getting on. He’d be close to sixty.”

~~They continued in silence for a little while. The street gas lamps were lit and most of the houses~~ elegant in this part of town, glowed with light. In some of the houses, the blinds weren’t drawn, and the rooms were as illuminated as brilliantly as a stage. In one drawing room, a white-haired man dressed in evening clothes, was waltzing slowly with a woman, also elderly, who was smiling up in his face. The light from the chandelier glinted on a brilliant jewel in her hair. They must have recently returned from some fancy affair. Murdoch was tempted to stop and watch them complete the dance; they looked so good together. A maid and a butler, also older, were standing at the edge of the room.

Murdoch was touched by the apparent affection between the dancers. He’d become rather interested in observing married couples, he realized, ever since he had proposed marriage to Miss Amy Slade.

Crabtree and Murdoch turned down Jarvis Street, and here most of the houses were protected from curious eyes by firmly closed blinds or curtains.

“I’m surprised that we’re being called to this area of town. On Mutual and Shuter Streets, there’s a physician living in every second house.”

“And as we all know, only the poorer classes of society commit crimes,” added Crabtree. He made his tone heavily ironic, and Murdoch grinned at him.

“There’s Fyfer.”

The constable was standing at the corner of a laneway. There was a high wooden fence behind him, which Murdoch assumed hid the livery. As they approached, Fyfer saluted.

“Good evening, sir.”

“Evening, Fyfer. How do we get in?”

“There’s a side entry just down here.”

Fyfer lit the way down the dark laneway with his lantern. They stepped through the door into a cobblestone yard. There were no lights.

“The body’s in the barn. There are two entrances for the carriages, and I barred those gates right away. Nobody has come or gone since I’ve been here.”

“Where’s the fellow who found the body?”

“I’ve put him in the office. It’s right there.”

He flashed his light. The office was just inside the south gate, and the side that faced into the yard was glassed. Murdoch could barely make out the figure of a man sitting at the desk. He didn’t move or make any attempt to come out to them.

“Have you talked to him yet?”

“Just a few questions. His name’s Elijah Green and he cleans out the stables. We didn’t go much further than that.”

Murdoch had worked with Fyfer before, and he’d grown to respect the young man’s efficiency. He was also well aware that the constable’s good manners covered a ruthless ambition. Kid gloves over a tiger’s paw.

“Good. All right, lead on.”

Fyfer opened the door to the barn and they went in.

“He’s in the tackle room, sir.”

He turned to the left and led the way along the centre aisle, which was also cobbled and light covered with straw. There was a warm, not unpleasant smell of hay and manure in the air and the lantern’s bull’s-eye beam picked out the rear ends of horses in open stalls. One or two of them nickered as the men went past.

“In here.” Fyfer pushed open a door at the far end of the aisle and stood back for Murdoch to enter the room.

A brass lamp sat on a low stool in the corner. By its light, Murdoch could see the body of a man hanging by the wrists from a strap hooked into the ceiling. He was twisting slightly, and his feet dangled in the straw. The sharp reek of vomit filled the air.

Murdoch went in closer, and Fyfer aimed his beam at the body.

The man's blue eyes were open and staring and he was naked from the waist up, his back crisscrossed with livid marks. Blood had clotted along the lines and pooled at his waist. Buzzing flies fed greedily on the wounds.

Murdoch drew in his breath. "Good Lord, he's been whipped."

"Yes, sir. Quite viciously, too, by the look of it."

Murdoch walked slowly around the body. "Are we certain this is Daniel Cooke?"

"I recognize him myself," said Crabtree, who was standing near the door.

In life, Cooke was slightly above average height. Not as tall as Murdoch, perhaps just under six feet. He had a full head of wavy grey hair and heavy sidewhiskers. He was overweight, his flabby pale flesh spilling over the band of his trousers. Vomit streaked his chest.

Murdoch placed the back of his hand against the dead man's cheek. The skin retained some warmth. Gently, he turned Cooke's jaw to the side. It moved easily.

"He hasn't been dead long at all. No rigor mortis and he's not completely cold." He turned to Fyfer. "Where are his clothes?"

"His jacket, shirt, and underwear are over there in that corner. They look as if they were cut away."

"Your light, please." Murdoch went over to the pile of clothes and examined them. There was a brown check wool jacket, a blue striped shirt, and a grey cotton undershirt. All were in shreds, but it was obvious they had been cut, not torn.

"I thought the assailant must have had a sharp knife and a strong hand to cut through the jacket so cleanly," said Fyfer.

Murdoch nodded and began to search through the jacket pockets. They were empty except for a handkerchief and two nickel pieces.

"Was that lamp here?"

"Yes, sir, and it was lit, just the wick turned down low."

"Shall we get him down now?" Crabtree asked.

"One minute."

Murdoch shone the beam around the area. The shelves around the walls were loaded with horse tackle, bulky collars mostly. Bridles and harnesses dangled from hooks in the ceiling out of the way of mice and rats. Nothing seemed out of place, that is if you discounted the half-naked body.

He waved the flies away and studied the stripes. They covered his entire back but seemed heavier near the middle. It was impossible without a magnifying glass to tell with any accuracy how many times Cooke had been whipped, but it was a considerable number.

"I'm surprised nobody heard him," said Crabtree. "He must have been screaming."

Murdoch turned up the wick in the brass lamp as high as it would go and set it on the floor. "There are bruises at the corners of his mouth. I'd say he was screaming, but he was gagged with something that was removed. I'll need your knife, George. You'll both have to take up some of the weight."

The two constables had the unpleasant task of clasping the dead man while they lifted him up and Murdoch cut through the strap tying Cooke to the hook. Finally, the body collapsed, and they lowered it gently to the ground. Murdoch knelt and cut the binding at the wrists and the arms flopped away helplessly.

He examined the strip of leather that had bound Cooke's wrists.

“It’s a lead shank, by the look of it. The clip is still attached. It’s been sliced cleanly at one end. There should be more of it. Do you see anything, gentlemen?”

The room was small, and all three of them searched quickly, but there was no sign of the remaining piece of leather. Murdoch put the strip on top of Cooke’s clothes to be examined later.

“What do you think happened, sir?” asked Fyfer.

“I wish I knew. The man was no youngster, but he was still strong by the look of him. There must surely have been more than one person to be able to overcome him... Wait a minute, I see he’s got another wound on his head. It’s not very deep so it probably wasn’t that hard a blow. Maybe enough to stun him, certainly knock him down. If you take a man by surprise, it’s not that difficult to pin him to the ground. Perhaps I’m wrong and there was just one assailant.”

“Do you think he was attacked in this room?” asked Fyfer.

“I can’t say at the moment. We’ll have to wait to find out when we have some daylight. All right, we’d better get the wheels of justice in motion. George, go back to the medical school and see if you can bring Dr. Ogden here. Fyfer, you might as well start rounding up a jury so they’re at the ready. I’ll stay here for now and have a word with the man who found the body before I inform Mrs. Cooke.”

“I’m here, sir.”

Murdoch hadn’t heard him approach, as he was standing in the shadows just outside the door. Fyfer stepped more into the light, and Murdoch realized he was a negro.

“I was wondering when I could get on with my job.” He avoided looking into the tack room. “The horses need their feed and I’ve got to muck out.”

His tone was neutral, neither overly polite nor provocative, but Fyfer didn’t like it and he said sharply, “You’ll get on with your job when we tell you you can. Detective Murdoch here wants to ask you some questions first.”

The man blinked at the retort, but there was no other expression on his face.

“All right,” said Murdoch. “Speaking of jobs, why don’t you two get on with yours. Green, will you bring me a blanket so I can cover Mr. Cooke’s body?”

“Yes, sir.”

He disappeared into the gloom.

“Mr. Murdoch, I wonder if I might have a word with you before I get going,” said Fyfer.

“Does Crabtree need to be here?”

“No, I don’t think so.”

“Off with you then, George,” said Murdoch, and the constable left.

Fyfer lowered his voice. “I have serious misgivings about the darkie, sir. There are two things that don’t sit right as far as I am concerned. First, he seems unnaturally composed. You know darkies are usually very emotional, but he is as calm as anybody I’ve ever seen, given he just discovered the body of his employer in what I’d call a gruesome state. I myself even found it hard to look at him at first.” He hesitated and gave a nervous little flick of his moustache. “Secondly, he told me this isn’t his usual night to come to work. Somebody else mucks out the stables on Wednesdays, which is a day when they close early. I think it’s too much of a coincidence that he comes this night of all nights. He’d know there was no risk of running into one of the cabbies, for instance. You know how easy it is for somebody to pretend to be the one who has discovered the body and, in fact, they’re the one who made it a body, so to speak.”

He was quite right about that, and Murdoch had also wondered about Green’s lack of distress. At that moment, he saw the man in question had come up with a horse blanket over his arm. Damn, the fellow moved quietly.

“All right, Fyfer, I’ll bear what you said in mind. You’d better get hopping. Keep the jurors in the yard until I tell you. Get them subpoenaed as fast as you can. Roust them out of bed if you have to.”

The constable saluted and left.

~~“Give me the blanket,” said Murdoch to Green. He went into the room and covered Cooke’s body~~
then stood for a moment.

“May the Lord have mercy upon your soul.”

He made the sign of the cross, aware that the stable hand was watching him from the doorway. He
turned around.

“If it’s that important that the horses are looked after, I don’t doubt you can work and answer
questions at the same time. Let’s close this door and you get started with your chores. I’ll follow you
around and talk to you.”

CHAPTER FOUR

Green stuck a pail underneath the spout and started to pump out water. Murdoch stopped him and took the handle.

“I’ll do this. How many do you need?”

“Each horse gets one pail full, and we’ve got a dozen horses.”

“Bring them then. I’ll man the pump.”

Green did as he was told, and for the next while they worked together, the stable hand carrying the pails to and from the stalls.

“How long have you been working for Mr. Cooke?”

“Twenty years.”

“And how old are you now?”

“Thirty-six.”

Murdoch had thought he was younger than that. He was wearing a snug-fitting woollen jersey which revealed thick strong arms and wide shoulders, and his movements were easy and lithe. He was standing close to the hanging lantern and Murdoch noticed he had a small lump over his left eyebrow.

“How’d you get the goose egg?”

Green grimaced. “I bumped into a low-hanging beam. You’d think I’d know better by now, but it gets me all the time.” He went into one of the stalls and, shoving the horse aside with his shoulder, poured the water into the trough.

“Was Mr. Cooke a good boss?” Murdoch asked.

“As good as any, I suppose.”

“That sounds as if you didn’t much care for him.”

“Did it? It wasn’t meant to. I was his hired hand. It was a business arrangement.”

“Any idea who might have attacked him?”

Green concentrated on his task. “None at all.”

Murdoch felt exasperated with the man’s apparent indifference.

“Aren’t you worried about your job now that he’s gone?”

“Stable hands are always in demand.” He put down the pail and stroked the horse’s neck as he drank.

“I get the impression you’d miss these horses if you had to move,” said Murdoch.

“I’m not sure you’re right about that, sir. It’d be foolish to get attached to cab horses. They don’t last long after they come here.” He bent down and ran his hand over the horse’s hock, clicking his

tongue softly. "Bendigo's got a bit of swelling there. I'll have to put a poultice on it. He probably should have a rest tomorrow, but he won't get it." He stopped.

Murdoch prompted, "Why won't he?"

"Mr. Musgrave usually has him and he's hard on his horses. Some cabbies won't make the horse canter, especially at the end of the day, but he'll always whip them up if it means an extra nickel."

He came out of the stall and picked up another pail of water.

"Was Mr. Cooke a man of regular habits?"

"Very regular. He was here without fail, rain or shine, summer and winter, by nine o'clock in the morning. He'd leave for his dinner at midday, come back no later than two, then stay until his supper at half past six. One hour and a half for his meal, then back here until the last cab checked in, which might be about half-past eleven. Except for the Sabbath, when nobody works, and Wednesday, when the last cab has to be back by eight. He liked to supervise the comings and goings."

"What about you? What sort of hours do you keep?"

"I come in round about six or half past six in the morning. I've got to feed and water the horses then harness up those that are going out. I gets my supper at about the same time as Mr. Cooke, then come back to clean out the carriages and tend to the horses." He brought the empty pail over to the pump and waited while Murdoch filled it. "I finish by eleven o'clock most nights."

"Those are policeman's hours."

"Are they? But like I said, I ain't usually in Wednesdays or Sundays."

Murdoch finished pumping. "That's the twelfth, by my count. I'll do it. Where do you want it?"

He picked up the heavy bucket.

"Amber's the only one left," said Green. "She's in the last stall."

The horse was a knock-kneed roan mare who pawed the ground and tossed her head as Murdoch stepped into the stall. Suddenly, she kicked out with her rear leg, just missing him but landing on the pail, sending it flying. The water splashed over his trousers and boots, soaking them.

"Whoa there." He backed out quickly.

Green came over at once. "I should've told you not to get too close, sir. She's a mean one, that Don't like nobody coming up behind her."

Murdoch felt like a fool. He'd worn his best clothes and boots for the lecture and now look at them.

"Damn. You should have warned me."

"Beg pardon, sir. Sometimes she's like that, sometimes she ain't." Green took a piece of grubby towelling from the rail and handed it to him. "Why don't you go into the office and dry off properly. Mr. Cooke has an oil heater in there."

Murdoch figured Crabtree would be returning with Dr. Ogden in about half an hour, but he expected they'd be in the barn for some time longer. He didn't fancy standing around with sopping wet trousers.

"Have you got the key?"

"It's not locked."

"Never or just tonight?"

"Tonight. When I found him I ran to the telephone. I 'spected I'd have to break in, but the door was open. Mr. Cooke always kept it locked. He was nervous 'bout thieves."

Murdoch dabbed at his trousers with the towel. "So far the key hasn't shown up."

Green frowned. "That so?"

"Which way did you come in?"

"Through the west side entry door. I do have a key to that."

"Who else does?"

“Just me and Thomas Talbert. He helps out on Wednesdays and Sundays.”

“Not the cabbies?”

“No, sir.”

“What about the office?”

“Nobody but Mr. Cooke had that.”

“I’ll need the names and addresses of the rest of the cabbies and also your helper’s.”

“I’ll give you Thomas’s, but you’ll have to look in Mr. Cooke’s files for the others.”

Murdoch scrutinized him for a moment, but his head was turned away and revealed nothing.

“I’d better go and dry off a bit.”

Green pointed. “You can get to the office through the passageway down there. You don’t mind if

I get on, do you?”

“No. I’ll come back to you later.”

Murdoch picked up one of the lanterns and, making sure to keep to the middle of the centre aisle

in case he drew the ire of other fractious mares, he went in the direction Green had indicated. His

boots squelched as he walked.

The door to the office was ajar and he stepped in, holding the lantern up high. It was a small

room, better furnished than his own cubicle at the station. An oil heater was in the opposite corner

from a safe, and the room was warm and the air redolent with the smell of good tobacco.

Murdoch sat down on a well-padded chair, pulled off his boots and socks, and placed them on top

of the heater. He wrung a little more water out of his trousers. Blasted horse.

A rough sisal carpet on the plank floor scratched his bare feet as he padded over to the long bank

of windows facing into the stable yard. From his desk, Cooke would have had a perfect view of the

comings and goings of his employees. The desk had once been a fine mahogany one, but the surface

was scarred with marks from matches allowed to burn down, and there was a light film of dust over

everything and clumps of cigar ash. In the left corner was a clean, dust-free circle where he assumed

the lamp now in the tack room had stood. On the right were several papers on a spike, a new-looking

telephone, and an open box of cigars, half empty. Murdoch flipped through the papers briefly. They all

seemed to be invoices, but he’d examine them more carefully later. He turned and swung the lantern

in an arc around the room. There were two doors: one that led to the passage into the stables and the

other likely to the street. He walked over to check. It was not locked and opened directly onto Mutual

Street. He assumed Cooke had entered the livery stable this way, as it was the most direct. Was that

where he’d received the blow to his head? Murdoch brought the lantern close to the floor, but the sisal

was too rough to show any sign of a man being dragged. How had his assailant got in, and how had he

got Cooke into the tackle room?

A pungent smell wafted over from the oil heater and he went to check on his socks. Not dry yet.

The large, elaborately decorated safe was locked. Next to it was a wooden filing cabinet.

Murdoch opened a couple of drawers and found them untidily stuffed with papers. A cursory

examination showed they were also business invoices. Hanging on a hook next to the cabinet was

a clipboard with a pencil tied to it.

Murdoch unhooked the clipboard and checked the piece of paper. Today’s date was at the top,

Wednesday, April 15, and underneath several scrawled signatures. In the column next to their names

the cabbies had written the time of taking out the carriages and the time of return. The third column

was initialled D.C. Only four carriages had gone out on the afternoon shift. Two of the cabbies, I

Littlejohn and J. Wallace, had signed off at 5:00 and 5:10 respectively. The last two names were I

Robson and P. Musgrave. The former had signed off at 7:00 and the latter at 7:25. Cooke had not

initialled these names.

A flash of light outside the window caught Murdoch’s eye. The side door across the yard opened

and Constable Crabtree stepped in, dark lantern in his hand, followed by Dr. Ogden. Behind he
muffled in a black double-tiered cape, was Professor Broske.

Damn. They'd come sooner than he expected. He grabbed his damp socks.

CHAPTER FIVE

Murdoch went outside to greet the newcomers.

“I do hope you don’t mind me coming along,” said the professor. “Dr. Ogden thought I would find it interesting.”

“Did she, indeed? This is a murder investigation after all, not a laboratory experiment.”

Broske halted and lowered the hand he had already extended toward Murdoch. Dr. Ogden looked disapproving.

“Dr. Broske is a world-renowned expert in fear, William. When your constable said that the victim had probably died of fright, he was naturally most interested.”

“Died of fright? We don’t know that.” He turned to Crabtree. “Why did you say such a thing, George?”

The constable seemed discomfited. “It’s his eyes, sir. They’re almost out of his head. In fact, begging your pardon, Dr. Ogden, what I said was, ‘He looked as if he had died of shock. I didn’t use the word *fright*.’”

It was Julia Ogden’s turn to look embarrassed. “I suppose I was so caught up in Dr. Broske’s lecture that I heard it as ‘fright.’ I’m sorry, professor. I have brought you here under false pretences.”

“Not at all, madam. Let’s save our judgment until we have examined the case further. I am more than happy to accompany you. I’m sure the learning will be all mine.”

Murdoch watched this exchange in astonishment. The prim doctor of formidable intellect was behaving like a coy young girl. As for Broske, he was speaking to her and looking at her as if she were an object of great attraction. Dr. Ogden!

She met Murdoch’s gaze and suddenly became brisk and businesslike again.

“Where is the body, William?”

“In the tack room, ma’am. Light us, George.”

Crabtree led the way across the cobbled yard, which was slick and dotted with puddles. Broske offered Dr. Ogden his arm and she accepted. She was a good six inches taller than he and had to bend toward him to hear what he was saying.

“I mustn’t forget to tell you the story of my poor Bertino and his open skull through which I could study the workings of the human brain for several weeks and what invaluable experiments I was able to conduct.”

Her response was lost to Murdoch, who was opening the barn door. Elijah Green was mucking out one of the stalls. He straightened up when they came in, but he didn’t approach them.

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