

A Murderer's Diary - May 1887

I had not chosen this lot in life, rather, I think, it had chosen me. What happened later on this night, and many more such nights, leads me to believe this. You see, I am not unkind, or a daemon, I am but a man. I have experienced pain, grief and sorrow aplenty, as any other man does. It is in mankind's history, this path that has chosen me, as old as time and mayhap as ignoble. Even realizing the tragedy of this now, it took me by surprise the first time.

The room was taller than the average man, but appeared smaller due to the crush of humanity deposited there. The smoke poured up and over the crowd, foaming as if from waves of a blue-brown sea. Crisp, acrid pipe smoke from clay pipes filled the air from almost every table, including those occupied by the dolly mops. A drunken, toothless old man spat on the floor with disgust, voicing his angst at life and poverty. He gulped back a sour mouthful of ale, smeared the foam from his lips on his worn sleeve and stared sullenly into the dirty glass. People cursed here, cried here, loved here and bled here. For many this place was a refuge. For me it emulated entertainment of the most bawdy kind.

I had passed a rather amusing evening with Rosie, one of the local ladies of the east end trade. She was called Rosie because of the deep red Rose tattoo on her buxom left breast. She related to me the sad tale of her only daughter, Rose, now 5 years dead, for whom the tattoo was acquired. At great expense, she had added. Such was the lady's unfortunate plight. Not a penny for food, bed or lodging - poor sole she was. I had taken pity on the poor lady, at first treating her and myself to pork pie and a tumbler of ale. Soon after it was gin, and more gin. Rosie surely delighted in the drink. She informed me that for my kindnesses she might provide me with such comforts as a lady of her persuasions could. Provided, of course that I pay for the double bed lodging. I declined the offer, being too tired and too worn from a long day. I was, I think, exceedingly drunk on gin and ale and rapidly losing my ability to resist any temptation, be it pleasurable or otherwise. I knew I had to take my leave. Stumbling and clutching at tables as I made my way to the door, I left with my purse, and what remnants of my dignity as might be, intact. Reaching the heavy door, I threw it open and stumbled into the roadway, slamming the oaken door behind me. Leaning against the pub's brick wall I tried to get my bearings. In the smoggy half dark of gaslight, I determined that the river lay to my south west a few scant streets away. I proceeded in that direction.

I found myself at the entrance to a narrow, dark alleyway leading towards the river Thames. The cobblestones were aslant and broken. Mud and water stood in putrid, slimy pools along the sides of the alley walls. Should I have wished to touch both walls at once, I could have, so narrow was my path. A rivulet of fetid sewage water ran along the middle of the narrow path where a ditch of sorts had been exhumed. Neither moon nor stars could penetrate the darkness here. Rats scurried along in search of any morsel of food. Their incessant squeals echoing and pleading. Several of the filthy rodents ran across my boots, lingering for the sweet, tempting aroma of human meat. I kicked at the loathsome bastards in disgust, imagining their beady eyes glaring at me in obscene delight, their shadows growing as large as oxen against the narrow stone passageway, trapping me. I was alone. But alas, I felt safe from the poisoned, defeated sorrows of the public house from which I had recently emerged.

After a time of walking in this sepulcher, I spotted the dim corona of a gaslight. As I neared the shadowy walled entrance, the passageway widened and the rugged cobblestones became clearer in my vision. Turning left along the broader avenue, I quickened my pace. Ahead the sharp bawling and low bleating of animals assured me I was on the right path. Mingled with the stench of smoke and animal waste, the dank, marshy foulness of the river became more ingrained in my nostrils. I had found the slaughter house grounds for which I had half blindly searched in my drunken wanderings. Piled high near the back entrance to this place of limited life and inevitable death were stacks of hay and straw feed. It was here that I sought my hideaway for respite and sleep. I clambered onto the largest haystack, settled back into the soft hay and closed my eyes. Soon my mind and body drifted into a troubled sleep.

I don't know how long I slumbered. Not long, I am sure, although I do know what it was that awakened me. Someone was stealthily making purchase through my topcoat in search of my purse. I seized the throat of the scoundrel with both hands crushing and choking. I daren't let go. To allow him to get the better of me meant penury at least, and almost certain death. Pitching and bucking in the hay we did a macabre fandango for what seemed to be an eternity. There was no sound save that of my rapid gasps and his death rattles. I felt more than heard the snap of the neck bones under the pressure of my fingers. Of a sudden, I knew I had become a murderer. I rolled away from the thief. This was no ordinary pickpocket. I saw by the pale light of the bloated half-moon that it was Rosie. She had followed me thinking to rob me in my drunken slumbers. She was indeed a black, defiled, filthy whore! This

person of low bearing and chicanery that I had treated with human kindness deserved no mercy, only the death squeeze of my iron clamped fingers.

Here it was then, the time of reckoning for my earlier association and kindness to the likes of her. We had been together for hour upon hour this night, sharing food, drinks and banter. Now, undoubtedly, everyone would know that it was I who throttled her. I needed to take care to remove all signs of struggle and stash the body at once. Damn her to the sulfurous, burning pits of hell!

I knew there had to be usable tools in the slaughterhouse yard nearby. I stumbled off in search of whatever I might find to aid me in my work. There, leaning beside one shed was an ax and a shovel. The very items that I needed! I hastened passed a small milling herd of skittish white faced Hereford cows, trying to keep my footing and not loose my boots in the shit filled boggy mess sucking at my feet. I reached the shed and collared the tools, heading back again across the greasy, repugnant wet bog. I heard the watchman making his round on the other side of the yard; a stroke of good fortune for me. That meant I had a tad more time to do my work, without fear of discovery from him. I rushed back to the hay stack in the quiet sheltered pavilion near where the sheep were milling in their pen.

Glancing briefly at the dead whore, I took quick stock of my predicament. Maybe I could bury the chopped up scraps of flesh in the slaughter yard? No, the bones would be discovered there. What of the river? That was the more preferred idea. Could I dump the entire body in the river? She might be identified if I did that! My fate would be a swing date with the hangman. I realized then, that I must cleave her body into manageable pieces. With my clasp knife in hand, I tore and ripped at the bodice and apron of her greying cotton dress. Next it was the filthy threadbare petticoat. After rolling her over, I took off her shoes and stockings, her clothing and the filthy shawl that had wrapped her shoulders. I threw the rags in a rumpled pile on the ground. The rags I would cast into the river depths too.

After turning her naked body face up, I clasped the ax in my trembling hand and took the first swing. Blood trickled into the hay. It shone in a small stream of crimson-black in the muted moonlight, puddling around her naked breast. I had severed the right arm at the shoulder. Electricity ran up and down my arms and into my chest, my heart pounded a tribal rhythm which echoed into my ears and head. After several deep breathes, I gathered my thoughts and began to continue with the task at hand. Tendons, gristle and bone hung from the severed arm. Alone and apart

from the torso, the severed arm lay there - small, insignificant, and childlike. I checked the hand for rings and bangles. There were none. Then, grasping the ax firmly, I pressed on with my task. The copper tang of blood brought back cravings, lust and excitement from long ago when I apprenticed in a slaughter house. I longed to pause my work and wallow in the hay and warm blood with the torso. Instead I needed to do something with the head and the alluring tattoo.

I slit the throat from ear to ear with my sharp knife. Both mouths grinned at me in toothless glee, one drooling sweet crimson nectar of blood onto the tattooed Rose. I stooped down next to the bloated breast that swaddled the red Rose. Gratefully tracing the flower's perfect outline with my tongue, I savored the salty, copper tang of blood. Shivers of blood intoxication rushed through me. My trembling body knelt for a short time in the hay, knees weak, reveling in the waves of euphoria. My head cleared slowly as if recovering from a swoon. I realized that I had to take care of this business soon so as not to get captured in this reckless indiscretion. The sun would rise in a few short hours. Time was against me now. With rapid precision, I severed the head from the neck, and then I kicked the hideous thing into the muddy cow shit.

My most ardent task was next. I needed to cleave the upper torso into two pieces, thus forever separating the Rose from the body. That horrid face and lovely tattoo would be my undoing should they be discovered. I grabbed my faithful ax and chopped at the ribcage, again and again. Anger overtook me, inspiring me into rage against the ghastly thing before me now. Bones cracked and crunched under the keen edge of my faithful blade. Then, my knife did fine work cutting through the internal flesh and lungs. Blood and viscera clung to me in outrage at being so displaced. Almost at once, the backbone snaked its way into view. The last vertebrae became visible and I knew that my chosen tools had worked well for their grotesque purpose. Almost without thought, I severed the left arm and legs from the torso with strong, accurate ax strokes. Once this was done, I sat in the straw for a moment to recuperate and organize my next steps.

In need of rope and a covering of sorts, I again began an intensive search of the slaughter house and surroundings. Not finding anything useful here for my grisly purpose, I moved through the dimly lit passageway towards the river. The building in the next street was a holding yard for swine. A roll of old canvas and a bale of twine secreted behind a watering trough, near the top of the fence, almost out of sight was ideal for my endeavors. The canvas was sun bleached and worn but whole. Once I was able to grab the cloth and twine, I hastened back to

the haystack. Rapidly cutting the canvas into large pieces, I deposited the appendages into their own separate bundles, wrapping them tightly with twine and setting them aside. Next, I prepared the lower torso, upper torso and head for disposal in the same manner, each in their own separate wrapping. A small, wooden hand barrow, the perfect conveyance for my packages, stood nearby filled with sheaves of straw. Some straw, the grim packages, rags of clothing, shawl, shoes and the shovel went inside the cart; I set off towards the river.

The barrow's wooden wheels rumbled, thump, ka-thump, over the cobblestones. I pushed the thing as would a costermonger or fishmonger on the way to early morning market. Still continuing in a southeastward direction, then turning east at the next roadway, the building site that was designated to be the Tower Bridge came into view. Construction on this behemoth venture would begin in a fortnight or two. This was the ideal concealment. I chose an already excavated site, climbed down into the crater and using the shovel I dug just over a yard into the compacted clay to the limestone bedrock. The bundled head and upper torso fit snugly into this earthen vault. With shovelfuls of earth and clay and by leveling and tamping the earth I completed the makeshift tomb. After climbing out of the crater, I moved on to the water's edge. An eelers' skiff bobbed on the inky black surface of the river, held in place by a rope painter. I maneuvered the rest of my gruesome cargo into the small craft and pushed away from the muddy shoal.

By taking up the oars located in the skiff, I rowed to midstream nearing the great Tower of London. The river took a turn in shallow waters and began to deepen and widen out. I let the oars play in the water and heaved the first of my five flesh packages into the murky depths. My heart raced, the package was floating! With an oar from the boat, I pushed the package under the water over and over again. Once the water began to enter the small opening in the canvas, the package sank below the surface of the water, like a torpedoed ship. Deep breathes helped my heart rate to slow down, then rowing further, I dropped the clothing and shoes into the water. The garments doggedly refused to sink under the waves as if they knew they were being deposited there to the final rot and purification that was the Thames. Again and again, I drowned the clothing with an oar edge. The petticoat swirled to the surfaced a last time as if in its final death throes. I watched it begrudgingly sink into the depths in fascination. Further away from the nearing shore I finished throwing the other cargo into the river's black gullet. Again, I waited to make sure that the packages sank under the water's inky surface. Exhausted, I rowed the skiff back to the landing making sure to reattach it to its own moorings.

Quickly securing the handles of the wheelbarrow I bumped and thumped my way back to the slaughter house feed yard. After covering the blood and waste matter from the murder site and the wheel barrow with boggy mud and then with hay and straw, I looked around and realized that the only evidence of the night's exploits was me. The water trough solved the problem of the filth, blood and shit that covered my clothing and my body. I scrubbed my clothes, boots and body with as much clean water as I could get. This final task complete, a deep ghostly veil of exhaustion and sleepiness overcame me. I burrowed deeply into the large hay stack and fell into a deep, contented sleep. I dreamt of blood and gore while wetting my lips and moaning softly in my sleep.