

Red Chapel

Mike Resnick

Year: 2000

"From Hell, Mr. Lusk-

Sir, I send you half the Kidne I took from one woman, prasarved it for you tother piece I fried and ate it was very nise I may send you the bloody knif that too it out if you only wate a whil longer signed Catch me when yu can Mishter Lusk"

-Jack the Ripper

October 16, 1888

"I have not a particle of sympathy with the sentimentality -as I deem it, the mawkishness-which overflows with foolish pity for the criminal and cares not at all for the victim of the criminal."

-Theodore Roosevelt

Autobiography

The date was September 8, 1888

A hand reached out of the darkness and shook Roosevelt by the shoulder.

He was on his feet in an instant. His right hand shot out, crunching against an unseen jaw, and sending his assailant crashing against a wall. He crouched low, peering into the shadows, trying to identify the man who was clambering slowly to his feet.

"What the devil happened?" muttered the man.

"My question precisely," said Roosevelt, reaching for his pistol and training it on the intruder. "Who are you and what are you doing in my room?"

A beam of moonlight glanced off the barrel of the gun.

"Don't shoot, Mr. Roosevelt!" said the man, holding up his hands. "It's me?John Hughes!"

Roosevelt lit a lamp, keeping the gun pointed at the small, dapper man. "You haven't told me what you're doing here."

"Besides losing a tooth?" said Hughes bitterly as he spit a tooth into his hand amid a spray of blood. "I need your help."

"What is this all about?" demanded Roosevelt, looking toward the door of his hotel room as if he expected one of Hughes' confederates to burst through it at any moment.

"Don't you remember?" said Hughes. "We spoke for more than an hour last night, after you addressed the Royal Ornithological Society."

"What has this got to do with birds?" said Roosevelt. "And you'd better come up with a good answer. I'm not a patient man when I'm rudely awakened in the middle of the night."

"You don't remember," said Hughes accusingly.

"Remember what?"

Hughes pulled out a badge and handed it to the American. "I am a captain of the London Metropolitan Police. After your speech we talked and you told me how you had single-handedly captured three armed killers in your Wild West."

Roosevelt nodded. "I remember."

"I was most favorably impressed," said Hughes.

"I hope you didn't wake me just to tell me that."

"No — but it was the fact that you have personally dealt with a trio of brutal killers that made me think — hope, actually — that you might be able to help me." Hughes paused awkwardly as the American continued to stare at him. "You did say that if I ever needed your assistance . . ."

"Did I say to request it in the middle of the night?" growled Roosevelt, finally putting his pistol back on his bedtable.

"Try to calm yourself. Then I'll explain."

"This is as calm as I get under these circumstances." Roosevelt took off his nightshirt, tossed it on the four-poster bed, then walked to an ornate mahogany armoire, pulled out a pair of pants and a neatly folded shirt, and began getting dressed. "Start explaining."

"There's something I want you to see."

"At this hour?" said Roosevelt suspiciously. "Where is it?"

"It's not far," said Hughes. "Perhaps a twenty-minute carriage ride away."

"What is it?"

"A body."

"And it couldn't wait until daylight?" asked Roosevelt.

Hughes shook his head. "If we don't have her in the morgue by daylight, there will be panic in the streets."

"I'm certainly glad you're not given to exaggeration," remarked Roosevelt sardonically.

"If anything," replied the small Englishman seriously, "that was an understatement."

"All right. Tell me about it."

"I would prefer that you saw it without any preconceptions."

"Except that it could cause a riot if seen in daylight."

"I said a panic, not a riot," answered Hughes, still without smiling.

Roosevelt buttoned his shirt and fiddled with his tie. "What time is it, anyway?"

"6:20 a.m.."

"The sun's not an early riser in London, is it?"

"Not at this time of year." Hughes shifted his weight awkwardly.

"Now what's the matter?"

"We have a crisis on our hands, Mr. Roosevelt. I realize that I have no legal right to enlist your help, but we are quite desperate."

"Enough hyperbole," muttered Roosevelt, slipping on his coat.

"You really hunted down those murderers in a blizzard?" said Hughes suddenly.

"The Winter of the Blue Snow," said Roosevelt, nodding his head briskly. "Doubtless exaggerated by every dime novelist in America."

"But you did bring them back, alone and unarmed," persisted the Englishman, as if Roosevelt's answer was the most important thing in his life.

"Yes . . . but I knew the territory, and I knew who and where the killers were. I don't know London, and I assume the identity of the killer you're after is unknown."

"So to speak."

"I don't understand," said Roosevelt, adjusting his hat in front of a mirror.

"We don't know who he is. All we know is that he calls himself Saucy Jack."

The two men approached the police line behind the Black Swan. The night fog had left the pavement damp, and there was a strong smell of human waste permeating the area. Chimneys spewed thick smoke into the dawn sky, and the sound of a horse's hooves and a cart's squeaking wheels could be heard in the distance.

"Sir?" asked one of the constables, looking from Hughes to Roosevelt.

"It's all right, Jamison," said Hughes. "This is Theodore Roosevelt, a colleague from America. He is the man who brought Billy the Kid and Jesse James to justice."

Constable Jamison stepped aside immediately, staring at the young American in awe.

"Now, why did you say that, John?" asked Roosevelt in low tones.

"It will establish respect and obedience much faster than if I told him you were an expert on birds."

The American sighed. "I see your point." He paused. "Just what am I supposed to be looking at?"

"It's back here," said Hughes, leading him behind the building to an area that had been temporarily lit by flaming torches.

They stopped when they were about ten feet away. There was a mound beneath a blood-drenched blanket.

"Steel yourself, Mr. Roosevelt," said Hughes.

"After all the monographs I've written on taxidermy, I don't imagine you can show me anything that can shock me," answered Roosevelt.

He was wrong.

The blanket was pulled back, revealing what was left of a middle-aged woman. Her throat had been slit so deeply that she was almost decapitated. A bloody handkerchief around her neck seemed to be the only thing that stopped her head from rolling away.

Her belly was carved open, and her innards were pulled out and set on the ground just above her right shoulder. Various internal organs were mutilated, others were simply missing.

"What kind of creature could do something like this?" said Roosevelt, resisting the urge to retch.

"I was hoping you might be able to tell us," said Hughes.

Roosevelt tore his horrified gaze from the corpse and turned to Hughes. "What makes you think I've ever encountered anything like this before?"

"I don't know, of course," said Hughes. "But you have lived in America's untamed West. You have traveled among the aboriginal savages. You have rubbed shoulders with frontier cowboys and shootists. Americans are a simpler, more brutal people — barbaric, in ways — and I had hoped . . ."

"I take it you've never been to America."

"No, I haven't."

"Then I shall ignore the insult, and only point out that Americans are the boldest, bravest, most innovative people on the face of the Earth."

"I assure you I meant no offense," said Hughes quickly. "It's just that we are under enormous pressure to bring Saucy Jack to justice. I had hoped that you might bring some fresh insight, some different methodology . . ."

"I'm not a detective," said Roosevelt, walking closer to the corpse. "There was never any question about the identities of the three killers I went after. As for this murder, there's not much I can tell you that you don't already know."

"Won't you try?" said Hughes, practically pleading.

Roosevelt squatted down next to the body. "She was killed from behind, of course. She probably never knew the murderer was there until she felt her jugular and windpipe being severed."

"Why from behind?"

"If I were trying to kill her from in front, I'd stab her in a straightforward way — it would give her less time to raise her hand to deflect the blade. But the throat was slit, not punctured. And it had to be the first wound, because otherwise she would have screamed and someone would have heard her."

"What makes you think someone didn't?"

Roosevelt pointed to the gaping hole in the woman's abdomen. "He wouldn't have had the leisure to do that unless he was sure no one had seen or heard the murder." The American stood up again. "But you know all that."

"Yes, we do," said Hughes. "Can you tell us anything we don't know?"

"Probably not. The only other obvious fact is that the killer had some knowledge of anatomy."

"This hardly looks like the work of a doctor, Mr. Roosevelt," said Hughes.

"I didn't say that it was. But it was done by someone who knew where the various internal organs belonged, or else he'd never have been able to remove them in the dark. Take a look. There's no subcutaneous fat on the ground, and he didn't waste his time mutilating muscle tissue."

"Interesting," said Hughes. "Now that is something we didn't know." He smiled. "I think we should be very grateful that you are a taxidermist as well as an ornithologist." He covered the corpse once more, then summoned another constable. "Have her taken to the morgue. Use the alleyways and discourage onlookers."

The constable saluted and gathered a team of policemen to move the body.

"I assume we're through here," said Roosevelt, grateful that he no longer had to stare at the corpse.

"Yes. Thank you for coming."

Roosevelt pulled his timepiece out of a vest pocket and opened it.

"No sense going back to sleep. Why don't you come back to the Savoy with me and I'll buy breakfast?"

"I've quite lost my appetite, but I will be happy to join you for a cup of tea and some conversation, Mr. Roosevelt."

"Call me Theodore." He shook his head. "Poor woman. I wonder who she was?"

Hughes pulled a notebook out of his pocket. "Her name was Annie Chapman. She was a Whitechapel prostitute."

"Whitechapel?"

"Whitechapel is the section of the city we are in."

Roosevelt looked around, truly seeing it for the first time, as the sun began burning away the fog. "I hope New York never has a slum like this!" he said devoutly.

"Wait until New York has been around as long as London, and it will have this and worse," Hughes assured him.

"Not if I have anything to say about it," said Roosevelt, his jaw jutting out pugnaciously as he looked up and down the street.

Hughes was surprised by the intensity of the young man's obvious belief in himself. As they stared at the broken and boarded windows, the drunks lying in doorways and on the street, the mangy dogs and spavined cats and fat, aggressive rats, the endless piles of excrement from cart horses, the Englishman found himself wondering what kind of man could view a woman's mutilated corpse with less distaste than he displayed toward surroundings that Hughes took for granted.

They climbed into Hughes' carriage, and the driver set off for the Savoy at a leisurely trot. Before long they were out of Whitechapel, and, Roosevelt noted, the air instantly seemed to smell fresher.

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Roosevelt had eaten the last of his eggs, and was concentrating on his coffee when an officer entered the dining room and approached Hughes.

"I'm sorry to interrupt, sir," he said apologetically, "but they said at the Yard that this is of the utmost

urgency."

He handed a small envelope to Hughes, who opened it and briefly looked at what it contained.

"Thank you," said Hughes.

"Will there be anything else, sir?" asked the officer. "Any reply?"

"No, that will be all."

The officer saluted, and when he left Hughes turned back to Roosevelt.

"What are your plans now, Theodore?"

"I have two more speeches to give on ornithology," answered Roosevelt, "and one on naval warfare, and then I board the boat for home on Friday."

"Let me tell you something about the murder you saw today," began Hughes.

"Thank you for letting me finish my breakfast first," said Roosevelt wryly.

"We have a madman loose in Whitechapel, Theodore," continued Hughes.

"That much is obvious."

"We knew that before today," said Hughes.

Roosevelt looked up. "This wasn't his first victim?"

"It was at least his second." Hughes paused. "It's possible that he's killed as many as five women."

"How can he still be at large?"

"We can't watch every Whitechapel prostitute every minute of the day and night."

"He only kills prostitutes?"

"Thus far."

"Were they all this brutally mutilated?"

"The last one — a girl named Polly Nichols — was. The first three suffered less grievous damage, which is why we cannot be sure they were all killed by the same hand."

"Well, you've got your work cut out for you," said Roosevelt. "I certainly don't envy you." He paused.

"Have you any suspects so far?"

Hughes frowned. "Not really."

"What does that mean?"

"Nothing."

Roosevelt shrugged. "As you wish. But the subject of Saucy Jack is closed. Either you confide in me or I can't help."

Hughes looked around the half-empty dining room, then lowered his voice. "All right," he said in little

more than a whisper. "But what I tell you must go no farther than this table. It is for you and you alone."

Roosevelt stared at him with open curiosity. "All right," he said. "I can keep a secret as well as the next man."

"I hope so."

"You sound like you're about to name Queen Victoria."

"This is not a joking matter!" whispered Hughes angrily. "I am convinced that the man who has been implicated is innocent, but if word were to get out . . ."

Roosevelt waited patiently.

"There are rumors, undoubtedly spread about by anarchists, that are little short of sedition," continued Hughes. "Scandalous behavior within one's own class is one thing — but murders such as you witnessed this morning . . . I simply cannot believe it!" He paused, started to speak, then stopped. Finally he looked around the room to make certain no one was listening. "I can't give you his name, Theodore. Without proof, that would be tantamount to treason." He lowered his voice even more. "He is a member of the Royal Family!"

"Every family's got its black sheep," said Roosevelt with a shrug.

Hughes stared at him, aghast. "Don't you understand what I'm telling you?"

"You think royalty can't go berserk just as easily as common men?"

"It's unthinkable!" snapped Hughes. He quickly glanced around the room and lowered his voice again. "This is not Rome, and our Royals are not Caligula and Nero." He struggled to regain his composure. "You simply do not comprehend the gravity of what I am confiding in you. If even a hint that we were investigating this slander were to get out, the government would collapse overnight."

"Do you really think so?" asked Roosevelt.

"Absolutely." The small, dapper policeman stared at Roosevelt. "I would like to enlist your aid in uncovering the real murderer before these vile rumors reach a member of the force who cannot keep his mouth shut."

"I don't believe you were listening to me," said Roosevelt. "My ship leaves on Friday morning."

"Without you, I'm afraid."

Roosevelt frowned. "What are you talking about?"

Hughes handed the envelope he'd been given across the table to Roosevelt.

"What is this?" demanded Roosevelt, reaching for his glasses.

"A telegram from your President Cleveland, offering us your services in the hunt for the madman."

Roosevelt read the telegram twice, then crumpled it up in a powerful fist and hurled it to the floor.

"Grover Cleveland doesn't give a tinker's damn about your murderer!" he exploded.

Hughes looked nervously around the room, and gestured the American to keep his voice down.

"He just wants to keep me from campaigning for his Republican opponent!"

"Surely you will not disobey the request of your president!"

"I can if I choose to!" thundered Roosevelt. "He's my president, not my king, a difference that I gather was lost on you when you manipulated him into sending this!" He glowered at the telegram that lay on the floor. "I knew he was worried about Harrison, but this is beyond the pale!"

"I apologize," said Hughes. "I wanted a fresh outlook so badly, I seem to have overstepped my . . ."

"Oh, be quiet," Roosevelt interrupted him. "I'm staying."

"But I thought you said?"

"Americans rise to challenges. I'll rise to this one. I'm just annoyed at the way you went about securing my services." He frowned again. "I'll show that corrupt fool in the White House! I'll solve your murder and get back to the States in time to help Ben Harrison defeat him in the election!"

"You'll stay?" said Hughes. "I can't tell you what this means! And of course, I'll help you in any way I can."

"You can start by checking me out of this palace and finding me a room in Whitechapel."

"In Whitechapel?" repeated Hughes with obvious distaste. "My dear Theodore, it simply isn't done."

"Well, it's about to get done," said Roosevelt. "I saw the way the onlookers stared at you, as if you were the enemy, or at least a foreign power. If they're going to learn to trust me, then I've got to live like they do. I can't look for a killer until dinnertime, then come back to the Savoy, don a tuxedo, and mingle with the rich and the powerful until the next morning."

"If you insist."

"I do. I just want time to send a wire to my wife Edith, explaining why I won't be on the ship when it docks."

"We can send for her, if?"

"American men do not put their wives in harm's way," said Roosevelt severely.

"No, of course not," said Hughes, getting hastily to his feet. "I'll send my carriage by for you in an hour. Is there any other way I can assist you?"

"Yes. Gather all the newspaper articles and anything else you have on these murders. Once I've got a room in Whitechapel, I'll want all the material sent there."

"You can have everything we've got on Saucy Jack."

"Some name!" snorted Roosevelt contemptuously.

"Well, he does seem to have acquired another one, though it's not clear yet whether he chose it himself or the press gave it to him."

"Oh?"

"Jack the Ripper."

"Much more fitting," said Roosevelt, nodding his head vigorously.

My Dearest Edith:

I'm having Mr. Carlson hand deliver this letter to you, to explain why I'm not aboard the ship.

Let me first assure you that I'm in perfect health. My extended stay here is due to a pair of conscienceless culprits — the President of the United States and someone known only as Jack the Ripper.

The latter has embarked on a rampage of murder that would shock even our own Western shootists such as Doc Holliday and Johnny Ringo. You do not need to know the details, but believe me when I say that this fiend must be brought to justice.

An officer from Scotland Yard has read of my experiences in the Dakota Bad Lands and asked Grover Cleveland to "loan" me to the British until these murders have been solved — and Cleveland pounced on such an excuse to remove me from the upcoming campaign.

With luck, I'll have things sorted out and solved in time to see Ben Harrison take the oath of office in a little less than two months.

My best to Alice and little Ted.

Your Theodore

Roosevelt sat on a rickety wooden chair, his back to the window, thumbing through Hughes' files.

It was clear that Polly Nichols was a Ripper victim. He doubted that the three who preceded her — Emma Smith, Ada Wilson, and Martha Tabram — were. They'd been brutally murdered, but the modus operandi differed appreciably from the two most recent killings.

The files were very circumspect about the Royal who had come under suspicion, but Roosevelt deduced that it was Prince Eddy, more formally Albert Victor, son of the Prince of Wales and, quite possibly, the future King of England.

Roosevelt put the papers down, leaned back on his chair, and closed his eyes. It just didn't make any sense. It would be as if James Garfield had walked into a Washington slum and killed a pair of women and no one had recognized him. It was true that Prince Eddy was a dissolute and depraved man, and Roosevelt held him in total contempt — but there was just no way he could walk fifty yards in any direction, in or out of Whitechapel, without being recognized.

He removed his spectacles, rubbed his eyes, and then stood up. It was time to stop hypothesizing and go out and meet the residents of the area. He needed to talk to them, get to know them, and learn their opinions, which, he was sure, would be worth more than the police's.

He walked over to a decrepit coat rack, then paused and smiled. He crossed the room to his steamer trunk, opened it, and a few moments later was dressed in the fringed buckskin he wore at his Dakota ranch. (It had been designed by his favorite New York haberdasher, since all the Dakotans were busily trying to look like New Yorkers.) He took off his shining black shoes and pulled on a pair of well-worn boots. Then he tucked a knife and a pistol into his belt.

He considered a coonskin hat, but decided to wear a Stetson instead. He looked at himself in the fly-specked mirror and grinned in approval. As long as he was going to be identified as an American the moment he opened his mouth, he might as well dress like one.

He walked out the door of his shabby building, and was immediately aware that he had become an object of notoriety. Every pedestrian within sight stopped to stare at him. Even horse-drawn carriages slowed down as they passed by.

He grinned at them, waved, and began making his way to the Black Swan, next to where Annie Chapman's body had been found. A number of curious onlookers had followed him, and most of them entered the tavern when he did.

He walked up to the bar, staring approvingly at his image in the mirror that faced him.

"I didn't know the circus had come to Whitechapel!" laughed a burly man who was standing a few feet away.

Roosevelt smiled and extended his hand. "Theodore Roosevelt. Pleased to meet you."

"Hey, you're a Yank!" said the man. "Ain't never met one before." He paused and frowned. "Don't rightly know if I like Yanks."

"Them the duds you fight Indians in, guv?" asked another.

"We don't fight Indians any more," answered Roosevelt.

"Killed 'em all, did you?"

"No. Now we live side by side with them."

"I heard they was all killers," said the burly man. "They go around cuttin' people's heads off."

"Most of them are pretty decent people," said Roosevelt, seeing an opportunity to bring up the subject he wanted to discuss. "And even the bad ones couldn't hold a candle to your Saucy Jack."

"Old Jack?" said the burly man with a shrug. "He's off the deep end, he is. Mad as a hatter and ten times as vicious."

"Has anyone here seen him?" asked Roosevelt.

"The only people what's seen him is lying in the morgue chopped up in bits and pieces," said a woman.

"They say he eats their innards," offered another, looking scared as she downed her drink.

"He only goes after women," added the burly man. "Men either fight too hard or don't taste so good."

"Maybe your women should go armed," suggested Roosevelt.

"What good would it do?" responded a woman. "If you're with a john, you don't need no weapon — and if you find you're with old Jack, you ain't got time to use it."

"That's muddled thinking," said Roosevelt.

"Who are you to come in here and tell us how to think?" said the burly man pugnaciously.

"I'm a friend who wants to help."

"Not if you don't live in Whitechapel, you ain't," said the man. "We ain't got no friends except for them what's stuck here."

"You didn't give me a chance to answer," said Roosevelt. "Yes, I live in Whitechapel."

"I ain't never seen you around," said a man from the back of the tavern.

"Me neither," chimed in another.

"I just arrived."

"This ain't a place where you 'arrive,' Yank," said the burly man. "It's a place where you get dumped while the rest of London pisses on you."

"Bloody right!" said another of the women, "I'll bet the coppers are probably cheering for old Jack. Every time he strikes, there's less of us for them to worry about."

"If the police won't hunt him down, we'll have to do it ourselves," said Roosevelt.

"What do you mean — ourselves?" said the burly man. "You ain't one of us! What do you care?"

"All right-thinking men should care," responded Roosevelt. "There's a crazed killer out there. We have to protect society and bring him to the bar of justice."

"What kind of man dresses like a dandy and wants to hunt down Jack the Ripper? It just don't make no sense." He glared at the American. "You sure you ain't a writer for one of them magazines — them penny dreadfuls, here to make a hero out of old Jack?"

"I told you: I want to hunt him down."

"And when he jumps you, you'll point out that it's not fair to hit a man with spectacles!" guffawed the burly man.

Roosevelt removed his glasses, folded them carefully, and set them down on the bar.

"There are many things I don't need glasses for," he said, jutting out his chin. "You're one of them."

"Are you challenging me to a fight, Yank?" said the burly man, surprised.

"Personally, I'd much rather fight the Ripper," said Roosevelt. "But it's up to you."

The man suddenly laughed and threw a huge arm around Roosevelt's shoulders. "I like your nerve, Yank! My name's Colin Shrank, and you and me are going to be great friends!"

Roosevelt grinned. "That suits me just fine. Let me buy you a drink."

"A pint of ale!" Shrank yelled to the bartender. He turned back to Roosevelt. "You're here too early, Yank. Old Jack, he only comes out at night."

"But I see a number of ladies here, and at least some of them must be prostitutes," said Roosevelt.

"They ain't hardly ladies," said Shrank with a laugh, "and they're here because he's got 'em too scared to work at night, which is the proper time for their particular business."

"Too bloody true!" chimed in one of the women. "You ain't gettin' me out after dark!"

"I don't even feel safe in the daylight," said another.

"Did anyone here know Polly Nichols or Annie Chapman?" asked Roosevelt.

"I knew Annie," said the bartender. "Came here near every night to find a new bloke. Nice lady, she was."

"Why would she go off with the Ripper?" asked Roosevelt.

"Well, she didn't know it was the Ripper, now did she?" answered the bartender.

Roosevelt shook his head. "Everyone in Whitechapel knows that prostitutes are at risk, so why would Annie go out with someone she didn't know?"

"There's thousands of men come here every night," answered one of the prostitutes. "Maybe tens of thousands. What're the odds any one of them is Jack the Ripper?"

"It ain't our fault," said another. "We're just out to make a living. It's the police and the press and all them others. They don't care what happens here. They'd burn Whitechapel down, and us with it, if they thought they could get away with it."

A heavyset woman entered the tavern, walked right up to the bar, and thumped it with her fist.

"Yeah, Irma," said the bartender. "What'll it be?"

"A pint," she said in a deep voice.

"Hard night?"

"Four of 'em." She shook her head disgustedly. "You'd think they'd learn. They never do."

"That's what they've got you for," said the bartender.

She grimaced and took her beer to a table.

"What was that all about?" asked Roosevelt.

"Irma, she's a midwife," answered Shrank.

"She delivered four babies last night?"

Shrank seemed amused. "She cut four of 'em out before they became a bother."

"A midwife performs abortions?" said Roosevelt, surprised. "Don't you have doctors for that?"

"Look around you, Yank. There's ten times as many rats as people down here. A gent's got to be as well-armed as you if he don't want to get robbed. Women are being sliced to bits by a monster and no one does nothing about it. So you tell me: why would a doctor work here if he could work anywhere else?"

"No one cares about Whitechapel," said Irma bitterly.

"Well, they'd better start caring," said Roosevelt. "Because if this butcher isn't caught, you're going to be so awash in blood that you might as well call it Redchapel."

"Redchapel," repeated Shrank. "I like that! Hell, if we change the name, maybe they'd finally pay attention to what's going on down here."

"Why do you think he's going to kill again?" asked the bartender.

"If his motive is to kill prostitutes, there are still hundreds of them left in Whitechapel."

"But everyone knows he's crazy," said Shrank. "So maybe he never had no motive at all."

"All the more reason for him to strike again," said Roosevelt. "If he had no reason to start, then he also has no reason to stop."

"Never thought of that," admitted Shrank. He gave Roosevelt a hearty slap on the back. "You got a head on your shoulders, Yank! What do you do back in America?"

"A little of everything," answered Roosevelt. "I've been a politician, a rancher, a Deputy Marshal, a naturalist, an ornithologist, a taxidermist, and an author."

"That's a hell of a list for such a young bloke."

"Well, I have one other accomplishment that I'm glad you didn't make me show off," said Roosevelt.

"What was that?"

Roosevelt picked his glasses up from the bar and flashed Shrank another grin. "I was lightweight boxing champion of my class at Harvard."

My Dearest Edith:

I must be a more formidable figure than I thought. No sooner do I agree to help apprehend Jack the Ripper than he immediately goes into hiding.

I have spent the past two weeks walking every foot of the shabby slum known as Whitechapel, speaking to everyone I meet, trying to get some information — any information — about this madman who is making headlines all over the world. It hasn't been productive — though in another way it has, for it has shown me how not to govern a municipality, and I suspect the day will come when that will prove very useful knowledge indeed.

I know America has its rich and its poor, its leaders and its followers, but any man can, through his own sweat and skills, climb to the top of whatever heap he covets. I find England's class system stifling, and I keep wondering where America would be if, for example, Abraham Lincoln had been forced to remain the penniless frontiersman he had been born. We have Negroes who were born into slavery who will someday hold positions of wealth and power, and while slavery is a shameful blot on our history, it was a system that men of good will and reason eventually destroyed. I see no such men attempting to bring about the necessary changes in British society.

I walk through Whitechapel, and I can envision what a handful of Americans, with American know-how and American values, could do to it in five years' time. And yet I fear it is doomed to remain exactly what it is until the buildings finally collapse of their own decrepitude.

I have made some friends among the residents, many of whom have been extremely hospitable to an alien. (Yes, I know I was well treated by the Royal Society, but I came there with a reputation as an expert. I came to Whitechapel only as an outsider. And yet I find I prefer to rub shoulders with the common man on this side of the ocean, even as I have always done at home.)

One special friend is a day laborer (who seems to labor as infrequently as possible) named Colin Shrank, who has been my guide down the fog-shrouded streets and filthy alleys of Whitechapel. As I say, we've discovered no useful information, but at least I now feel I have a reasonably thorough working knowledge of the geography of the place, a knowledge I will be only too happy to expunge the moment I

return to our beloved Sagamore Hill.

My best to Alice and little Ted.

Your Theodore

Roosevelt opened a letter, tossing the envelope carelessly on the bar of the Black Swan.

"Another note from your pal Hughes?" asked Shrank.

Roosevelt nodded. "He's through asking who the Ripper is. Now he just wants to know if he's through killing women."

Shrank shrugged. "Could be."

Roosevelt shook his head. "I doubt it. I think he takes too much joy in killing and disemboweling helpless women."

"Up against a man with a knife like that, they're all helpless," offered Shrank.

"Not so, Colin." Roosevelt looked around the tavern, and his gaze came to rest on Irma, the burly midwife. "The women he's attacked have all been on the slender side. If he went after someone like Irma here, he might have a real battle on his hands."

"I'm no prostitute!" snapped Irma indignantly. "I honor the Bible and the Commandments!"

"No offense intended," said Roosevelt quickly. "I was just suggesting that perhaps being a prostitute is not the Ripper's sole criterion, that maybe he goes after women he knows he can dispatch quickly."

"Why quickly, if he's having such a good time?" asked the bartender.

"Secrecy is his ally," answered Roosevelt. "He can't butcher them unless he kills them before they can scream. That means they can't struggle for more than a second or two."

"Ever been anything like him in America?" asked Shrank.

"Not to my knowledge. Certainly not in our cities, where such crimes would not go unnoticed and unreported."

"They gets noticed and reported, all right," said a woman. "Just no one cares, is all."

Roosevelt looked out the window. "It's starting to get dark." He walked to the door. "Come on, Colin. It's time to make our rounds."

"You go alone tonight," said Shrank, taking a drink of his ale.

"Aren't you feeling well?"

"I feel fine. But I been walking those damned bloody streets with you every night since he chopped Annie Chapman. It's been raining all day, and the wind bites right through my clothes to my bones, so I'm staying here. If you spot him, give a holler and I'll join you."

"Stick around, Theodore," added the bartender. "He ain't out there. Hell, he's probably got his throat sliced on the waterfront."

Roosevelt shook his head. "If I can save a single life by patrolling the streets, then I have no choice but to

do it."

"That's the coppers' job," insisted Shrank.

"It's the job of every civic-minded citizen who cares about the safety of Whitechapel," replied Roosevelt.

"That lets you out. You ain't no citizen."

"Enough talk," said Roosevelt, standing at the door, hands on hips. "You're sure you won't come with me?"

"I can't even keep up with you in good weather," said Shrank.

Roosevelt shrugged. "Well, I can't stand here talking all night."

He turned and walked out into the fog for another fruitless night of hunting for the Ripper.

Roosevelt felt a blunt object poking his shoulder. He sat up, swinging wildly at his unseen assailant.

"Stop, Theodore!" cried a familiar voice. "It's me — John Hughes."

Roosevelt swung his feet to the floor. "You're lucky I didn't floor you again."

"I learned my lesson the first time," said Hughes, displaying a broom. "The handle's two meters long."

"All right, I'm awake," said Roosevelt. "Why are you here?"

"Jack the Ripper has struck again."

"What?" yelled Roosevelt, leaping to his feet.

"You heard me."

"What time is it?" asked Roosevelt as he threw his clothes on.

"About 3:30 in the morning."

"It's Sunday, right?"

"That's correct."

"Damn! I only went to bed about half an hour ago! Where did it happen?"

"In a little court off Berner Street," said Hughes. "And this time he was interrupted."

"By whom?"

"We're not sure."

"That doesn't make sense."

"Come with me, and I'll explain."

Roosevelt finished dressing. "Let's go."

"There it is," said Hughes as he and Roosevelt stared at the woman's body. The head lay in a pool of blood. "He cut her throat and slashed her face, but there's no other damage. He'd pulled her dress up

and was just about to cut her belly open when he was interrupted."

"What makes you think he was interrupted?" asked Roosevelt. "Why couldn't he just have stopped for some other reason?"

"Because those two gentlemen"? Hughes pointed at a pair of locals who were speaking with two officers?" heard the scuffle and approached from different directions. We don't know which one startled him — for all we know, he might have heard them both — but he suddenly took flight. They saw the body, realized what had happened, and gave chase."

"For how long?"

Hughes shrugged. "Three or four blocks, before they knew for sure they'd lost him."

"Did they get a glimpse of him?" persisted Roosevelt. "Any kind of description at all?"

Hughes shook his head. "But one of them, Mr. Packer, alerted us, and the body was still warm and bleeding when we found it. We couldn't have missed him by five minutes." He paused. "We've got a hundred men scouring every street and alley in Whitechapel. With a little luck we may find him."

"May I speak to the two witnesses?" asked Roosevelt.

"Certainly."

Hughes accompanied Roosevelt as the American approached the men. "This is Mr. Roosevelt," he announced. "Please answer his questions as freely as you would answer mine."

Roosevelt walked up to the taller of the two men. "I only have a couple of questions for you. The first is: how old are you?"

"Thirty-four," said the man, surprised.

"And how long have you lived in Whitechapel?"

"All my life, gov."

"Thank you."

"That's all you want to know?" asked the man.

"That's all," said Roosevelt. He turned to the smaller man. "Could you answer the same two questions, please?"

"I'm twenty-eight. Ain't never been nowhere else." He paused. "Well, I took the missus to the zoo oncet."

"Thank you. I have no further questions." He shook the smaller man's hand, then walked back to look at the corpse again. "Have you identified her yet?"

Hughes nodded. "Elizabeth Stride. Long Liz, they called her."

"A prostitute, of course?"

"Yes."

"When was the last time anyone saw her alive?"

"She was seen at Bricklayers Tavern just before midnight," answered Hughes.

"With a customer?"

"Yes, but she'd already serviced him. He has an alibi for the time of the murder."

"Which was when?"

"About forty-five minutes ago." Hughes looked off into the fog. "I wonder if he's still out there?"

"If he is, I'm sure that?"

He was interrupted by a woman's scream.

"Where did that come from?" demanded Hughes.

"I don't know, sir," said one of the policemen. "Either straight ahead or off to the left. It's difficult to tell."

He turned back to Roosevelt. "What do you . . . Theodore!!! "

But the American was already racing into the fog, gun in hand.

"Follow him!" shouted Hughes to his men.

"But?"

"He's a hunter! I trust his instincts!"

They fell into stride behind Roosevelt, who ran through the darkness until he reached Church Passage. He leaned forward in a gunfighter's crouch and peered into the fog.

"It came from somewhere near here," he whispered as Hughes finally caught up with him. "Where does this thing lead?" he asked, indicating the narrow passage.

"To Mitre Street."

"Let's go," said Roosevelt, moving forward silently. He traversed the passage, emerged on Mitre Street, spotted a bulky object in an open yard, and quickly ran over to it.

"Damn!" muttered Hughes as he joined the American. "Another one!"

"Post a man to watch the body and make sure no one touches anything," said Roosevelt. "The Ripper can't be more than a minute ahead of us."

He trotted off down Mitre Street. The police began using their whistles to identify each other, and soon the shrill noise became almost deafening. Roosevelt had gone a short distance when he heard a faint moaning coming from a recessed doorway. He approached the source warily, gun in hand.

"Who are you?" he demanded.

"Thank God it's you, sir!" said a familiar voice, and as he moved closer he realized that it was Irma, the midwife. He lit a match and saw a large bruise over her left temple.

"What happened?"

"I was coming back from Elsie Bayne's when I heard a woman scream. Then a bloke dressed all in black

run down the street and bowled me over." She was overcome by a sudden dizziness.

"Did you see his features?"

"He had crazy eyes," said Irma. "The kind what gives you nightmares."

"What color were they?"

"I don't know," she said helplessly. "It's dark."

"How tall was he?"

"Taller than you, sir," she replied. "Much taller. And thin. Like a skeleton, he was!"

"Was there anything, however small, that you can remember?" demanded Roosevelt. "Think hard. It's important."

"All I know is he wore black gloves."

"No distinguishing marks?"

"Just the wound."

"Wound?" said Roosevelt, pouncing on the word. "What wound?"

"On his cheek. It was dripping blood, it was."

"Which cheek?"

"I don't remember."

"Please try."

She frowned as if trying to recall, then whimpered in pain. "I don't know, sir." She looked down the street, where some bobbies were approaching them. "He done sliced another one, didn't he, sir?"

The American nodded. "Not far from here."

"These poor women!" sobbed Irma, starting to cry. "When will it stop?"

Roosevelt stood up. "You're our only eyewitness," he said. "The police artist may want to speak to you later."

"But I done told you what I know!"

"Other details may come back to you. Try to cooperate with him."

She nodded her head while rubbing her tears away with a filthy coat sleeve, and Roosevelt turned to the nearest officer. "When she feels strong enough, take her to the nearest hospital." He turned and walked rapidly back to the latest victim.

"He really did a job on this one, sir," said one of the policemen, staring down at the corpse.

The woman's throat had been slit from ear to ear. The Ripper had then opened her up from neck to groin and gutted her like a fish. Each of her internal organs lay on the ground, neatly arranged in a seemingly meaningless pattern. A piece of her apron had been cut away; the Ripper had evidently use it to wipe his

knife.

"Jesus!" said another officer, staring in fascination. "I never saw anyone sliced up like this!"

"You're the taxidermist, Theodore," said Hughes, joining them. "Can you tell if anything's missing?"

Roosevelt studied the organs. "A kidney, I think."

"I'll have the police surgeon make sure," said Hughes. He paused. "If you're right, then we have to ask the question: as crazy as he is, why would he steal her kidney?"

"I'd hate to know the answer to that one, sir," said one of the policemen.

"Does anyone know who she is?" asked Roosevelt.

"If she's got any identification on her, it's too blood-soaked to read it," replied Hughes. "We'll ask around. We should know by morning."

Roosevelt walked away from the corpse, then signaled Hughes to join him.

"What is it, Theodore?"

"I wanted to speak where we couldn't be overheard," replied Roosevelt. "I'm sure you'll be happy to know that we can definitely eliminate Prince Eddy from the list of suspects."

"I am, of course," said Hughes. "But how do you know?"

"I've met him," said Roosevelt. "He's a weak man, ravaged by disease. He could barely grip my hand."

"Are you saying he's too weak to have killed these women?" asked Hughes, looking unconvinced.

"Anyone can kill an unsuspecting victim with a knife," responded the American.

"Well, then?"

"Your two witnesses," said Roosevelt. "They were twenty-eight and thirty-four years old, in the prime of life. They were healthy, and neither was carrying any excess weight. And they know their way around Whitechapel." Roosevelt paused. "How could such an ill man, especially one who doesn't know the area, outrun them? Remember, they said they chased him for three or four blocks. The Albert Victor I met couldn't have run for one block, let alone four."

"Thank you, Theodore," said Hughes, obviously relieved. "You've lifted an enormous burden from me."

"Forget about him, and concentrate on what we do know," said the American. "For example, we know that the Ripper has an intimate knowledge of Whitechapel or he couldn't have evaded his pursuers. In fact, he evaded pursuit twice in one night, because we couldn't have been sixty seconds behind him at the site of this murder, and he vanished like an Apache in the Arizona hills."

"He probably ducked into a building after he bumped into the midwife," said Hughes.

"How would he know which ones were unlocked if he didn't know the area like the back of his hand? Whatever else he may or may not be, the Ripper is a resident of Whitechapel."

"Blast!" muttered Hughes. "That probably clears a second suspect as well."

"Oh?"

"A Dr. Thomas Neill Cream. But he wouldn't know Whitechapel any better than Prince Eddy. Furthermore, he's quite fat. I doubt that he could have outrun anyone."

Roosevelt stared off into the distance, frowning.

"Is something wrong, Theodore?"

"Of course something's wrong," said Roosevelt irritably. "That madman has butchered two more women right under our noses." He continued looking into the fog and frowning. "And I'm missing something."

"What?"

He frowned again. "I don't know. But it's something I should know, something I'm sure I've overlooked."

"Can I be of any assistance?" asked Hughes.

Roosevelt remained motionless for another moment, then shrugged and shook his head.

The morgue wagon arrived, Hughes began supervising the removal of the corpse, and Roosevelt went back to his room where he replayed the events of the evening over and over in his mind, looking for the detail he had missed.

My Dearest Edith:

They identified the evening's second victim, a poor prostitute named Catherine Eddowes. I know I said I would be coming home shortly, but I cannot leave while this fiend remains at large.

There is no question that he will strike again, but when and where is almost impossible to predict. There seems to be no pattern to his murders until after he has dispatched his victim, and then the pattern is one that I shall not distress you by describing.

There was absolutely nothing I could do to prevent the four murders, but I have the uneasy feeling that I have the ability right now to prevent any further killings, if I could but see the tree rather than the forest. I am certain I know something that might lead to his apprehension, yet I have no idea what that knowledge may be.

Ah, well, there is no need to worry you with my problems. I shall be on the first ship home after this dreadful affair has been brought to a successful conclusion, hopefully in time to make a speech or two on Ben Harrison's behalf, and then perhaps we'll take Alice and little Ted on a vacation to Yosemite or the Yellowstone.

Your Theodore

"Where were you last night?" demanded Roosevelt when he entered the Black Swan on the morning of October 1.

"Right here," answered Colin Shrank. "You think I sliced them two women?"

"I just want to know what time you went home," said Roosevelt.

"Two o'clock or so."

"The first of them wasn't killed until almost three."

"Well, it weren't me!" snapped Shrank. "I didn't kill no bloody women!"

"I never said you did," said Roosevelt.

"Then why all the questions?"

"Because the one night you didn't make the rounds with me, the Ripper claimed two more victims. I think I should at least inquire after your whereabouts."

"Where was you?" shot back Shrank.

"I was in bed when Elizabeth Stride was murdered, but I was in Captain Hughes' company when Catherine Eddowes was killed," replied Roosevelt.

"So are you saying I done it or not?" said Shrank belligerently, his hands balled into massive fists.

Roosevelt stared long and hard at the man, then sighed. "No, I'm not."

"Good!" said Shrank. "And just to show there's no hard feelings, I'll let you buy me a pint of ale."

Roosevelt nodded to the bartender. "And I'll take a cup of coffee."

"Ain't got no coffee, Mr. Roosevelt," said the bartender. "How about a cup of tea?"

"That'll do," said Roosevelt, walking over to a table and sitting down.

"Now we're friends again, what made you decide I ain't the Ripper?" asked Shrank.

"Your education."

"What education?" laughed Shrank. "I ain't never been to school in my life!"

"That education," said Roosevelt. "If you killed someone, could you find the spleen?"

"What's a spleen?"

"How about the pancreas?"

"Never heard of them."

"Point to where you think my lungs are."

Shrank pointed.

"There's your answer," said Roosevelt. "The Ripper knows where those organs are."

"How do you know I'm not lying?" said Shrank.

"Where would you have learned?"

"Maybe I read it in a book."

"Can you read?"

Suddenly Shrank laughed aloud. "Not a word!"

Roosevelt smiled. "One more reason why you're not the Ripper."

"One more?" repeated Shrank. "What was the first?"

"I've seen you get winded walking three blocks. The Ripper ran for at least half a mile last night and eluded some very fit pursuers."

"Then why'd you come in asking questions like that?"

"I'm just being thorough."

"I think we was friends — mates, you might say," said Shrank.

"We are. But if you were the Ripper, that wouldn't stop me from putting you away."

"At least you give a damn. I can't say as much for the rest of 'em."

"You mean the police?" responded Roosevelt. "You misjudge them. They've got hundreds of men working on the case."

"Only because the press keeps goading 'em," said Shrank. "But they don't care about us or Whitechapel. They'll catch the Ripper and then cross us off the map again."

"What do you think would make them do something about Whitechapel?" asked Roosevelt.

"It'll sound balmy — but as long as Saucy Jack's around, they pay attention to us. Maybe having him ain't such a bad thing after all." Shrank laughed bitterly. "He slices up another forty or fifty women, they might clean this place up and turn it into Hyde Park."

"No," said the bartender with a smile. "Mayfair."

"You really think so?" asked Roosevelt.

"Nobody paid no attention to us before the Ripper, Mr. Roosevelt, and that's a fact," said the bartender.

"That's a very interesting outlook," said Roosevelt. "But I'll keep trying to catch him anyway."

"Maybe old Jack is really your pal Hughes," offered Shrank. "Y'know, he's always the first one at the body."

Roosevelt shook his head. "I was with him when the second woman was killed last night."

"It's a puzzle, all right."

"There are a lot of puzzles in this case," said Roosevelt.

"You mean, besides who is he?" said Shrank.

"Yes," said Roosevelt. He frowned again. For example, he thought, why would he have walked off with Catherine Eddowes' kidney?

It took sixteen days for Roosevelt to get his answer. Then Hughes summoned him and showed him a crudely scrawled message that had been sent to George Lusk, the head of the Whitechapel Vigilance Committee.

"From Hell, Mr. Lusk-

Sir, I send you half the Kidne I took from one woman,

prasarved it for you tother piece I fried and ate it was

very wise I may send you the bloody knife that too it out

if you only wait a while longer

signed Catch me when you can Mishter Lusk"

-Jack the Ripper

October 16, 1888

"Well, at least now we know why the kidney was missing," said Hughes. A look of disgust crossed his face. "Do you really think he ate it?"

Roosevelt shrugged. "Who knows? He's certainly capable of eating it." He stared at the letter. "Does the handwriting match the previous messages?"

Hughes nodded. "It's the same man, all right."

Roosevelt lowered his head in thought for a moment. "All right," he said. "Here's what you must do. Make copies of that letter and give it to every newspaper in London."

"We can't do that, Theodore! There would be widespread panic."

"I hope so."

"I beg your pardon!" said Hughes heatedly.

"Try to understand, John," said Roosevelt. "Everyone in Whitechapel has been aware of the Ripper for more than a month. Prostitutes know that they're his quarry, and yet they continue to ply their trade and put themselves at risk. Maybe if they read this, if they get a brief peek into the mind of this madman, we can keep them off the streets until he's apprehended."

"Keep prostitutes off the streets?" laughed a nearby policeman. "You might as well try to keep the sun from rising."

"It's that, or prepare yourselves for more murders."

"It's not my decision to make," replied Hughes. "You've been working on this case at my request, and I've been your sole contact, so you can be forgiven for thinking that I'm in charge . . . but in point of fact we have more than five hundred police officers working around the clock on the Ripper murders. I'll have to go through channels before we can get it published."

"What if I just took it to the papers, and said that I hadn't told you what I'd planned?"

"You'd be on the first ship back to America, and I doubt that your presence would ever be tolerated in England again."

That's no great loss in a land that worships royalty and allows something like Whitechapel to exist, thought Roosevelt. Aloud he said, "All right, John — but hurry! The sooner this is made known to the press, the better."

Hughes picked up the letter and stared at it. "I'll do what I can," he said.

"So will we all," replied Roosevelt.

Nothing happened.

A day passed, then a week, then three. The police again began suggesting that the Ripper might have been killed by some other member of the criminal class — there were enough stabbings and bludgeonings in Whitechapel and on the waterfront to write fini to a dozen Rippers.

Even Roosevelt relaxed his guard. He spent a day birding in the Cotswolds. He made a speech to the Royal Zoological Society, and another to Parliament. He found the time to write three articles and more than one hundred letters.

And still, he couldn't rid himself of the nagging feeling that this was the calm before the storm, and that he possessed some small but vital piece of the puzzle that could help him prevent another murder.

On the evening of November 8, he sat down to write a letter to his wife.

My Dearest Edith:

It has been almost six weeks since the fiend last struck, and most of the authorities here have convinced themselves that he is dead, possibly by his own hand, possibly murdered. I don't agree. There was no pattern of regularity to his prior killings. The first and second were separated by nine days, the second and third by twenty-two days, the third and fourth by no more than an hour. Since there has been no pattern, I don't see how they can conclude that he's broken one.

As I mentioned in previous letters, some of the police still lean toward Prince Albert Victor, which is simply beyond the realm of possibility. All of their other suspects also seem to come from the upper classes: a doctor, a lawyer, a shipbuilder. They mean well, the London Metropolitan Police, but they simply lack American practicality as they go about this most important and onerous task.

I may not send this letter to you at all, because I do not want the details to cause you dismay, but I need to clarify my thinking by putting things down on paper.

I begin with the question: what do we know about Jack the Ripper?

It's true that there is an eyewitness account that makes him a head taller than myself, and thoroughly emaciated, but it was made by an hysterical woman whose veracity cannot be relied upon. Still, it's all the police have to go on, and that is the man they are searching for.

But that is all we know empirically. The rest comes from logic — or the science of deduction, to borrow from Sherlock Holmes, the fictional detective who has made such an impact here in the past year.

And what can I deduce?

First, he has at least a rudimentary knowledge of anatomy. The nature of the mutilations implies that he takes pleasure in removing certain internal organs — and he was able to tell a kidney from other organs in near-total darkness on the night of September 30.

Second, he is trying to delude us into thinking he is illiterate. That letter of his is a masterpiece of misdirection — for if he is a doctor, or if he has even studied medicine for a year, how could his spelling, diction and penmanship be so indicative of a barely literate man?

Third, he must possess an intimate knowledge of Whitechapel. The only time he was seen he eluded his pursuers, and being unseen the other times also implies familiarity with his surroundings.

Fourth, these murders must be planned in advance — a theory I have not shared with the police, because

none of them would accept such a notion. But damn it, he had to know when and where he would kill each of his victims! Because if he didn't, then how did he get fresh clothing, and without fresh clothing, how did this man, who must have been soaked in the blood of his victims, escape detection as he walked through the streets of Whitechapel on his way back to wherever he goes when his foul work is done? He must have had a clean set of clothes hidden within yards of his victim, and that implies premeditation.

Fifth, and this is the one that I cannot begin to answer: even though they have been alerted, even though they know the Ripper is lurking in the darkness, he is nonetheless able to approach his victims with complete impunity. Do they know him? Does he appear so wealthy that they feel it is worth the risk? What leads otherwise cautious women to allow this fiend to approach them? There has been no sign of a struggle at any of the murder scenes. No victim has tried to run from him.

Why?

Roosevelt pulled out his timepiece and opened it. It was 3:40 a.m., and he realized that he had fallen asleep.

He looked at the letter, read it over, frowned, and began writing again.

Why? Why? Why?

Suddenly there was a pounding on his door.

"Theodore, wake up!" shouted Hughes. "He's struck again! It's the worst yet!"

Room 13, 26 Dorset Street, was a scene straight out of hell.

Marie Jeanette Kelly — or what remained of her — lay on a blood-soaked bed. Her throat had been slashed. Her abdomen was sliced open. Both her breasts were cut off. Her liver and entrails had been ripped out and placed between her feet. Flesh from her thighs and her breasts had been put on a nearby table. Her right hand was stuck in her belly.

"My God!" exclaimed Hughes, covering his mouth and nose with a handkerchief.

"He was crazy to begin with, but this is past all imagining," said another officer. "He didn't cut her organs out, like the others. He reached in and pulled them out with his hands!"

"He had to be drenched in blood," said Roosevelt. "Surely someone saw him, if not here, then walking the street, or trying to hide until he could change into a clean outfit."

"Nobody saw a thing, sir," said the officer.

"They had to!" exclaimed Roosevelt. "They couldn't have missed him." He frowned and muttered: "But why didn't it register?"

Roosevelt paused, motionless — and then, slowly, a grin crossed the American's face. The officer stared at him as if he might soon start running amuck.

The American turned and walked to the door.

"Where are you going, Theodore?" asked Hughes.

"Back to my room," answered Roosevelt. "There's nothing more to see here."

"I'll be seeing it in my nightmares for the next thirty years," said Hughes grimly.

Roosevelt went to his desk, opened a drawer, pulled out his pistol, filled it with cartridges, and put it in the pocket of his buckskin coat.

Then he took his pen out, and added a few lines to the letter he had been writing to Edith.

I curse my own blindness! I could have prevented this latest atrocity. I knew everything I had to know more than a month ago, but I didn't put it together until tonight.

I am going out now, to make sure this fiend never kills again.

Roosevelt sat in the dark, his pistol on his lap, waiting.

Finally the knob turned, and a short, burly figure entered the room.

"Hello, Jack," said Roosevelt, pointing his pistol at the figure.

"Jack? Who's Jack?"

"We both know what I'm talking about," said Roosevelt calmly.

"I just come back from helping poor Liza Willoughby!"

"No," said Roosevelt, shaking his head. "You just got back from murdering Marie Jeanette Kelly."

"You're daft!"

"And you're Jack the Ripper."

"You've done lost your bloody mind!" yelled Irma the midwife, finally stepping out of the shadows.

"The Ripper had to live in Whitechapel," said Roosevelt, never lowering the pistol. "He had to know the area intimately. Who knows it better than a woman who lives and works here and makes dozens of house calls every week?"

He watched her reaction, then continued.

"The Ripper had to have some knowledge of anatomy. Not much — but enough to know one organ from another. Your letter fooled me for awhile. I thought it was the misdirection, but I was wrong: you need no formal schooling for your work." He paused. "Are you following me so far?"

She glared at him silently.

"There were two things that bothered me," continued Roosevelt. "Why would these women let the Ripper approach them when they knew he was killing prostitutes in Whitechapel? They'd been warned repeatedly to watch out for strange men. But then I realized that you're a trusted, even a necessary, member of the community. They were all looking for Jack, not Jane.

"The other thing I couldn't figure out," he said, "was how the Ripper could walk around in blood-spattered clothing without drawing everyone's attention. I made the false assumption that the killer had picked the spots for his murders and hidden fresh clothing nearby." Roosevelt grimaced. "I was wrong. Those murders were so deranged I should have known there couldn't be anything premeditated about them. Then, when I was at Marie Kelly's apartment tonight, I saw how you ripped out her intestines with your hands and I knew how much blood you had to have splashed on yourself. It occurred

to me that I've never seen you when you weren't wearing blood-stained clothes. After all, you do nothing all day but deliver babies and perform abortions; there's nothing unusual about a midwife's clothing being bloody."

"So maybe a midwife killed all them women!" yelled Irma. "Do you know how many midwives there are in Whitechapel? Why pick on me?"

"That's what's been haunting me for six weeks," answered Roosevelt. "I knew everything I had to know right after you killed Catherine Eddowes, and yet I couldn't piece it together until I realized that a midwife was the likely killer. You made a major blunder, and it took me until tonight to realize what it was."

"What are you talking about?" demanded Irma, curiosity mingling with hatred on her chubby face.

"You told me you heard a woman scream, and then the Ripper knocked you over while he was escaping from the scene of the crime."

"He did!" said Irma. "He come running out of the darkness and?"

"You're lying," said Roosevelt. "I should have known it immediately."

"It's God's own truth!"

He shook his head. "I found you on the ground less than a minute after we heard Catherine Eddowes scream. The Ripper knocked you down just before I got there, right?"

"Yeah, right."

Roosevelt grinned in triumph. "That's what I missed. It would have taken the Ripper five minutes or more to disembowel poor Catherine and arrange her innards on the ground the way he did. Surely she couldn't have screamed four minutes into that. She was dead before he started." The grin vanished. "That was you screaming. What better way to escape from the scene of a murder than to have a solicitous policeman escort you to a hospital? If there were any contradictions in your statements, we would write it off to hysteria. After all, you'd just come face to face with Jack the Ripper."

She glared at him balefully.

"Before we put an end to this, perhaps you'll tell me why you did it?"

"I told you before," said the midwife. "I honor the commandments. They broke 'em all! They were all sinners, and God told me to rid the world of 'em!"

"Did God tell you to disembowel them, too?" asked Roosevelt. "Or was that your own idea?"

Suddenly a butcher knife appeared in her hand. She held it above her head, screamed something unintelligible, and leaped toward him. Roosevelt never flinched. He kept the pistol trained on her and pulled the trigger.

She fell backward, a new red blotch appearing on the front of her blood-stained dress.

She tried to get up, and he fired once more. This time she lay still.

My Dearest Edith:

Please destroy this letter after you have read it.

I have faked the symptoms of the malaria I contracted some years ago on a trip to the Everglades, and have been relieved of my unofficial duties here. I will be put aboard the next ship to America (quite possibly on a stretcher, if you can imagine that!) and within a very few days I will once again be able to hold you and the children in my arms. And I'm pleased to see that Harrison defeated that fool Garfield without my help.

My work here is done. I would have preferred to arrest the fiend, but I was given no choice in the matter. Jack the Ripper is no more.

If I make that fact public, two things will happen. First, I will probably be arrested for murder. Second (and actually more important, for no jury would convict me once they have heard my story), Whitechapel will remain a blight upon the face of England. Whereas a conversation I had a few days ago has convinced me that as long as the British authorities think the madman is still at large, they might do something positive about eradicating Whitechapel's intolerable conditions. If that is so, then it may actually be serendipitous that only I (and now you) know that the Ripper is dead.

At least I hope that is the outcome. One would like to think that if one's life didn't count for much, at least one's death did — and if Whitechapel can either be cleansed or razed to the ground, then perhaps, just perhaps, these five unfortunate women did not die totally in vain.

Your Theodore

Theodore Roosevelt returned to London 22 years later, in 1910, on the way home from the year-long safari that followed his Presidency.

Whitechapel remained unchanged.

Mike Resnick

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