

Yon Distant Isle

Excerpts from Trouble at High Tide by Donald Bain, adapted and expanded by Anne (4.20.12)

Author's Note:

The title is taken from a line in Robert Burns' poem "Behold the Hour, the Boat Arrive":

*Behold the hour, the boat arrive;
Thou goest, the darling of my heart;
Sever'd from thee, can I survive,
But Fate has will'd and we must part.
I'll often greet the surging swell,
Yon distant Isle will often hail:
"E'en here I took the last farewell;
There, latest mark'd her vanish'd sail."
Along the solitary shore,
While flitting sea-fowl round me cry,
Across the rolling, dashing roar,
I'll westward turn my wistful eye:
"Happy thou Indian grove," I'll say,
"Where now my Nancy's path may be!
While thro' thy sweets she loves to stray,
O tell me, does she muse on me!"*

It was a devilish case that had been handed me, this business of Jack the Ripper-like murders on the tiny, picturesque island of Bermuda. Three women were dead so far, and despite having some of my best inspectors there on the ground, nary a break in the case was to be found. We were having no luck at all ... until a familiar and beloved face appeared on the front page of the *Daily Mail*, crowned with the headline *Mystery Author Stumbles Upon Ripper's Latest Victim*.

"Jessica," I said to myself, shaking my head. "Why is it that I'm not the least bit surprised?"

Later, when I finally had a few minutes to spare, I dialed her mobile phone number. "Hello, lass," I said when she answered. "I see you're up to it again."

"George! How nice to hear from you. How are you?"

"To tell the truth," I sighed, the weight of the case lying heavily upon my

shoulders, "I'm feeling a wee bit wabbit."

"Wabbit?" she asked.

I'd forgotten to translate. "Sorry, lass, that's Scottish for tired."

"Have you been working late?"

"Late and long," I replied, "but I had a nice jolt some hours ago when I saw your face."

A sigh on her end of the line. "Oh, dear. Was my picture in your newspaper, too?"

"Afraid so, lass. I imagine you're a bit of an international sensation."

"I'm sorry to hear it."

"Nothing you can't handle," I said reassuringly. "You know that we've a team in Bermuda working on the case?"

"So I understand."

"The Bermudian police are doing a thorough job, but the governor is worried that if the case isn't solved quickly, the island will suffer economically."

"I don't doubt it," said Jessica. "Having a serial killer roaming around isn't good for tourism."

"Precisely. I've got a strong trio of inspectors on it," I told her.

"Macdonald, one of our forensic experts, and Freddie Moore, a good lad, very knowledgeable, plus Gilliam, a profiler. Would you mind terribly if I told them to contact you? I'm overseeing from here, getting reports from those on the ground, but I'll always be happy to have your take on the situation, particularly with your intimate knowledge of this latest victim and her family."

Jessica modestly demurred. "That's very flattering, George, but I only arrived on Bermuda the day before yesterday. I just met the girl and hardly know the rest of her family. And anyway, do you really think her murder is related to the others?"

"Tell me about the young woman," I suggested.

"Well, she wasn't poor or a prostitute for starters, nor was she killed in an alley. She was a bright, very pretty twenty-two year old, well off, the niece of a judge, who was just learning how to be attractive."

"What do you mean?" I asked.

"Well," Jessica said, "she didn't practice her wiles on me, but apparently she was interested in drawing masculine admiration but not always happy when she got it. Her family loved her, but I have the distinct impression that some of them didn't particularly like her. Let's just say they were impatient with her behavior. Does she sound like any of the other Jack the Ripper cases?"

"She's a way apart from the others—I'll give you that—but I can't rule her out as a serial victim. The killer may be looking for more attention. So far,

his actions have attracted only mild interest on Fleet Street. The case has been back pages and below the fold in our newspapers. But this time their ears perked up, I'm vexed to say."

"And my discovery of the body only made the situation worse."

"Not your fault, Jessica," I told her.

"No," she agreed. "But I'd rather not play a part in feeding the monster."

I chuckled. "Meaning the press or the killer?" I asked.

"Either one," she replied.

"So you'll talk to my staff?" I said hopefully.

"Of course," she said, "if that's what you want."

"You already have things to offer. I'll tell them to contact you.

Meantime," I added, because I couldn't help but worry, "you be careful, lass. This is a tricky one and he's been able to elude the authorities to date. I don't want to see your name on the front page again."

Jessica's response was heartfelt: "Neither do I."

Despite Jessica's reservations that she had little to add to Scotland Yard's investigation, I was keen to get her involved and broached the subject of the team meeting up with her that very evening during our regular conference call.

Freddie Moore was enthusiastic, as I had suspected he would be. "Capital idea, Chief Inspector," he said.

"I'm quite relishing a chance to meet her," Gilliam said. "We'll contact her immediately."

"Are you sure this is wise, George?" Macdonald asked uncertainly. "It doesn't appear that Alicia Betterton's murder is linked in any way with the murders we're here to investigate."

"That has not yet been proven beyond a doubt," I pointed out. "And even if it does turn out that the one had nothing to do with the other, Jessica's observations will still be valuable."

"But she's a civilian."

"A civilian, yes, but with experience far beyond that of many in law enforcement," I reminded her. "Just wait until you meet her - I'm sure you'll get along famously."

Or so I thought ... until Jack Gilliam called me the next evening with grievous news of the latest murder.

"So it's in line with the first three," I said once he had related the details, "but not at all like Alicia Betterton's murder."

"Yes, sir. At this point we must consider that the Tucker Town murder is a completely separate incident from the Jack the Ripper-style murders in Hamilton."

“That’s what Jessica was thinking,” I said, as much to myself as to him. “Speaking of Jessica, did you and the others have a chance to speak with her?”

“Yes, we met with her earlier today.”

“Splendid. How did it go?”

There was an awkward silence on the other end of the line.

“Jack?”

“Yes, sir. I found her delightful, and her insights upon the case relevant and extremely valuable. Freddie in particular was quite taken with her - he saw in her a kindred soul, or something of that sort.”

“I knew he would. And what about Macdonald?”

“Erm. They, ah, didn’t get on, sir.”

“What do you mean, they ‘didn’t get on?’”

Gilliam let out an expressive sigh. “Ronnie,” he said reluctantly, “was not receptive to Mrs. Fletcher. She had a preconceived notion of her as a ‘talented amateur,’ I’m afraid, and showed, ah, a certain impatience with her presence.”

To say that I was taken aback would be a serious understatement. I couldn’t fathom anyone not taking Jessica seriously, let alone a law enforcement professional under my command who I had explicitly instructed to consult with her. But then the memory of Macdonald’s distinct lack of enthusiasm to my suggestion during the last progress report came back to me. And then, thinking further back, I recalled that Macdonald, usually cheerful and outgoing round the office, always seemed to become quiet and preoccupied whenever conversation turned to Jessica, as from time to time it inevitably did. A horrifying thought occurred to me - could Veronica Macdonald be *jealous* of Jessica - and not just of her skills as a detective, but of her relationship with me?

Dear God, anything but that ...

“That settles it,” I said.

“Come again, sir?” Gilliam asked.

“I’m coming to Bermuda. I’ll be on the next flight out of Heathrow.”

“Yes, sir.”

I was good to my word, arriving on the island the next morning. After a brief meeting with the team, I went to Judge Betterton’s estate to seek out Jessica. Upon my arrival I was told that she was down at the beach, but that I was welcome to wait. I did so, taking the opportunity to rest in comfort for the first time in nearly a day.

It was not long before Jessica returned to the main house, her eyes alighting when she saw me.

“My goodness, George,” she exclaimed. “This is a surprise!”

I rose from the sofa where I'd been sitting and came to greet her, taking both of her hands in mine as I gave her a soft kiss on the cheek. "Always good to see you, Jessica."

"When did you arrive?" she asked, questions tumbling from her in her eagerness. "Why didn't you let me know you were coming? I would have met you at the airport. Have you been to headquarters already? You know about the fourth murder? Of course you do. Where are you staying?"

"One question at a time, lass," I said, chuckling. I led her to a chair by the window took the seat across from her, laying my raincoat over the arm of my chair. "I apologize for not alerting you to my pending arrival. As you may presume, it was a late decision, prompted by circumstances."

"Murder number four," Jessica guessed.

"Precisely so."

"Were you waiting very long?" she asked. "Had I known you were here, I would have come up from the beach earlier."

"Not long at all." I patted the top of the telescope next to me. "I entertained myself with this while I was waiting for you," I said, then added, "Thought I might see you wandering along the shore."

"And what did you see?" she asked. "I haven't looked through it myself." She stood and leaned over to peer into the viewfinder.

"Just a portion of the beach," I told her. "It's locked, and I didn't want to change someone's settings."

"A very important portion of the beach," Jessica said, sitting down again. "That's the scene of the crime."

"You'll have to show it to me before I leave." I held her in my gaze: although she was as radiant as always, she looked tired, as though she had not been sleeping well. Another ruined vacation for her, I thought with an inward sigh. But then, I probably didn't look much better after days of dealing with this frustrating case and the rigors of last-minute travel.

"I caught the first flight out after the news arrived, barely had time to pack a bag. As you can see, I'm still carrying my mackintosh" - I patted my raincoat - "even though the climate here is quite lovely."

"You'd be surprised," Jessica said, gesturing at it. "You'll probably find plenty of use for it. I got caught in a downpour just the other day."

"Did you? Well, then, I won't complain," I said. I cocked my head and added, "Met your host, the judge, leaving with his man as I was coming in. Seems a decent chap."

"Tom has been very generous, continuing to entertain his guests even though this has got to be a terrible time for him and his family. I feel a little guilty that my being here is preventing them from having a private mourning

period.”

“They could have asked you to leave. Perhaps they’re grateful for the distraction. Some people would prefer to ease into their grief, rather than having it beset them all at once.”

“I hope you’re right,” Jessica said. “My staying near the scene of the crime does have its advantages. I wouldn’t confess to Tom that I’ve been conducting my own investigation, but it’s difficult not to think about his niece’s murder while surrounded by those who knew her, and in particular those who disliked her.”

“Are there many who disliked her?” I asked.

“For someone so young, she seemed to have approached the world with a scorched-earth policy, gleefully alienating people, although I haven’t uncovered many details of how she managed to accomplish this so easily.”

Jessica turned at the sound of someone clearing her throat. “Excuse me, Mrs. Fletcher,” Norlene said, coming into the room with a heavy tray. “I thought the gentleman might like a little something to eat.”

I rose from his chair and relieved her of the tray, which contained sandwiches, tea, and some delightful-looking confections that resembled doughnuts. “Thank you, madam. You’re very kind.”

“How thoughtful of you, Norlene,” Jessica exclaimed as she pulled over a small table for me to set the tray down upon. “This is more than a little something - this is a feast.”

“If you’d be more comfortable in the dining room, I can set you up in there,” Norlene offered.

I waved her suggestion away. “Please, dinna fash yourself on my account,” I said. “This is wonderful exactly as it is. You are an angel come to a starving man’s rescue.” I put a hand over my heart and smiled at her. Norlene blushed and aimed a small smile in Jessica’s direction before returning to the kitchen.

Jessica bit back her curiosity and withheld her questions while I ate. She poured tea for both of us, shared one of my sandwiches at my insistence, but left the other and both the doughnuts - malasadas, she told me they were called - for me to enjoy. Only when I had finished, and started on my second cup of tea, did she ask me about my presence.

“Is there a problem with the investigation, George?” she asked. “I had the impression it was going well. Why did you need to rush over here?”

I sighed. “It’s a long story, lass,” I said.

“Do you have time to fill me in?”

I sat forward, setting down my cup on the tray, and reached out for her hand. “I do,” I said. “But why don’t you take me down to the scene. We can talk

along the way.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. I’m fully content.” I patted my stomach. “Please thank that lovely lady again for me.”

We exited by the terrace doors after Jessica had notified Norlene that we were leaving and passed along our gratitude for the food. We took the gravel path, stopped at Jessica’s cottage so I could drop off my raincoat on the swing of her porch, and talked all the way to the beach. I laughed out loud when she told me the story of her encounter with the intruder who turned out to be Freddie Moore.

“The redheaded man! Sounds like a great title for one of your books,” I said. “Freddie would love to be a scary character.”

“I certainly felt foolish once I met him and we had a chance to talk,” Jessica said wryly. “He’s not scary at all.”

“People often mistake Freddie for someone other than who he is. No, he’s not scary, but he’s nobody’s fool either. Very shrewd, that one. It’s easy to dismiss the costume and the bumbling manner, but his method of getting into character in his own way has been very efficient at solving crimes.”

Jessica nodded. “I thought that’s what he was doing. He’s dressing like Inspector Frederick Abberline to think through Bermuda’s version of Jack the Ripper.”

“Or,” I continued, “he may be impersonating Jack the Ripper himself. If it helps him to get into the mind of the murderer, it’s fine with me.” I shrugged. “I don’t question whatever works for him. Plus, he’s a whiz with electronics. One of the best we have.”

“He was going to show me what he carries in his suitcase,” said Jessica, sounding almost wistful, “but we were interrupted by news of the fourth murder.”

“Plenty of time for that,” I assured her. “He’s scheduled to give a class to the Bermudian police before he leaves. Perhaps you can sit in.”

Jessica positively glowed. “I’d like that,” she said.

She led me to the place on the beach where she’d found Alicia’s body, a spot that would have been beautiful had it not been for the grisly events that had happened there. It was a warm day, the sky a clear, deep blue that was mirrored in the sea that lapped at the delicate pink sands of the beach. I examined the rocks, and looked back to the window in the house where I’d observed this portion of the beach through the telescope. Next Jessica showed me the place where Freddie had found evidence of a hiding place that may have been used by the killer.

That was about all there was to see, so we sat together on the bottom step

of the flight of stairs that led up to the neighbors' property. As we watched a motorboat cruise along the shore just beyond the breakers, Jessica provided me with a rundown of her activities to date, her suspicions and the few trails she had yet to follow. I listened carefully, nodding at intervals, until she fell silent.

"You've gathered a lot of productive information," I said.

"Unfortunately, my team is not free to pursue Miss Betterton's killer."

"So Freddie told me."

"We have to be careful what toes we tread on here. Our duties are clearly circumscribed with no room to improvise or to expand our investigation."

"It sounds as if the Bermudian police are upset that Scotland Yard is here," Jessica said. "I thought they had specifically invited your help."

"They did," I replied. "But it's a complicated relationship we have."

"I'm sure you can simplify that for me," she said.

I laughed, and once again took her hand in mine. "Let me try. You see, we train many of their officers. Their system is very similar to ours, almost a copy of it. Yes, they want our help, but only on their terms. And they've basically given us a time frame to put up or shut up, as you Yanks like to say."

"Why would they be so impatient?" Jessica asked. "They must know an investigation takes time."

I sighed. "They don't trust us, you see."

Jessica was indignant. "I'm afraid I don't see. Why don't they trust you? They asked you here, didn't they?"

"They did, but they've invited us in before with spectacularly unfortunate results." I paused - this was a particularly difficult thing to explain. "This is not the first time the Yard has been called in on a difficult case on the island," I said at length. "In the seventies, not so long ago that I can't remember hearing about it, we were called to help investigate the murder of the island's commissioner of police."

"No!"

"Ironic, isn't it? But that was not the worst of it. Later, we were called again when the island's governor and one of his aides were assassinated. In each instance, to our great irritation and to the Bermudian government's frustration, we were unable to determine the perpetrators or effect any arrests. We returned home with a blot on our record."

"How embarrassing."

"Complete humiliation," I said. "There was a good deal of racial tension in Bermuda at the time, and the authorities made no headway in drawing out witnesses despite offering a crackin' reward."

Jessica gazed out at the turquoise-blue water. "But those things will happen," she said philosophically. "Not every case is solved, even though the

popular media make it seem as if they are.”

“You are very sweet, lass,” I said, putting my arm around her shoulders, giving her an affectionate squeeze that was rewarded when Jessica settled closer to me. “But that was not the end of it. We were called in again when two shopkeepers were murdered with equally unsatisfactory results. After we’d returned home defeated for the third time, the local boys arrested a pair of bad apples— two lifelong petty criminals— and accused them of the murders. They were hanged for the crimes, setting off a major riot, millions in damage, and the deaths of three more people.”

“Oh dear,” Jessica sighed. “I hope they were truly the guilty parties.”

“They were involved somehow, but there must have been others behind them. When we were here, our boys had continuously come up against walls, not only from the communities in which these men lived but from the top echelons of Bermudian society. They were satisfied with simply pinning the crimes on these two thugs. They didn’t want any scandals to threaten the entrenched establishment or to tarnish Bermuda’s reputation as an island paradise.”

“So Scotland Yard has a lot to prove with these Jack the Ripper cases,” she said.

I nodded as I brushed a lock of golden-blond hair back from her face. “We have indeed. I wasn’t in the service when those other crimes took place, but several colleagues who’ve since retired were among the investigators. We asked them to brief us. They were reluctant to discuss the case— not exactly a red-letter day for the Yard— but they did sit down with the team.”

“Did they give you helpful information?” she asked.

“It remains to be seen. It’s another island now, with a new regime and far more integration, both in government and in the police ranks, than was true before.”

“And, of course, the case is completely different,” she added. “The victims are not officials or even part of the establishment.”

“Far from it,” I agreed. “They’re poor souls whose lives don’t touch the majority of the populace, except for those who have sympathy for them— or who might have engaged their services.”

“Or those who are afraid their killer will look beyond such easy targets.”

I could have very happily spent the rest of the day sitting on that step with Jessica, but duty made that impossible so I slapped my hands on my knees and stood, though not without reluctance. “I have to motor into Hamilton. I’m due at headquarters for a meeting with the team.” I put out a hand to help her up. “I’d be pleased to give you a lift into town.”

Jessica smiled up at me as she took my hand. “I’m going to take you up

on that offer,” she said as she brushed the sand off of herself. “I have some errands to run fir...” She trailed off, staring out at the bay. “Do you see that boat?”

I shaded my eyes with my hand and followed her gaze. “Yes.”

“It has been up and down this portion of the beach several times.”

“Do you think they’re spying on us?” I asked, amused by the fanciful thought.

“I don’t know,” Jessica said darkly, “but they’re not dragging a fishing line. I have a bad feeling about that. Why would they crisscross the same piece of water?”

I do so wish I’d listened to Jessica’s intuition.

For here was the rebuke for my foolishness, splashed across the front page of the next day’s morning newspaper.

“Business or Pleasure?” the headline read in bold. Underneath, the subhead asked: *“What is Scotland Yard’s chief inspector doing here?”* And below that was a large photograph of Jessica and me sitting on the step with my arm about her shoulders, with a caption reading, *“Cuddling at the scene of the crime.”*

With growing mortification I read the accompanying article, which implied that the Scotland Yard team was merely enjoying an extended vacation at the expense of the Bermudian government and the British taxpayers, and taking me to task for using the occasion to meet my “sweetheart” when I should have been exhorting my team to accomplish something.

I had been indiscreet, and I knew it. I was also well aware that Jessica, ever sensitive on the subject of our being regarded as a couple, would be furious beyond words at having our relationship “outed” when, in her mind at least, no such relationship existed. I wanted to go to her immediately, to beg her forgiveness for subjecting her to such a public humiliation, but before I could follow through on my intentions my mobile started ringing, and kept ringing, and it was a full hour before I could so much as even draw breath.

Finally I was able to place a call to Jessica. She must have been out; her voice mail picked up.

“You were right about that boat, lass,” I said, my voice heavy with apology. “I have an appointment with the commissioner at noon to ‘explain myself’—his words. I knew I was taking a chance coming here, but I never believed it would involve you in this nasty business. Terribly, terribly sorry.”

My audience with the commissioner was not as bad as I feared. He seemed more amused than angered by the newspaper article, and even a bit

relieved that the press had reason to focus more on Scotland Yard than on his own department - which, he had to admit, was having no more luck at bringing the Jack the Ripper killer to justice than we were. I had lunch at my desk, then Gilliam and I went round to Macdonald's field laboratory to collect her so we could all regroup at headquarters.

When we entered the conference room, Jessica and Freddie were already there.

"Mrs. Fletcher, it's good to see you again," Gilliam said, greeting her warmly. Macdonald merely nodded at her, her chilly demeanor lowering the temperature in the room by several degrees.

As for me, I went straight to Jessica and took her hands in my own. "Are you all right?" I asked her in concern. "I'm terribly sorry to have caught you up in this mess. I should have been more sensitive to how my visit would be perceived."

"No harm done, George," she assured me. "I'm a big girl. I can protect myself, although I was very grateful for the assistance of one of the constables today." She favored me with a wry smile.

I sighed. "I'm sorry."

"Don't be," she said. "I can't say that I appreciate the attention from the press, but it comes with the territory. I only hope that all of our combined efforts will result in something that gives the press a real story to cover instead of the one they're making up."

There was an awkward silence during which I was acutely aware of the eyes of my team, and especially those of Veronica Macdonald, upon us. I wondered why they were staring until I realized that Jessica and I were still holding hands. Then thankfully Freddie broke the tension, holding up an envelope.

"While you gents and this lady were enjoying your luncheon," he said, waving the envelope at Gilliam, Macdonald, and me, "I went to the post office general delivery to retrieve our post." He sniffed one envelope. "I believe this is a billet-doux for you, Ronnie. Didn't know you had a beau."

"Oh, don't be daft," she said, reddening. She swiped the letter from his hand and put it in her handbag. I silently sighed with relief.

"Something from the home office for you, Jack," he said to Gilliam.

Freddie continued passing out the items he'd picked up at the post office and opened the package addressed to himself.

"Here's my new mini-motherboard," he said. "And look!" He held up what looked like a fountain pen.

"Is that your nineteenth-century writing implement?" Gilliam asked, laughing. "Are you going to carry around an inkwell now?"

“So you assume,” Freddie said, grinning. “This is a camera, my friend, the latest twenty-first century technological achievement, capable of capturing an image from five hundred meters.” He tucked it in his breast pocket.

“Don’t lose that,” I warned him. “It took a big chunk of my budget.”

Freddie put a hand to his breast. “I will guard it with my life.”

I turned to see Jessica staring at Freddie, a preoccupied look on her face.

“Jessica?” I said to her. “Something wrong, lass? You appear upset.”

“The opposite, George,” she said, brightening. “I just thought of something. Freddie, I can’t thank you enough.”

“Well, I always hope my contributions will be helpful,” Freddie said, perplexed, “but I must admit, I’m a bit at sea about what I’ve done.”

“I’ll let you know later if I’m right.” She turned to me. “Can you give me a lift into town?”

I looked at her in surprise. “Right now?”

“Yes, please. I’m not sure what time it closes.”

“What time *what* closes?” I asked, still confused.

“The post office, of course.”

I waited in the car with the engine idling while Jessica dashed into the post office on her mysterious errand. When she re-emerged she was smiling and carrying a manilla envelope.

“What’s so special about this package?” I asked as she got back into the passenger seat of the car.

“I don’t know,” she said, turning it over. “I don’t know what’s in it.”

“Why don’t you open it?”

Jessica hesitated, her enthusiasm suddenly dampened with uncertainty. “I’m not sure if I should.”

“Why not?” I asked.

“It’s not mine,” Jessica said. “Is it even legal for me to have it? I’m not a member of Alicia’s family. It may be something very private.”

“What do you want to do with it, then?”

“Perhaps I should just give it to Tom,” she said. “She was his niece, after all. He’ll know what to do with it.”

“Jessica,” I said, guessing at the source of her hesitance, “are your scruples making you hesitate to open this mail because it wasn’t addressed to you?”

Jessica nodded.

To spare her the pain to her conscience, I took the envelope from her hands. “As a duly appointed member of the Criminal Investigation Division of the Metropolitan Police Service in Great Britain, I believe this package is a

piece of evidence in an unsolved murder,” I said. I pulled the tab on the back of the envelope and ripped it open.

Jessica leaned over to see a sheaf of papers, protected by a plastic sleeve. A sticky note on top of the sleeve read: “A, Here’s what you asked for. Be careful.” It was signed “B.”

“Do you know who ‘B’ is?” I asked.

“I have a pretty good idea,” she replied.

“Then let’s take this to headquarters and have these papers copied. I don’t want to contaminate them with our fingerprints. We can put the documents back into the sleeve and into another envelope. I’d like to hold on to the copies in the event it turns out this actually contains evidence, but you may examine them whenever you like. That agreeable to you?”

“Yes, of course,” Jessica said, relieved.

“If you decide the proper owner of this envelope is the judge, I have a favor to ask.”

“What’s that?”

“I’d like to be there when you deliver it to him, not in any official capacity, but as your friend,” I said. “Would that be all right? Can you think of an excuse to have me there?”

“After today’s article, they would assume you and I are a couple,” Jessica said. “I’d say that’s excuse enough.”

I gave her a sad smile. “If only it were so,” I said softly.

It took an hour for the copies to be made and returned to us. In the meantime, Veronica Macdonald scoured headquarters for a padded envelope similar to the one the papers had been sent in and brought it to us. Freddie Moore peeled off the bar code on the original envelope and affixed it to the new one. Jack Gilliam carefully copied the handwriting in the address and the initials of the sender, and we passed around the new envelope, trying to make it appear as if it had been wrinkled in its transit through the mail. When the documents and the photocopies of them were returned, we slipped the originals into the plastic sleeve, made sure the note to “A” from “B” was still affixed, and slid it all into the new envelope, sealing it so it would appear as if it had never been opened. Then we took the time to see what we had. I gave my team the photocopies, directing them to spread the pages out on the long table.

“Try to arrange them in sections of a similar nature,” I instructed.

The five of us circled the table, examining the papers that Alicia had taken such extreme measures to keep hidden, but which Jessica had managed to retrieve.

“So, what do you think we have here?” I asked.

“Most of it looks like personal correspondence,” Jessica said, lifting a printout of an e-mail and showing it to me. The message had been addressed to a Barry Lovick, instructing him to pick up a package on a particular date and deliver it to “your boss.”

“Who’s Barry Lovick?” I asked. “Is he the B.L. who sent these papers to Alicia Betterton?”

“I believe so,” she said. “He was Tom Betterton’s law clerk until about six months ago when he was fired.”

“Why was he fired?”

“Tom told his personal assistant, Adam, that he let his law clerk go because he liked doing his own legal research.”

“And does he?”

“Do his own research? I highly doubt it,” Jessica replied. “Tom, himself, told me that he’s in the process of hiring another clerk, one of two he normally maintains. He bragged about how many wanted the job and said a judge needs his clerks not only to research case law, but also to write bench memos, among other duties.”

“So he lied to Adam about the reason for the firing. Why would he do that?”

“Perhaps to cover up the real reason,” she said. “Adam heard that Lovick had been copying papers and taking them home from the office. I don’t know who he heard that from, but he assumed they were legal papers—‘party-of-the-first-part stuff,’ he said— but maybe they were more personal than professional.”

“Money is personal, isn’t it?” Freddie said, waving a sheet in the air.

“What did you find?” I asked.

“Deposit slips for a bank here in Bermuda. There are three, each in the amount of forty thousand dollars.”

“Did you find a copy of the checks, too?” Jessica asked.

“No. Looks like these were cash deposits,” Freddie said. “And look here, the dates of the deposits have been circled with a marker.”

“What does that mean?” Gilliam asked.

“If the man who sent Miss Betterton the papers made those marks, he could be making a point,” Macdonald said. “Perhaps he’s tying the dates of the deposits to something else.”

“Like what?” Freddie asked.

“I don’t know,” she said. “He’s a judge. Perhaps they’re dates of legal decisions.”

Jessica cocked her head. “In other words, you think these are bribes.”

Macdonald immediately assumed a defensive tone. “I’m just

speculating,” she said. “But your American jurists don’t normally get paid in forty-thousand-dollar increments, do they? And in cash?”

“I can’t think of why they would,” Jessica said gently, sighing. “I’m not challenging your interpretation; I’m just sorry if it’s the correct one.”

Macdonald’s attitude softened. “It’s always difficult when someone doesn’t live up to one’s expectations,” she said, lowering her head to peer at some of the other papers. Who was she talking about, I had to wonder - Tom Betterton, or me?

“Someone else must have raised that issue,” Gilliam said, “but it appears that your host was exonerated.”

“What do you have there?” I asked, holding out my hand.

Gilliam gave me the paper he’d been reading. I perused it briefly and then passed it to Jessica. “It’s a transmittal concerning a ruling from the New Jersey Bar Association in which charges against Judge Thomas L. Betterton have been found to be unsupported.”

“Here’s another one saying the same thing,” Gilliam said, “but it’s a different date.”

“So, he was suspected of misconduct,” Jessica said, “but there wasn’t sufficient proof.”

“He received congratulations from several people,” Gilliam said, looking through other sheets, “and here’s one that thanks him for his quote ‘attention to their needs.’ Kind of an odd wording, don’t you think?”

“We’re looking for facts, Jack,” I said, perhaps a bit more sharply than I intended, “not the existence of odd wording. If you can put together a genuine quid pro quo, then we may have something. Let’s not read into these papers what’s not there. We know that appearance is not necessarily truth.”

My team resumed examining the documents on the table, while Jessica looked pained at the reminder of the violation we had been subjected to - *she blames herself*, I thought with regret. It was unfortunate, since none of what had happened had been her fault. It hadn’t been mine either, unless you counted falling in love with her in the first place as being my fault ...

My musings were interrupted by Freddie. “I think I’ve found the facts you’re looking for,” he said, plucking several pages from one of the piles and passing them to me. “Those first records are deposit slips, but from a Canadian bank. And here are confirmations of wire transfers from the Canadian bank to a Swiss bank, and then to the Bermuda institution. It looks like he’s been laundering his bribe money, filtering it through several banks before it reached the island.”

We spent another half hour perusing the papers Barry Lovick had sent to Alicia before gathering them up and sealing them in the new envelope. Jessica

slid the package into her shoulder bag and thanked us all for our assistance.

“I know investigating Alicia’s death is not in your sphere of responsibility,” she said. “Furthermore, I have no idea whether or not these papers have anything to do with it to begin with. But I am very grateful you volunteered your time and expertise in reviewing them.”

“No worries,” Freddie said cheerfully. “Always good to get your mind moving on someone else’s puzzles. Kind of clears the thinking logjams.”

“Glad to have given you some help in return for yours,” Gilliam said.

“I hope they turn out to be what you want them to be,” Macdonald.

“Thank you,” Jessica said, taking her hand. She smiled, and Macdonald smiled back - it seemed as though they had achieved a measure of peace between them.

I escorted Jessica out the rear door to avoid the press, and climbed into Freddie’s little yellow car for the trip back to Tucker’s Town. Jessica was silent, no doubt pondering the meaning of the package that was now in her possession. I was certain that no matter what the papers ultimately represented, the dinner party that evening would be interesting to say the least.

A rainstorm was well underway by the time I arrived at Judge Betterton’s estate. Adam Wyse answered my knock at the door and led me to the sitting room; it appeared that I was the last to arrive. Jessica immediately jumped up and came to greet me.

“I’m so glad you made it,” she said fervently in a low voice.

“What’s going on?” I whispered back.

“I’ll tell you later,” she said cryptically before introducing me to the others. Godfrey Reynolds, Tom Betterton’s British publisher, was particularly pleased to meet another British citizen, and said that he’d never met a real, live Scotland Yard inspector before.

“You probably have and just didn’t know it,” I replied pleasantly.

Godfrey’s wife, Daisy, was equally delighted to meet me, while Stephen and Madeline Betterton were appropriately polite. Claudia, Tom’s most recent ex-wife, took my hand and proceeded to try to crush it. I wasn’t sure what she was trying to prove, but whatever it was I wasn’t about to give her the satisfaction of wincing.

Margo announce that dinner was served, and we made our way to the dining room. There were ten of us at the table. The conversation was subdued, and mostly about the food, which was exceptional. The nasty weather naturally became a topic of discussion, and Tom recounted how his boat had made it back to the safety of the harbor just ahead of the storm.

“I frankly wondered whether we’d get there,” Tom said. “I don’t think

I've ever seen a storm quite this bad before on Bermuda. I hear that all flights have been cancelled until further notice."

"The weather reports say it will last at least until tomorrow night," Stephen said.

"Well," Tom said, "we did make it back, thanks to Adam's piloting skills, and by the way, we have him to thank for our meal tonight. He caught and cleaned these rockfish before the foul weather hit. Nothing like fresh-caught fish."

"And Norlene cooked them perfectly," Jessica said, nodding towards the kitchen.

"Right. Right," Tom said, raising his glass. "To Norlene, best cook on the island." We all joined in the toast.

Over dessert Tom tapped his wineglass with his knife. "Stephen isn't the only one with good news," he said. "You'll be pleased to know that the Bermuda Police Service has released all of us from its demands that we remain on the island. We are free to go at any time."

This was news to me, and my face likely mirrored my surprise.

"Oh, thank goodness," Daisy said. "Not that it hasn't been lovely here, Tom," she added hastily. "I mean, it's a beautiful island and all but we really must get home to London."

"I'm sorry if your forced vacation was not what you had anticipated," Tom said, "but you are welcome back any time." He raised his glass. "To my family, guests, and good friends, all of whom have helped me bear this dreadful episode. I thank each and every one of you."

We touched the rims of our glasses together around the table, me with my goblet of water, Jessica with her ginger ale, and the others with their wineglasses.

Tom put his glass down and pushed back his chair. "Now, if it suits you all, may I suggest we take our coffees to the sitting room to allow Norlene to clean up and get home before the weather worsens? Adam, please give her a hand and then bring in some cordials."

"When did you learn that we don't have to stay on Bermuda any longer?" Jessica asked Tom as the others had left the dining room. "I guess I'm a little surprised that we weren't notified personally."

"Commissioner Hanover called this morning," Tom replied, ushering us into the living room. "He asked me to pass along the news that you are no longer required to stay, but since I didn't see you before you left this morning, I decided to hold the news for tonight and deliver it in person."

When we joined the others in the sitting room, Godfrey, who'd taken a chair near the fireplace as his wife settled on one of the sofas, said, "I take this as

a sign that the police service are closing in on solving their cases.”

“I certainly hope so,” Tom said, “but the inspector here would know more about that than I.” He turned to me expectantly.

“So far as I know, there have been no arrests to date,” I replied, choosing my words with care. “Beyond that, I’m not at liberty to speculate.”

“Oh, come now, sir, you must know something more about the Jack the Ripper killer who’s been terrorizing this island,” Godfrey said. “After all, the niece of our host here was a victim of the monster herself.”

“That’s right,” Stephen said. “The local police may not be the most sophisticated investigators but we’d like to know that the world-famous Scotland Yard is making progress.” He said that last bit with poorly-concealed sarcasm, which I pointedly ignored.

“Too bad,” Tom said. “I was hoping that you would entertain us with some inside information, the sort of scoop that the media vultures would sell their souls for.”

“There’s no inside scoop to provide,” I said with a noncommittal smile. “All I can say is that we continue to investigate in conjunction with Bermuda’s local authorities, who I must say are quite professional in the way they go about things. The Yard are here only in an advisory capacity; the investigation is very much under local control, or as you Americans are fond of saying, the ball is in their court.” It wasn’t entirely truthful - my team and I were very much hands-on with this case - but it was the most I was willing to say under the circumstances.

Adam, who had carried in a tray with three bottles of liqueur and a dozen tiny glasses, chimed in as he set them down on a table, “Maybe the government should have called in the FBI instead.”

Jessica spoke up in my defense: “I have confidence that Scotland Yard will crack the case before long.”

I leaned over and whispered in her ear. “Nice of you to say, lass,” I breathed, and Jessica blushed slightly.

“I do, too,” Margo chimed in. “The police always save the day.”

“I have to speak up for the Yard, as well,” Godfrey said. “Every bit as good as your FBI.”

“I’d just like to see them solve Alicia’s murder,” Tom said, “and catch this Jack the Ripper before he slaughters any more of us.”

“If I remember correctly, Tom, you said that the Scotland Yard team told you that Alicia was not a victim of the Jack the Ripper killer,” Jessica said.

“You don’t remember correctly, Jessica,” he replied with annoyance. “I’m a little surprised at you.”

“But I heard you say it the other day when the inspectors were here.”

“What you say is not precisely accurate, Jessica,” Tom told her, “and accuracy is key in such cases. What the Scotland Yard inspectors said was that they didn’t believe that she was a victim of Jack the Ripper. That’s not a presentation of proof in any court I’ve ever had jurisdiction over. I frankly think they’re wrong.”

“She was killed by the Bermuda Jack, no doubt about it,” Adam said.

“What makes you say that?” I asked.

“The MO, *modus operandi*,” Adam replied. “I read the papers. I read the crime reports. As sickening as it might be, Alicia was killed just like the others.”

“Do we have to discuss this?” Madeline wailed. “We will have to continue living with Alicia’s murder every day. I don’t want to talk about it tonight.”

“Very well,” Tom said. “What would you like to talk about?”

She shrugged. “I don’t know.”

“I know,” Daisy said excitedly. “We were in Hamilton shopping today. Which reminds me.” She turned to Jessica. “Madeline and I saw you coming out of the post office, Jessica. What were you doing in Hamilton today?”

“You didn’t need to go to the post office in Hamilton,” Tom said. “We have plenty of stamps here, and Adam makes a post office run every day.”

“I was picking up a package in general delivery,” Jessica explained.

“I wouldn’t think that you’ve been here long enough to get mail,” Claudia said.

“I haven’t been,” Jessica said. “The package was not for me. It was sent to Alicia, Tom, but I think it’s something we should discuss privately. It can wait for another time when you’re not entertaining.”

“For Alicia?” Tom said. “Can’t imagine what she sent away for. Probably another mystery book. Now you’ve piqued my curiosity.” He slapped his knees and rose from his chair. “There’s no time like the present. I’m sure our guests won’t mind if we desert them for a few minutes. Shall we go in the library?”

Jessica looked uncertain. “Are you sure?”

“Absolutely. These grown-ups can entertain themselves for a few minutes. Can’t you?” he said, looking around.

“Go ahead,” Godfrey said. “I’ve got some questions for the inspector.”

Jessica glanced at me. “You’ll excuse us, won’t you?”

I inclined my head slightly. “Of course.”

As Tom led Jessica across the breezeway toward the library, Claudia said, “So, Daisy, tell us what bargains you found in Hamilton today.”

“I would rather hear about your case, Inspector,” said Godfrey.

I wasn’t about to fill him in on the details, of course, so I kept my comments vague, talking more about the historic investigation than the present

one. I was still stalling when at last the door to the library opened abruptly, and Tom came storming out. Jessica followed at a calmer pace, but her eyes were boring holes in our host's back.

"Well, that didn't take long," Claudia said.

Margo studied Tom's face. "Are you all right?" she asked him.

"Perfectly fine," he said, the tick in his eye belying his words. He went straight to the fireplace where Stephen had stationed himself again.

"What was that all about?" Stephen asked.

"Nothing," Tom said. "Nothing at all. Jessica thought she had something really special, perhaps something that I would be upset about, but of course, I'm not. Have a drink, Jessica, and we'll celebrate your soaring imagination. Adam, pour Jessica a cordial." Adam jumped up to follow Tom's direction.

"No, thanks," Jessica said neutrally. "I don't want anything. I'm fine as I am." She returned to her seat next to me, her eyes never leaving our host.

Tom pulled some papers from the envelope and held them up. "Jessica was worried these may have been important. But you see, they're really not. Not important at all," he said as he started dropping them into the fireplace. The fire had burned down to embers, but the papers caught immediately and the flames flared up, lighting the room. "See how important they are, Jessica?" Tom said. He seemed to be taunting her as he fed sheet after sheet to the flames.

"But, Tom, maybe you'll need them later," Margo said. "Are you sure you want to burn them?"

"I don't need them. I don't want them," Tom said, continuing to add more fuel to the fire.

Jessica studiously avoided looking at me, but I already knew what she was thinking: it was fortunate that we'd photocopied all of the documents in that envelope.

"As long as you've got the flames up, we should throw another log on there," Stephen said, pulling a piece of wood from a basket next to the hearth.

"Put it in," Tom told him. "I want to burn the rest of these."

I felt Jessica tense beside me, and knew she was about to make her move. I found her hand on the sofa and gave it a squeeze to convey my support.

"I'm sorry you feel it necessary to burn those papers," she said to Tom, "considering that Alicia was killed because of them."

The silence that followed her pronouncement was deafening. "What are you talking about?" Tom demanded. "She was killed by the Jack the Ripper killer. Everyone knows that. Isn't that right?"

Jessica's grip on my hand tightened. "No, that isn't right," she said.

Her quiet defiance enraged our host. "Are you accusing me, Jessica?" Tom roared. "How dare you? To even think that I would be capable of brutally

murdering a beloved member of my family is— it's— it's outrageous. That poor innocent girl was slashed to death by a madman with a knife. I don't own any knives, and if I did, I wouldn't even know how to use one."

"I find that difficult to believe," said Jessica. "I've heard you say that you're an admirer of Teddy Roosevelt, and Madeline has said that your New Jersey home is filled with hunting trophies. It's a rare hunter who doesn't know how to use a knife."

"Claudia was the one who walked out of here with knives that night," Stephen said, pointing at his former stepmother. "And you hated Alicia. You *always* hated her."

"She was not the most lovable child," Claudia replied calmly. "But I didn't kill her. I wouldn't waste my time."

"Don't talk about Alicia that way!" Tom shouted.

"That's right. Defend her again," Claudia snapped. "She was the one who broke our marriage apart. You know that, don't you?"

"No, you did when you sent her away," Madeline cried out. "You convinced Tom to send her to that terrible school. It broke her spirit. She was miserable there."

"She would have been miserable anywhere," Claudia bit back. "She had to have her way all the time, and all of you kowtowed to her like she was Queen of the May. Well, she wasn't my queen and I wasn't about to let her rule the roost. I got rid of her and all of you loved it. Admit it. It was so quiet without her, so peaceful, no fights, no screaming."

Welcome to one man's family, I thought wryly.

Jessica spoke up, redirecting the focus of the conversation to Alicia's death. "What did Alicia say to you on the night she was killed, Tom?" she asked.

"What do you mean? I didn't talk to her that night."

"You just told me in the library that she'd said she had a surprise for you," she reminded him. "Did she tease you about it? Did she hint at what it was, threaten you?"

"She did that to all of us," Madeline said with a shrug. "She said that she was going to get us in trouble; we'd be living on skid row, begging her for mercy. She said she had proof that was going to blow us all out of the water. Yes, that's the way she put it. I was so mad that I told her if she tried it, I would kill her." Madeline looked at Tom. "I did. I said that. But I didn't. I didn't kill her. She just made me so mad," she finished, breaking down into tears.

"We know you didn't kill her," Stephen put in. "I told her to shut up, too. I told her any pain she inflicted on us was going to come back to bite her. She said she didn't care. She was just ranting." He shook his head. "I don't think the

hospital helped. If anything, it made her worse. Or maybe we weren't used to it anymore. It was probably typical Alicia. She always had some grandiose plan."

"But, Tom, you knew it was different this time, didn't you?" Jessica said. "You knew what she was talking about and that it wasn't an idle threat. The papers you just burned would have burned you if they'd been seen by the wrong people. Isn't that so? Alicia was trying to blackmail you."

"And just why would she do that, Miss Mystery Writer?" Tom said with a curl of his lip. I clenched my teeth, fighting down the urge to connect my fist with his face for showing her such disrespect.

Jessica stood her ground. "You would know better than I, but revenge sounds like a good motive," she said. "She was angry at you for letting Claudia send her away, for putting her in a strict, regimented school, an unyielding, unsympathetic environment where she wasn't free to do as she pleased. And when she fought back in every way she knew how, even to the point of attempting suicide, she succeeded in breaking up the marriage, didn't she?"

"She certainly did," Claudia put in. "I always thought it was a sham, that pretend suicide attempt."

"You never loved her," Tom said to Claudia.

"She never even liked her," Stephen added with a snort.

Before the conversation could descend back into the murky depths of the family's sordid past, Jessica caught their attention again. "Even when Claudia was no longer Alicia's stepmother, she still was able to thwart Alicia's plans, convincing you, Tom, to renege on your promise of an apartment in New York. She was still after that apartment, wasn't she? And she knew what she needed to get it from you."

"Her throat was slashed," Tom ground out. "Good God, does anybody here think I'd be capable of slashing anyone's throat, especially my own flesh and blood? It's barbaric."

"I didn't say you slashed Alicia's throat, Tom." A brilliant flash of lightning accompanied by an especially violent crack of thunder punctuated her last statement, as if the very elements cried out for justice. And then everything went black.

One of the women - I think it was Margo - screamed. "Get a flashlight," someone else yelled.

The only light in the room came from the flickering flame in the fireplace. Jessica, always prepared, took a small flashlight out of her handbag, and flicked it on, illuminating our small part of the sitting room with the harsh blue light of its LED bulb.

"Call the power company," Claudia said. The words were barely out of her mouth when, as abruptly as they had gone out, the lights came on again.

Stephen laughed nervously. "That didn't last long," he said.

Norlene came from the kitchen carrying a large flashlight. "I thought you might need this. But thank goodness, the lights are back on," she said.

Jessica looked around the room. "Where's Adam?" she asked.

"He just left," Norlene said.

"Did you see where he went?"

"He ran into the kitchen and grabbed the keys to the boat," the cook replied.

Jessica looked at me in alarm. "He has to be stopped," she said.

"He can't take the boat out in this weather," Stephen said.

I pulled out my mobile and removed myself to a corner of the room to place a call to the Bermuda police. "His name is Adam Wyse. He works for Judge Thomas Betterton here in Tucker's Town," I told the staff sergeant who answered the phone. "Notify the Marine Unit. Try the dock area here. He might be attempting to leave using a boat that belongs to the judge."

When I turned back to the others I saw that Jessica's worry had intensified. She had clearly been counting heads while I was on the phone, and someone else had come up missing.

"Where's Tom?" she asked.

There were shrugs all around. A flurry of conversation ensued.

"He said he didn't feel well," Madeline said.

"I think he went upstairs. I'll go find him," Stephen said and left the room.

"Adam's a fool if he thinks he can take a boat out on a night like this," Claudia commented. "And just where does he think he can go?"

Stephen returned a few minutes later. "Tom said he's feeling a little queasy," he said. "He's lying down. He told me to tell everyone to continue enjoying themselves."

"Not that we were exactly enjoying ourselves," Claudia said sourly.

"This has been such a strain on him," Margo said. "Maybe I should go see how he is." She started to rise from her seat, but Stephen stopped her.

"Leave him alone, Margo," he said.

My mobile rang, and I once again retreated from the group to take the call. This time Jessica followed me.

"Good news, Inspector," the staff sergeant said without preamble. "We found Mr. Wyse - you were right, he was at the dock, attempting to take the judge's boat. He was having trouble starting it, didn't even see us coming."

"Yes, that's good news, good news indeed," I said. "Fast work. Well done."

"Shall we detain him, sir?"

“What? Yes, hold him until I arrive,” I said. “Many thanks.”

“They found Adam?” Jessica asked as I replaced the phone in my pocket.

“Yes. He was at the dock trying to start the boat. Good thing it wouldn’t kick over. They’re bringing him to police headquarters in Hamilton.” I lowered my voice and asked her, “Why is it important that he be retained, Jessica?”

“I’ll fill you in on the way,” she replied quietly. “You have your car outside?”

“Yes, I do.”

Jessica turned to the others and announced, “The inspector and I are leaving.”

“I would suggest that you all remain here on the property for the interim,” I said. “Why?” Daisy asked. “Tom said that we were all free to go.”

“And I say that everyone must remain here,” I said firmly, in a tone that would brook no argument.

“But—”

“Calm down, Daisy,” Godfrey said to her. “We’re not going anywhere in this storm anyway.”

“Kindly inform the judge of my order when he awakens,” I said as I helped Jessica into her coat, “and thank him for dinner.”

A gust of wind buffeted the car as I wrestled the steering wheel to keep us from sliding into a rain-swollen ditch. The drive to Hamilton was proving devilishly treacherous - between the heavy rain and the darkness visibility was almost nil. My attention was divided between the road conditions and Jessica, who was laying out for me her case against Tom Betterton.

“When I spoke with Margo this afternoon, she told me how Tom cried in her arms, moaning about Alicia’s death, saying, ‘How could she do this to me?’ Margo didn’t remember if the police were already there when Tom woke her,” she told me. “But the police questioned each of the family members separately before letting them come together in the library. They wouldn’t have informed Tom of Alicia’s death and then allowed him to wake Margo. They kept everyone apart until after the initial interviews.”

“So Tom knew Alicia was dead before the police came,” I said.

“Yes. And tonight Tom kept denying that he slashed her throat. And he didn’t - Alicia was strangled to death. However, that piece of information was never released.”

“Another person, then, slashed her throat after Betterton strangled her,” I reasoned.

“Yes,” Jessica confirmed. “And I believe that person was Adam.”

It was a relief to finally reach the streets of Hamilton, and arrive safely at

the Bermudan police headquarters.

“Where is he?” I said as I strode in, showing the staff sergeant my Scotland Yard badge.

“We’ve brought in more than one fellow tonight, Chief Inspector. Who are you looking for?”

“His name is Adam Wyse,” Jessica said.

“That fellow the Marine Unit brought in? He’s in a holding cell in the back. What’s he done?”

I looked at Jessica and said, “We’ll know more after we question him. Lead the way.”

Adam Wyse was huddled on a bench in a corner of his cell, his soaking wet clothing leaving puddles on the metal seat. He sat up upon seeing us and came to the bars.

“Am I glad to see you,” he said to Jessica.

“I can’t imagine why,” Jessica replied mildly.

The staff sergeant opened the cell door and we joined Adam inside. “I didn’t kill her. I swear it,” he said as the door clanged shut behind us.

“Then why did you run?” I asked.

“Because I knew I’d be accused,” he said.

“You would be?” I said. “By whom?”

“The judge.”

“Why would Judge Betterton accuse you of killing his niece?” I asked.

Adam fell silent, so Jessica answered for him. “Tom Betterton would accuse Adam of the murder because he’s the one who killed her.”

Adam brightened. “Not me. Not me,” he said. “It was the judge who slit her throat.”

“That’s not true,” Jessica pointed out, “but Tom did commit the murder - he strangled her.” She turned her gaze to Adam.

“I had nothing to do with Alicia’s murder,” he said.

“That isn’t true either, Adam,” said Jessica. “Oh, I’m not suggesting that you killed her. Tom is responsible for having taken her life. Her throat was slit after she’d died to make it appear that she was the victim of the Jack the Ripper killer. Her throat was slit to shift suspicion away from Judge Betterton. And that’s where you come in, Adam. Was it your suggestion?”

He sat on the cot and hung his head.

“You’re handy with a knife. Everyone knows that,” said Jessica. “You recently bought a new knife at the marine store in town. Was it to replace the one you used on Alicia? Did you throw the old one in the ocean to get rid of the evidence?”

He didn’t answer, so Jessica continued. “Ever since Alicia was killed,

you've been repeating that she was a victim of Jack the Ripper. You've said it over and over, which caused me to wonder why you were so certain— unless it was because you wanted to reinforce the lie in order to protect your boss.”

“Is Mrs. Fletcher correct?” I asked, and he nodded. “She was about to blackmail him, wasn't she?”

Adam shrugged. “I guess. I overheard her calling that Barry Lovick guy, the one the judge fired. I figured they had a thing going, but maybe I'm wrong. She would hang up every time she thought I was listening.”

“Did you actually see the judge kill her?” I asked. “Or did he tell you what had happened?”

Jessica answered for him. “He saw it happen,” she said, looking at me. “Remember when you told me the telescope was locked? It was focused on the scene of the crime because Adam had been watching when Tom killed her.”

“I didn't know it was going to happen, though,” Adam said. “I was just looking at her through the telescope.”

“You were spying on her, you mean,” Jessica said.

“I was watching her, but she knew it. I'd watched her before. She liked having me watch her. She knew I was thinking of going down there to talk to her, maybe even get something going between us. I kind of think she wanted it. And I was getting up the nerve to go. But then I saw the judge come up behind her, and I was glad I hadn't gone down there.”

“Then what happened?” I asked.

“They argued,” Adam said. “That wasn't new, but this time he was really angry and he grabbed her by the neck. I couldn't hear anything, but it was obvious that he was yelling at her. I don't think he meant to kill her, just wanted to shake some sense into her. I didn't know what to do, so I just kept watching until I saw her fall to the ground. The judge, he just stood there for a moment, and then he came back to the house.”

“And he was aware that you'd seen it happen,” I proffered.

“He was shaking like a leaf when he walked in,” Adam said. “He saw me sitting next to the telescope and asked me what I thought I was doing. I could have lied, but he never would have bought it. I told him I was waiting for him. I said I saw him kill her. He started to cry and said he didn't mean to squeeze so hard, asked me to help him. I asked him what I could do. He didn't have an answer, but then I thought of all the Jack the Ripper talk and the fact that the victims had been pretty young girls, so I suggested that we make it look like she was just another victim.”

“And?” I prodded.

“And he agreed,” Adam said simply.

“So you went down to the beach and slashed her throat,” said Jessica.

“I didn’t want to, believe me,” Adam told her. “I almost got sick after I did it. I tossed the knife into the ocean and was leaning against these rocks trying not to throw up. Then I heard you. I waited until you left and ran back up to the house to tell him it was over, but I got delayed.”

“Because Godfrey Reynolds was following you,” she said.

Adam looked surprised. “You knew about that? Yeah. I had to wait for him to go back to his cottage before I could talk to the judge. By that time, you had already called the cops, and they were knocking on the door.”

“Did the judge pay you to help cover up his crime?” Jessica asked.

Adam replied sheepishly, “Thirty thousand dollars. In cash. I told him I wasn’t blackmailing him; I just wanted some acknowledgment for taking such good care of him. Believe me, I’d never kill anyone for money, not even a million bucks. But she was already dead. I needed the money to set me up for a while. I’m tired of being a PA. I don’t want to have to run errands anymore for some fat cats who treat me like a servant. ‘Adam, do this. Adam, do that. Adam, get me a drink of water. Adam, get my slippers.’ Even the judge. It was more of the same,” he scowled petulantly. “I want a new career.”

I glanced at Jessica. “I think I’d better have the local chaps grab hold of Judge Betterton before he decides to take off,” I said.

“A good idea,” Jessica said, “although, with the flights canceled, he won’t be able to leave the island, at least not until the storm abates.”

“I can go, then?” Adam asked hopefully. “I didn’t kill her, so—”

“You may not have killed her, young man,” I said, “but you’re an accessory to murder. I’m sure the local constabulary will decide you’ve committed some very serious offenses, including hindering a police homicide investigation, lying to authorities, defacing a corpse, blackmail, even though you don’t want to call it that. I’m sure they’ll think of others. You’ll not be trying out a new career until you’ve paid for those crimes.”

“I’m sorry it’s ended this way, Adam,” Jessica said sadly. “It didn’t have to.”

The resolution of the Betterton murder proved to be a watershed moment, as the very next day my team had a break in the Jack the Ripper murders that led, quite swiftly, to an arrest and a confession. When I called Jessica that evening with the news, she insisted on coming down to headquarters to hear the story for herself and congratulate my co-workers personally.

Freddie, especially, had been elated by our success, but also mindful of who he had to thank for it. The moment Jessica entered the room he swept her into his arms and danced her around the office as I looked on proudly.

“It was you, Jessica Fletcher,” he said, twirling an astonished Jessica

around. “You gave me the key to the solution.”

“How was I responsible?” she asked, laughing.

Freddie stopped dancing and caught his breath. “You reminded me that the murderer was following in the footsteps of the real Ripper, who had taunted the public with postcards and letters sent to the newspapers. I went down to the news office. The publisher said they’d just turned over another pile of unprinted letters to the police. The local chaps had gone through them, but couldn’t make heads nor tails of what was important and what was simply a sham. They’d bundled them up for us. We collected all the missives they’d received having to do with the case and we combed through them looking for signs.”

“And how did that lead you to the killer?” Jessica asked.

“There was a postcard from ‘Saucy Jacky,’” Gilliam said. “Freddie knew that name had been used in one of the 1888 communications. In it, the writer mentioned details only the killer would know.”

“We never give out all the information to the public,” I said. “It’s important to hold back particulars pertinent to the investigation.”

“But how did you know who wrote the card?”

“We compared the handwriting to all the other correspondence,” Macdonald said, “and found several pieces by the same person.”

“These kinds of killers are often proud of their accomplishments,” Gilliam said. “They may be a solitary, secretive type, but the impulse is not one they can hide forever. They need to boast about their prowess. It adds to the satisfaction.” As the team’s profiler, he had put together an assessment of the murderer’s personality, which had proven correct.

“The laboratory was able to lift unknown fingerprints— not from the letters themselves but from one of the envelopes,” Macdonald added. “He’d gotten sloppy with that one.”

“It only takes one,” Freddie said gleefully. He hauled his battered suitcase up onto a desk and opened the leather straps. “Voila!” he said. “My traveling criminal library.” He lifted out a laptop computer that was nestled amid a profusion of technical equipment and cradled it in his arms. “This little love contains the latest satellite interface and a complete set of crime-mapping software.”

I smiled. “Freddie can track criminal patterns in participating police districts around the globe.”

“It creates an actual crime map of antisocial behavior,” Gilliam added, “to alert police to criminals who’ve committed similar crimes elsewhere in the world.”

“Our man had been questioned about serial killings in South America in his younger days,” I explained to Jessica. “He’d been released for lack of

evidence.”

“What evidence do you have now?” she asked.

“His record was relatively clean,” Freddie said, “making it more difficult, but he’d been pulled in for a civil disturbance several years back, when he’d been protesting the Bermuda Immigration and Protection Amendment Act. Once we identified him, the local men were able to get authorization to search his quarters and found just what we needed.”

“One room was decorated with photographs he’d taken of his victims,” Gilliam said. “Those were his trophies; now they’re our evidence.”

“And his fingerprints matched those on the envelope,” Macdonald added.

“Well,” I said, coming to Jessica’s side and reclaiming her from Moore, “I do hope you’ll excuse us, but I intend to take Jessica out for a nice celebratory dinner to thank her for her assistance. The rest of you can manage without me for an evening, surely?”

“Of course,” said Freddie. “By all means, show the lady a good time. She richly deserves it.”

“The three of us can fend for ourselves,” Gilliam assured me with a wink. “Can’t we, Ronnie?”

“Actually, I think I’ll beg off,” Macdonald said, carefully avoiding looking at me. “I have all the victim photographs from the house to process, so I think I’ll just grab a sandwich and make a start on them at the lab.”

“Suit yourself,” Freddie said.

In the course of my travels around the island I had discovered an exquisite little restaurant outside of St. George overlooking a long crescent of relatively secluded seashore.

“Fancy a walk along the beach?” I asked after we had finished dinner.

Jessica sighed sadly. “I don’t know if that’s a good idea,” she said. “The last two times I’ve tried to take a night-time stroll along a beach, I’ve stumbled over a body.”

“Well, you know what they say,” I said as I took her arm in mine. “Third time’s a charm.”

We reached the beach where I paused to roll up my trouser cuffs and remove my shoes, then steadied Jessica while she unstrapped her sandals. Continuing onward we walked toward the surf line, our feet sinking into sand still warm from the afternoon sun. I casually held my loafers in one hand, clasping Jessica’s hand with the other, and for awhile we strolled beneath a canopy of sparkling stars without speaking, content simply to be in each other’s company.

“Did you know Inspector Macdonald was attracted to you?” Jessica asked, breaking the silence.

I laughed. “No!” I said. “Not until Jack Gilliam told me about your confrontation at the fifth murder scene - then the pieces fell into place. But tell me, Jess - how did *you* know?”

Jessica shrugged, a movement I felt through our clasped hands. “Little things,” she said. “She referred to you as ‘George,’ for one thing - the rest of your team called you ‘Chief Inspector Sutherland.’ So, I inferred a higher degree of familiarity between you and her than between you and Jack or Freddie.”

“A familiarity that existed entirely in her own imagination, I assure you,” I said. “Go on.”

“There was also our initial meeting,” Jessica continued. “It started off well enough, but it seemed that the further along we went, the less friendly she became.”

“Perhaps,” I said suggestively, inclining my head slightly to murmur the words into her ear, “she realized that I had not been exaggerating about how absolutely amazing you are.”

Jessica shivered and shied away from the ticklish touch of my breath upon her ear, but did not let go of my hand. “Perhaps,” she said neutrally, but the sidelong smile she gave me was one of amusement.

“Anything else?”

“Well ...” She hesitated, as if uncertain how to put what she was about to say next. “I could not help but notice how strikingly beautiful she is, and I imagine that you must have noticed this as well - and I guess she may have interpreted this notice as encouragement that her feelings might be reciprocated.”

I stopped in my tracks and turned to face her. “You’re almost as good a profiler as Jack Gilliam,” I told her, “but on that last point at least you’re mistaken.”

Jessica met my gaze, challenging me. “Am I?”

“I’m afraid so. Yours is the only beauty that captivates me, Jess - yours and no one else’s.” I dropped my shoes to the sand, drew her into my arms, and kissed her tenderly, trusting that even if my words failed to convince her, my actions would remove all doubt. And it seemed that I was right, for after a moment Jessica also let go of her shoes and returned my embrace and my kiss wholeheartedly.

I have no idea how long we stood like that, kissing and caressing each other, nor did I care ... until, that is, an incoming wave washed over our feet and around our ankles. The relative coldness of the water startled us into jumping

apart and away from the incoming tide. I made a grab for our shoes, saving them from being washed away but not from being completely soaked.

Jessica laughed as I handed her sandals back to her. "I guess we should have paid more attention to where we were standing," she said.

"I suppose so," I said, knocking some of the sand out of one of my loafers. I looked at her and grinned. "It's quite a thing, this non-relationship of ours."

She returned my smile with a warm one of her own. "It is indeed."

The newspaper article had given most of the credit to the investigative expertise of the Bermuda Police Service, but acknowledged that a suggestion from Scotland Yard had led to the arrest, restoring the Yard's good name. That Scotland Yard's suggestion had come from a suggestion of Jessica's was not noted - an omission for which Jessica was grateful.

We'd been invited to a celebratory luncheon with Bermuda's governor and officials of the Bermuda Police Service, after which we would be taken to the airport for our respective flights. But first Jessica wanted to say her good-byes to Agnes.

"Is Stephen living in the house all by himself?" the older woman asked.

"I believe so," Jessica told her. "The Reynoldses flew to London yesterday, and I'm staying in town at the Hamilton Fairmont Princess Hotel until my flight home."

"You could have continued on in the cottage."

Jessica sighed. "Under the circumstances, I thought it more prudent to move to a hotel."

"Stephen was here yesterday, you know," Agnes said. "My nephew, Charles, has commissioned my portrait and Stephen came by to take photographs and make some preliminary sketches." She patted her white hair. "I never thought I'd be immortalized with a portrait," she said, smiling. "I wish my husband, Stubby, could see me now. I'll be famous."

"I'm sure Stephen will do a beautiful job," she said. "He's very talented."

"Claudia said that she's going to make arrangements for Richard Mann to hang the finished painting in his gallery for a while before Charles takes it home. She said that way Stephen will get more commissions on the island, maybe even from some tourists."

"That was nice of her," Jessica said.

"Are you ready now, lass?" I asked, glancing at my watch. "We don't want to be late."

"Yes, George." She gave Agnes a hug and told her she'd be in touch.

"You make sure to let me know when your next book comes out," Agnes

told her. "I just know you're going to write about this case."

I held the door for her as we climbed into Freddie's little yellow car. "It's always good to be with you, Jessica," I said, kissing her lightly on the cheek, "however briefly."

"Yes," she said, smiling at me in return. "It's always good."

I returned to London with a sense of both relief and trepidation, born of my uncertainty as to whether I had salvaged the Yard's reputation or damaged it. I was relieved to have overseen a successful end to the Bermudan Jack the Ripper murders, thus breaking the Yard's dismal losing streak on the island. But I was also uncomfortably aware that the salacious story about Jessica and myself had received broad attention in the British press; in spite of my success it was unlikely I would receive a hero's welcome from my superiors - hence my trepidation.

Macdonald, Moore, and Gilliam, to their credit, were properly reserved when asked about the particulars of the case, deflecting questions with a neutral response, pleading an inability to discuss the matter until our higher-ups had been debriefed, or something like that. The curious had more sense than to ask me about the newspaper headline directly; only those co-workers who I also considered mates dared to subject me to good-natured ribbing about what they had seen in the papers.

It was no use putting off my report to the superintendent - I considered Peter Clarke a friend, but that didn't mean I was looking forward to the meeting. Still, best to get it over with, really. And so the morning after my return to the United Kingdom I found myself in Peter's office, standing in front of his desk as I recounted my actions and those of my team.

Clarke, who had already read my written report from cover to cover, questioned me closely on details of the case, the performance of my team, and about the conduct of the Bermudan police. The question-and-answer lasted for well over an hour, until finally Clarke sat back in his chair, signaling that the interview was almost over.

"It's top notch work, George," he said. "Given the Yard's unfortunate failures in the past, these Bermudan cases are always sticky - you knew that going in - but your team seems to have seen its way clear and produced the results we were looking for. However, I would be remiss if I didn't ask for an explanation of this." He unfolded a copy of the *London Times* with the notorious picture of Jessica and me on the front page.

I swallowed hard as I looked at it. Every time I saw it I felt as if I'd been kicked in the stomach, which was a pity, really, because it was quite a nice photograph. My arm was draped about Jessica's shoulders as we sat together on

the wooden steps, our feet buried in the warm coral sand and the sea breeze ruffling our hair. Jessica was leaning slightly against me, completely at ease with our physical closeness. Had the picture been taken with our consent, it would have been one I'd have considered suitable for framing.

The sound of Peter Clarke discreetly clearing his throat brought me back to the present. "It's, ah, not what it looks like, Peter."

"I know it's not," Clarke said with a hint of impatience. "So what exactly is it?"

I paused, looking for the right words. "Mrs. Fletcher and I have been friends for a number of years," I said at last, "and over time we have become very comfortable in each other's company. At the precise time this was taken she was debriefing me on what had transpired the night that Judge Betterton's niece was murdered."

"Debriefing, eh? Is that what they're calling it now?"

I favored Peter with a withering look. "Nothing inappropriate occurred at any time."

"I know it didn't, George," Peter sighed, folding the newspaper again and dropping it into the wastepaper basket beside his desk. "I think I know you well enough to trust in your professionalism. If you say that you and Mrs. Fletcher are nothing more than friends, then that is all you are. Still," he added reluctantly, "the Deputy Commissioner is demanding that I 'do something' to quell the nasty rumors of Scotland Yard's detectives mixing business with pleasure on the taxpayer's coin, which is why I am suspending you for three weeks without pay."

I bowed my head. "Understood." I turned to leave, but Peter stopped me.

"George," he said, "I know this is none of my business, but ... use these three weeks wisely. Go to her."