

## DON'T FEAR THE RIPPER

by Holly West

*31 August 1888*

The young woman lay sideways atop a rickety metal bed. Her thin cotton shift stuck to her skin, adhered by the sweat of brutal exertion. Beyond that, she was naked, her legs spread open and bent at the knees as she heaved herself forward. She screamed from the pain.

“Hush, now, Mrs. Levy,” Caroline Farmer, the midwife, said. “You mustn’t yell; it’ll only tire you out.”

Mr. Levy, as young and inexperienced as his wife, paced from one end of the room to the other. It now seemed ridiculous to Caroline that she’d hesitated to go with him when he’d arrived on her doorstep twenty-four hours earlier, begging for help. Having grown up in the East End, most of her neighbors were well known to her. She kept a running tally of the women who were expecting and called on each of them regularly, knowing that she was their only source of medical knowledge beyond the superstitious clap-trap passed down through generations.

But Mr. Levy was a stranger and she didn’t fancy going out into the night with him, especially with the recent murder in Whitechapel. One month prior, Martha Tabram’s body was

found in a nearby stairwell, stabbed thirty-nine times. Though the district was rife with all manner of criminal goings-on, no one could recall so savage a killing.

Mr. Levy had insisted. "Please, come quick, ma'am," he said. "My wife is dying, I'm certain of it."

"Is she bleeding?" Caroline asked. "Unconscious?"

"Anyone screaming so loudly must be near death."

She nearly smiled. She'd seen this many times before—a young man on the edge of fatherhood, terrified by the powerful forces of labor overtaking his wife. Caroline took up her bag of medical tools, which felt unusually light in her hand. The one she'd used for years, given to her by her mother who'd trained her, had recently been stolen and all of her implements with it. She had yet to replace many of them.

When she arrived at their home, she found his wife was alone and writhing on the bed, her waters already broken.

"Where's your womenfolk?" she asked.

"My wife's mother intended on birthing the baby," he said. "But she died two weeks ago. We've got no one."

"I'll need your help then."

He'd been a worthy assistant, for a man. But the night had been endless, the day eternal, and still, there was no baby.

"Something must be wrong, how could it take so long?" he'd asked several times.

"This is her first child, Mr. Levy. It takes time. Only God can say with certainty when a baby will arrive."

Caroline and Mr. Levy spent the hours ministering to the laboring woman's needs, massaging her feet and lower back, doing what they could to make her comfortable.

Now, finally, the baby was coming. Caroline alerted Mr. Levy: "Hold up her legs!"

The woman hunched forward, straining hard. Caroline counted to ten. "Very good, Mrs. Levy, you may rest," she said. "It shan't be long now."

When at last the baby slid from his mother's body, he was silent and still; his skin tinged a bluish-gray color. Judging by his small size, he'd come early, but Caroline reckoned he'd survive. She turned him onto his stomach, resting him against her splayed palm while she tapped his back. All at once he let out a lusty cry and his nervous parents wept with relief.

"His name is Louis," Mr. Levy said. "After my father."

#

It was nearing four in the morning when Caroline made her way home along Buck's Row, content with the knowledge that she'd delivered another life into the world. She couldn't know the child's destiny, but his parents appeared to love him and she hoped he'd thrive in spite of his simple origins in London's East End.

On the far side of the street, a school dominated the landscape and just in front of it, a crowd had gathered. Recognizing several of her neighbors standing on their tiptoes as they tried to see what happened, she hurried over and caught the attention of her friends, Emily Holland and Mary Kelly. Emily was crying.

"What is it?" Caroline said, grabbing Emily's hand.

"Polly's been murdered!" Mary said.

Caroline caught her breath. "Are you certain it's Polly?"

Emily nodded. "I saw her for myself. Oh Lord, forgive me, I should've never let her go out alone last night!"

Caroline squeezed through the bystanders to where Polly's body lay. In the darkness, she could surmise little about the condition of her remains, but noticed her skirts were raised up around her waist, leaving her bottom half exposed.

"You must let me see to this woman," she said to the bobby standing guard. She knew most of the men who patrolled the area but had never seen this one before. The name "Stubbs" was displayed on his uniform jacket.

"Go on and join the others, missus," he growled. "This ain't no penny show."

"I'm a midwife, Constable Stubbs. I know her. She's—she's my patient."

There was some truth to this, though she'd never delivered Polly of a child. Mary, Emily and Polly were prostitutes, and frequently visited Caroline for ailments suffered as a consequence of their profession.

"Like I said, move along. We're waiting on the *real* doctor."

Frustrated, Caroline returned to her friends. "You must tell me what you know," she said.

"The lodging house deputy turned her away when she couldn't pay the four pence for her bed last night," Emily said. "You know Polly. I saw her at about half past two this morning and she told me she'd earned her doss money three times over but spent it all on drink. I begged her to come home with me but she'd have none of it. Said it wouldn't be long 'till she was back."

"Did anyone see her after that?"

"Not that I know. To think, I might've been the last one to see her alive!"

"Except for the killer," Mary said.

"Oh Mary," Emily said. "Don't say such things!"

The doctor arrived with a second police constable, PC Neil, who'd patrolled the beat for several years. The crowd clamored around the body, hoping for a glimpse of something titillating while Caroline pushed her way forward, wanting to hear what the doctor had to say.

"Get these people out of here," the doctor hissed. As the PCs proceeded to disperse the group, he knelt down and felt one of Polly's legs. "Still warm," he said, to no one in particular. "Couldn't be dead for more than half an hour."

PC Stubbs grabbed Caroline's arm, pulling her back. "You again? Thought I told you to leave."

"And I told *you* that Polly Nichols was my friend. I want to know what happened to her."

"You'll find out when you read the newspapers, same as everyone else. If you don't vacate the area we'll take you in to the station."

She made a final appeal to PC Neil, who knew her reputation in the neighborhood.

"Sorry, Mrs. Farmer," he said. "You'd better do as PC Stubbs says."

Just as Caroline decided it was in her best interest to go home, an inspector had come to take a description of Polly's corpse. As she stepped away from the scene, she heard him say, "My God, doctor. This woman's been disemboweled."

#

After Polly's killing, there was much speculation about who'd committed the Whitechapel Murders.

Emily and Mary were adamant that Leather Apron, an obscure character who'd long extorted money from area prostitutes and other vulnerable citizens, was the killer. The name alone was enough to inspire fear throughout the East End, yet nobody seemed to know exactly

who he was, or if he even existed. Nevertheless, the gangs that claimed to work for this bogeyman had only to utter his name in order to get results.

Caroline was skeptical. “Why would Leather Apron suddenly come out of the shadows and start killing after all these years?”

“Maybe Martha and Polly owed him money and they couldn't pay?” Mary replied.

“Wouldn't he just send one of this thugs to break their fingers, same as usual?”

Then, in the wee hours of 8 September, Annie Chapman's body was found on Hanbury Street, her throat and abdomen carved open and her intestines pulled out. The killer had removed her womb, taking it with him as a macabre souvenir.

A freshly laundered leather apron was found near her corpse.

The newspapers' disclosure of the leather apron served only to stir the already simmering pot of anti-immigrant sentiment in Whitechapel, heating it to a full boil in the days after her murder. Obviously, the culprit was a Jew—no Englishman could be responsible for such barbaric crimes. Or so thought the British populace.

Caroline, who'd brought many Jewish and immigrant babies into the world, couldn't bring herself to believe that a person's nationality had any bearing on whether they were capable of such savagery. Until someone came up with real evidence pointing to a Jew as the killer, she would look elsewhere for the culprit.

There were other theories, of course. The suspicion that the killer was a member of the medical profession, or at least had knowledge of anatomy, troubled Caroline the most. She hadn't known Annie Chapman, but upon reading the details of her slaying in the evening newspaper, her eyes welled up. How could someone who'd sworn their oath to take care of others betray it in such a horrifying way?

A fierce protective instinct rose within her. These women might've been sinners, but none of them deserved such a brutal punishment. Poverty turned souls desperate and the East End had more than its share of both. Too many of its inhabitants starved in the streets, reduced to selling their flesh in order to secure shelter for the night. Martha, Polly, and Annie were but a few.

In her work, she saw the penalties wrought by prostitution daily: unwanted pregnancy, venereal disease, and assault. Now, murder. She vowed to do something.

#

In the early morning hours of 30 September, Caroline received word that Ruth Graves was ready to have her baby.

She set off toward their address in Fairclough Street, not getting very far before a woman's voice broke through the quiet night air. The sound, something between a gasp and a scream, chilled her, and she stopped walking. There was a whisper of movement as a murky figure slipped behind the large wooden gate at the entrance to Dutfield's Yard. She dashed over, and, finding the gate unlocked, she entered the yard, tripping over something in the darkness. She fumbled in her pocket for match and lit it.

A woman lay on her side, facing the wall. She'd been slashed across the neck. The blood, still pulsing, poured out onto the ground beneath her. Caroline felt her wrist for a heartbeat. Nothing. The match burnt down, flickering out, and she lit a second one, holding it up to inspect the rest of the yard. It appeared empty, but she couldn't escape the peculiar feeling that someone was watching her.

She thought she'd seen someone creeping through the gate and *into* the yard, but had she been mistaken? Had he actually been escaping?

The clop of hooves and wheels crunching across the ground commanded her attention. A cart driver had entered the yard, his pony shying to the right.

“You, there!” he shouted, struggling with the reins. “What have you done?”

The match burned Caroline’s fingers and she tossed it to the side. “She’s dead,” she said. “Stay here with her while I find a bobby.”

“How am I to know you didn’t do this yourself?”

“Wait or don’t wait, I’m going. There’s no time to spare!”

She ran into the street, ignoring the driver’s protests. She spotted a bobby in the distance, walking in the opposite direction. She started after him and in her haste, nearly collided with PC Stubbs as he rounded the corner.

“Watch it!” he said.

“There’s been another murder,” she said, pointing. “Over in Dutfield’s Yard.”

He broke into a run and she followed him. By this time, a crowd had gathered, their lanterns illuminating the scene. There was so much blood that Caroline couldn’t imagine there was a drop left in the poor woman.

“I’ve seen her about,” one man said. “Name is Liz Stride.”

“Back away, everyone,” PC Stubbs said, removing his own lantern from his belt. At his first sight of Liz Stride’s damaged body, he shook his head and cursed. He turned to Caroline.

“What did you see?”

“I heard a noise—I went to see to it and found her here. I thought I saw someone entering the yard but it was too dark to know for sure. She was already dead when I arrived.”

“You’re certain of that?”

“Yes.” Knowing she could do nothing more for Liz Stride, she continued. “I’m on my way to a birth. If I’m no longer needed here, I’ll be on my way.”

“You’ll do no such thing. You’re a witness and you’ll remain here until someone can transport you to the station.”

“But sir, they’re waiting on me.”

His only response was to put her in handcuffs.

#

As PC Stubbs pulled Caroline toward the Bishopsgate Police Station, the jailor, PC Hutt, was just releasing another inmate, a woman named Catherine Eddowes. “Good night, ol’ Cock,” she said, waving over her shoulder.

“Pull to it, Kate,” he replied, then turned his attention to PC Stubbs. “What ‘ave we ‘ere?”

“There’s been another Whitechapel murder,” Stubbs said. “Found this one at the scene, acting suspicious.”

“Suspicious?” Caroline said. “I only wanted to help!”

“Put her in a cell to wait for Inspector Abberline.”

“Can you at least remove these handcuffs?” Caroline asked.

Stubbs looked to Hutt for guidance and he nodded. Stubbs removed the handcuffs, leaving her wrists sore.

PC Hutt led her to one of the two empty cells located in the far corner of the station. She sat on the hard bench and thought about the baby that was coming. Without her, there’d be no one to deliver it. She hoped that Inspector Abberline would arrive soon so that she could report what she’d seen and be off.

When he finally did come, there were two men with him. To her surprise, he carried a carpetbag in his hands. Caroline recognized it immediately.

“My bag!”

Abberline raised an eyebrow. “We’ll get to that later, Mrs. Farmer. These are Inspectors Reid and Drake. We understand that you witnessed the murder of Elizabeth Stride earlier this evening.”

“I didn’t see it happen,” she said. “I was on my way to a confinement and heard what sounded like a scream. I went to see about it was and found a woman’s body.”

“Did you know who she was?”

“No. Only later did I hear someone say her name was Liz Stride.”

“A cart driver, Mr. Diemschutz, claims he came into the yard and found you touching the body. Do you have an explanation?”

“I was feeling her wrist for a heartbeat.”

“How would you know to do that?”

“I’m a midwife. In fact, I’m needed at a birth this very moment. I’ve told you everything I know—please dismiss me so that I may see to my patient.”

Inspector Abberline raised her bag up. “Where do you think we found this, Mrs. Farmer?”

“I don’t know. I’m only glad to have it back.”

“When was it last in your possession?”

She thought for a moment. “It was stolen from my person at the beginning of August. I haven’t seen it since then.”

“You’re sure of that?”

“Quite. I reported the theft to this very station.”

“Will you see about that?” Abberline asked Inspector Reid. He returned his attention to Caroline. “We found the bag at the scene of Annie Chapman’s murder. Have you any guess as to how it got there?”

“I’ve no earthly idea,” she said.

“Is it possible that *you* left it behind?”

She was suddenly apprehensive. How guilty she must appear from his perspective! Not only had she been at the scenes of two of the murders, as a midwife, she had medical knowledge, especially as it pertained to women. And her profession required her to be out on the streets at all hours of the day and night, along side the prostitutes, criminals, and God knew who else. If her clothing should sometimes have blood on it, it was easily explained—it happened often in the execution of her duties.

Her unease turned to fear as she realized that the murderer himself must’ve been the thief who stole her medical bag. Had he used the very same tools to kill that she had used to minister to his victims?

Inspector Reid returned to his place beside Abberline. “There’s no record of the theft,” he said.

“I did not kill these women!” she said. “My life’s work is to assist them, to protect them!” Her voice grew quiet. “It’s the only thing I’m fit to do.”

A great commotion ensued, interrupting Caroline.

“Come quick, Inspector,” PC Hutt shouted. “There’s been another woman murdered.”

Catherine Eddowes, the woman Caroline had seen leaving the police station, had been slaughtered in Mitre Square.

#

Just days after the murders of Elizabeth Stride and Catherine Eddowes, the killer began his taunts, sending the first letter to Scotland Yard:

*I keep on hearing the police have caught me but they wont fix me just yet. I have laughed when they look so clever and talk about being on the right track. That joke about Leather Apron gave me real fits. I am down on whores and I shant quit ripping them till I do get buckled. Grand work the last job was. I gave the lady no time to squeal. How can they catch me now. I love my work and want to start again.*

He'd signed it Jack the Ripper.

Given that Catherine Eddowes' murder had occurred while Caroline was incarcerated—an ironclad alibi if ever there was one—the authorities conceded that she wasn't the culprit. They took their time about releasing her, however, waiting until mid-afternoon the following day. She traveled immediately to the Graves' residence, praying that she wasn't too late.

Mr. Graves himself opened the door, looking haggard. It appeared he'd had an even worse night than Caroline had.

"Mr. Graves," she said. "I'm sorry for the delay. I'm here to check on your wife and child."

"We've no need for you now," he said, his eyes tired and devoid of emotion. "The baby is dead."

He closed the door in her face.

#

The morning newspapers reported her arrest and subsequent release, but the damage was done. Her reputation was ruined. The people who'd known her since childhood, whose own

children she'd helped bring into the world, crossed the street when they saw her coming.

Mothers with babies due refused to admit her when she came to check on them. The prostitutes she'd advised and treated, often at no charge, wouldn't so much as say hello to her. Only Mary and Emily remained loyal friends.

Caroline didn't fear the Ripper. She despised him. He'd taken everything from her—including her cherished medical bag—and had likely tried to frame her for his murders. The only thing that stood between her and the hangman's noose was the Ripper's own folly when he'd murdered Catherine Eddowes while she'd been in jail.

It was only his own folly—the killing of Catherine Eddowes—that had With these most recent killings, she became even more determined. If she couldn't aid and protect the neighborhood's women as a midwife, she would do it by putting an end to this ogre's killing spree.

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Alas, her initial investigation attempts proved unsuccessful. In the first, she approached two women standing on a street corner, both well worn and obviously destitute.

“Pardon me,” Caroline asked. “But I wonder if either of you know a man named John Gardener?” It was reported that a man by this name had been one of the last people to see Elizabeth Stride alive.

The fatter of the two women replied, “If you're looking for a man to pay your doss, you'll have to find one on your own, like the rest of us.”

“A woman named Elizabeth Stride was murdered a fortnight ago. Did you know her?”

“She asks a lot of questions, doesn't she, Bessie?” the thin one said. “Why d'ye think that is?”

“Liz was a friend,” Caroline said. “I want to know how she died.”

“A friend, eh?” Bessie. “If that’s the case you’re the only one she ever had.”

“You knew her?”

The thin one said, “Everyone knew Long Liz. She made sure of it.”

“How do you mean?”

“She was the most hateful woman I’ve ever met,” Bessie said. “If you were a ‘friend,’ as you say, you’d a known that.”

“Bessie!” said her friend. “Don’t speak ill of the dead.”

“I don’t care if she is dead. She was nothing but a common thief. D’ye know she stole my dear mum’s pearl broach? I never did get it back—she probably sold it on so she could drink herself silly.”

“You can’t prove it.”

“Why’re you defending her? She was awful and you know it better than anyone. She stole your bloke!”

“I’m better off without him. She did me a favor on that score, she did.”

So Liz Stride had been a thief, Caroline thought. Could that have gotten her killed? Could it have gotten them all killed?

“Has she had rows with anybody recently?” Caroline asked.

“You mean like with anyone who might’ve killed her?” Bessie said. “I ain’t no snitch, am I?”

“Even if it might save another?”

She laughed, her round belly bouncing like a child’s rubber ball. “You think one of us whores is out here killing our own, is that it? That’s a good one, that is.”

“Did you know any of the other victims?”

She gave Caroline a hard look. “Wait a minute,” she said, her jaw set. “You’re that midwife the police suspected of being the Ripper. What’re you doing, trying to start trouble? Looking for someone else to blame so you can save your own hide?”

On another such evening, Caroline outfitted herself in one of her dead husband’s suits, piling her hair up into a bowler and rubbing coal along her jaw to mimic beard stubble. She went out, looking for women who might attract the Ripper’s attention. It was no difficult task; streetwalkers lurked everywhere, beckoning. One gravel-voiced slattern grabbed her by the arm as she passed, startling her.

“Aye, sir, would ye be liking a bit of company?” she said. She appeared to be forty or so, and quite in need of a good washing up. Her eyes were heavy-lidded with drunkenness and she stunk of gin.

“Indeed, I would,” Caroline said, her voice pitched low.

“C’mon then,” the woman said. “I know a nice private place where we can spend some time together.”

She led Caroline to a darkened stairwell. She gathered her skirts and started to pull them up.

“Oh no, there’ll be no need for that,” Caroline said. “I only want to talk.”

“Bah! I’ve no time for it.” She started to walk away.

“Wait,” Caroline said. “I’ll pay you. How much?”

The woman looked at her with suspicion. “Five pence will do.”

Three was the going rate, but Caroline handed over the requested coins with no argument. The woman placed them somewhere amid the folds of her abundant cleavage and said, “What d’ye want then?”

“Do you know anything about the Ripper murders?”

The woman’s eyes grew wide. “Why should I know anything about the murders? I mind me own business and it’s a good thing I do.”

“Did you know any of the victims?”

“I’d seen ‘em about. Didn’t know ‘em to talk to ‘em.”

“Do you know anyone who might’ve witnessed something? Seen anything suspicious?”

“Why’re you so interested in the killings? What’re you, a bobby?”

“Nothing like that—“

Realization crossed the woman’s face like a shadow, immediately replaced by an expression of pure fear. “Dear God, you’re him, aren’t you?”

The woman screamed and tried to run, but Caroline was quicker. She grabbed her arm and covered her mouth. “For the love of God, be quiet or the whole of Whitechapel will hear. I’m a—I’m a newspaperman, looking for a story.”

The woman seemed to accept this and Caroline loosened her grip. As soon as she did, the woman broke away and ran, yelling, “It’s him! It’s the Ripper!”

Caroline made it home that night, managing to avoid another arrest. But if she were to catch Jack the Ripper, there seemed only one way to do it. She’d have to lure him out herself.

#

Caroline assessed her appearance in the mirror. It hadn't been difficult to disguise herself as a common East End whore—all it took was a filthy dress and a slovenly manner. She added a black bonnet and veil to help conceal her face and concluded that she looked the part.

She'd studied every available detail of the Ripper killings—the newspapers reveled in publishing every gruesome detail. In each case, the manner of death was strangulation. He throttled his victims first, waiting until after they died to sever their throats and mutilate their bodies. With this in mind, she practiced defending herself against such an attack.

It had been several weeks since he'd killed Liz Stride and Catherine Eddowes, leading some to believe he'd finished his scourge. But the last letter, sent to the president of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee two weeks after their deaths, was the most shocking of all. With it, the Ripper had included a human kidney. To Caroline, this vile package indicated he'd no intention of halting the killings and it made her more determined than ever to find him.

Armed with a scalpel taken from her makeshift tool bag, she wandered the streets, trying to draw the Ripper out. It was easier to conceal than a kitchen knife, and if necessary, easier to use.

A man on the opposite side of the street called to her. "Is that bonny Ida I see over there?"

Caroline smiled. "It's not Ida you see, sir, but Nellie."

"C'mon over then, sweet Nellie, and give us a kiss."

She laughed and continued on her way, turning up Whitechapel High Street. It was well lit here, illuminated by the interior lamps of the public houses, gin shops, penny show houses, and coffee stalls. Street performers offered every sort entertainment, from singing waifs to wiry acrobats. It was difficult to imagine a killer in the midst such frivolity.

She walked to the White Hart Pub, intending to stop for a quick drink and a rest. This end of the street was engulfed in darkness, and as she entered George's Yard to access the pub's front door, someone came up behind her.

He grabbed her to him, holding her tightly against his body with one arm and cupping her mouth with the other. Within seconds, he dragged her to the darkest corner of the passage and wrapped a scarf around her neck. Though she'd rehearsed this moment many times, she hadn't known how powerless her panic would render her.

He twisted the scarf tighter. Lightheaded now, she just had the strength to pull the scalpel from her pocket and drag it as deeply as she could along the back of his gloved hand. He gasped and flinched, loosening his grip. She lashed out again, digging the blade in even deeper this time. He backed away and she spun around, swinging it across his face.

He howled in pain and ran off toward the passage's other end. She got her first solid glimpse of him and saw that he wore a police constable's uniform.

"Murder!" she cried softly, for the assault had made her hoarse. "Murder!"

She scrambled after him, knowing there was little chance she'd catch him. After a few steps, she turned back toward Whitechapel High Street to find help.

Then, she stopped short. The man who'd attacked her had been a constable, or at least dressed as one. For all she knew, she'd end up reporting the crime to the very man who'd committed it. Having survived one attack, she had no desire to face another. And having already been a suspect in the Ripper killings herself, she didn't dare go to police headquarters for assistance.

She trudged home, frightened and sore. When she stripped off her coat, she found a torn piece of the scarf he'd used caught on one of the buttons. His effort to kill her had left bruises on her neck.

She spent a sleepless night, wondering at the revelation that Jack the Ripper was either a police constable himself or posing as one. Either way, it was a brilliant ruse—the uniform allowed him to walk the streets at night, concealed as a trusted public official, all the while searching for potential victims.

The following morning, she was still in bed when Emily came pounding at her door.

“Caroline! Caroline!”

She opened the door and found her friend in a mess of tears. “Heavens, Emily, what’s happened?”

“It’s Mary,” Emily choked. “She’s been—dear Lord, Caroline—the Ripper killed her.”

The significance of Emily’s words sunk in as Caroline realized the truth. Mary’s death was her fault. If she’d reported the Ripper’s attack last night, the police might’ve laid chase and caught him before he to her.

*Oh, dear Mary, I’m so sorry.*

#

Caroline steeled herself as the facts of Mary Kelly’s slaying emerged. She couldn’t allow herself to succumb to grief and guilt, for it would help no one. Instead, she focused her attention on the only thing that mattered: finding the Ripper and avenging Mary. Avenging all of them.

The details were almost too much to bear. Mary’s head was severed and placed beneath one of her arms. Her ears and nose were cut off. He’d disemboweled her body and tore the flesh

from her thighs. Some of her organs, including her heart, were missing. He'd ripped the skin off of her forehead and cheeks and pushed one of her hands into her stomach.

But the most important detail of all was the photo printed in *The Star* two days after Mary's death: a torn scarf was found on the bed beside the body. Caroline recognized it, for she still had the other half in her possession.

#

George Hutchinson, a mutual acquaintance of Mary and Caroline, seemed to have been the last person to see her alive. Two days after Mary's murder, Caroline went to see him.

"I already told the police all this," he complained. "Why's it so important I tell it to you?"

"Mr. Hutchinson, I know how fond you were of Mary. I was, too. I can't rest until I know what happened to her."

"She asked me to lend her six pence and I didn't have it. She said she'd have to get it some other way then and I let her go off. If I'd a known what was gonna happen I woulda stole it for her myself."

"Mary was deep in debt. Your six pence wouldn't have changed anything."

"Maybe not. But I had a feeling something bad was set to happen. She met a man on the next corner and I followed them back to a lodging house. I waited outside for half an hour or more but when no one came out, I left."

"What time was this?"

"About two o'clock, I'd say."

"The inquest revealed that Mary died around four," Caroline said. "Unless you stayed with her all night, you probably couldn't have helped."

He nodded, but didn't seem convinced.

“Do you remember what the man looked like?”

Mr. Hutchinson described a stocky man of average height, quite unlike the person who'd attacked her.

“And did you see any bobbies about?” she asked.

“I suppose I did, but since nothing untoward had happened at that point, I didn't think to say anything.”

Before she left, she assured Mr. Hutchinson: “You mustn't blame yourself for Mary's death. There's nothing more you could've done. Let that knowledge bring you peace.”

She wished she could believe the words for herself.

On her way home she stopped at a fruit cart to buy an apple for lunch. After she handed the merchant her coin, she turned around and saw PC Neil on the opposite side of the street. He might've been the last bobby in Whitechapel she still trusted, but nevertheless, she had no wish to speak to him. She was about to turn and walk the other direction when she noticed the bandage affixed to his cheek.

No, she thought. It's only by chance. He can't be the Ripper.

PC Neil headed toward her and as he got closer, the truth became apparent. He was the right size and build. He'd been at or near the scene of all the murders. He wore a bandage in the very place she'd wounded her attacker. PC Neil, a bobby who'd ever only showed her kindness, was the man who'd tried to kill her. Which meant, likely as not, he was also Jack the Ripper.

She stood still, wanting to flee but unable to move. Her previous determination to destroy the Ripper now seemed brash and foolhardy. Faced with him now, she gave him the brightest smile she could muster. “Goodness, constable, what on earth happened?”

She searched his eyes for anything that might suggest him capable of the Ripper's savagery, but saw nothing but benevolence. Had she been mistaken? Could the wound on his face be only a coincidence?

He raised his hand and touched the bandage. "It's nothing to concern yourself with, Mrs. Farmer. Just a nasty scuffle last night. All in the line of duty, you know."

"It's weeping through the bandage. Have you seen a doctor?"

"Certainly there's no need for that."

She took a deep breath, trying to bolster her courage. "An infection can be quite serious," she said. "I live just around the corner and have medical supplies at my disposal. If you like, I'll clean it up for you."

"Very well, perhaps you're right. That's very kind of you."

Though it was a short distance, the walk home seemed endless. Along the way, she formulated her plan, understanding the risk. If she failed at her task, he would kill her. If she succeeded, she could be arrested.

She unlocked the door and invited him inside. "Sit down," she said, indicating a chair at the kitchen table. "I'll just go get my bag."

She moved casually in spite of her racing heart. Did he realize that she'd been the one he attacked before moving on to Mary Kelly? Was she playing into his hands instead of the other way around? Thankfully, she kept her bag close at hand in case of emergency; it took only a few steps to fetch it, enabling her to keep her eye on him.

"It must've been a terrible fight," she said, crossing back over to where he sat.

"Working the East End is no easy thing," he said. "But that should come as no surprise to you."

She took out a clean cloth and a bottle of carbolic acid. Using her surgical scissors, she carefully cut the tape away from his face, revealing the wound. She'd cut more deeply than she'd thought, dangerously close to his eye. A half an inch higher and she might've blinded him.

She fought to keep her hands steady as she poured a quantity of carbolic acid onto the cloth and raised it to his cut.

"This might sting," she said.

He winced at the first contact, then relaxed somewhat as she continued dabbing the wound. He settled himself, allowing her ministrations to soothe him. Then, all at once, his hand shot up and grabbed her wrist.

"Stop," he said.

She held her breath. "Did I—did I hurt you?"

"No. It's just that—I'm sorry. It's been many months since I've been touched so tenderly. My wife died in July."

She took shallow breaths as she tried to make sense of his words. July. That was just before the Ripper killings started. Was that what had set him off? Simple grief?

"I'm very sorry for your loss," she said, her voice weak. "My husband died four years ago."

"Then you know how it feels, don't you?" He looked at her now, his eyes showing neither kindness nor sorrow. Just emptiness.

No, she thought. I don't know how it feels. Because I would never turn to violence in order to heal my broken heart, no matter the circumstances.

“I'm nearly done here. I just need to prepare a fresh bandage.” She used the bag to conceal her hands while she poured chloroform onto the torn scarf. In one swift motion, she pressed it over his nose and mouth.

“I believe this belongs to you,” she said, holding his head against her breast tightly as he struggled. “This is for every one of those women you killed. You will die here, Jack the Ripper, and no one will ever know your true name. That's what the letters were all about, weren't they? Notoriety. Infamy. You'll die an anonymous wretch, but the names of your victims will be known forever.”

When he lost consciousness, she eased him off of the chair to the floor, rolling him onto his side. She placed a bucket next to him and using the scalpel, she slit his wrist deep enough to sever the artery. Before she could contain it, it sprayed across her face and onto the wall.

Swallowing back her bile, she cut his second wrist and let him bleed out into the bucket. Within minutes, the ripper known as Jack was dead.

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The next day, the newspapers and broadsheets reported the suicide of PC Thomas Neil of Division H of the Metropolitan Police:

*PC Neil was distraught due to the death of his wife in July.*

East End gossip spread that the constable's wife killed herself when she'd learned he'd given her a venereal disease, rendering her unable to bear children. It seemed that PC Neil enjoyed the company of many of the prostitutes working his beat in Whitechapel, suffering the consequences and inflicting them upon his poor wife. Killing the women he held responsible for his loss was his recourse.

Emily had helped Caroline to drag the Ripper's body out to the street and stage the suicide scene. These women, who'd been friends for so many years, swore on the soul of their dear departed Mary that no one would ever know their secret.

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