

# **AS FAR AS THE MIND MAY DREAM**

**The story of Isabella Rose  
London's Notorious Child**

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Book II**

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## CHAPTER 1



The first images Isabella could form when awakening from, as it were twelve years of sleep, were white masked women and one doctor named Doctor Hemel who was also clothed with a white mask and cap and white clothing overall.

“I am Doctor Hemel,” he said introducing himself to Isabella. “and this is nurse Pauline and nurse Gwen respectively.”

Isabella had been making verbal noise from the moment the emergency attendants picked her up off the ground somewhere near the back doors of the Pulstar Manor. By the time she was discovered she had ceased from screaming as the fire had so devoured her body that it had numbed her nerve endings into something of a self preserving shock mechanism and yet, as she spoke it was as if she were speaking in a foreign language.

And only then, when she had awakened enough from the medication that lined her body like an interior cocoon, that she somehow, after what had been several weeks in a virtual coma, did form her very first words in English.

“Yes, hello,” she said feeling the words coming out of her felt as if they were dislodging themselves from being held in her mouth by glue, “I am Princess Isabella.”

Doctor Hemsel and his two assistants looked curiously at one another before returning their attention to Isabella.

“We are very pleased to meet you Princess Isabella,” said doctor Hemel without the slightest level of mockery in his voice.

“May I ask you Princess Isabella, do you remember anything?” while simultaneously nurse Pauline touched the doctor’s arm to remind him.

“Oh, my pardon,” continued Doctor Hemsel “I must tell you, you are now in the Braisel hospital.” Doctor took a hesitant breath and said, “the burn unit to be more precise. I am afraid Isabella that you have been burned quite severely my dear.”

There was an exaggerated long moment as Isabella, looked down upon her mummified bandage wrappings. There were tubes in her arms

hanging from glass containers which contained a milky looking liquid. There were curtains drawn all around her bed and bright lights over her making her feel as if perhaps she was in some kind of cloud formation.

“You have been with us approximately a fortnight,” said Doctor interrupting Isabella’s thoughts. “May I ask how you feel Princess Isabella; do you have discomfort anywhere?” “I am not certain Sir. I feel....” Isabella’s words trailed off and she lost consciousness.

Nurses Gwen and Pauline attempted hiding their tears. Doctor Hemel put his hand softly upon the child’s head as if he were lending Isabella a virtue of healing. “Sleep my child.” he said in a whisper “you shall be needing all your strength.”

It was a full day from doctor Hemel and his staff’s introduction to Princess Isabella before she opened her eyes and lifted her head to look round. Nurse Gwen noticed her movement and engaged Isabella.

“Hello again. You may remember we met just yesterday. I am nurse Gwen.”

Isabella struggling with her words took a deep breath. “I am not sure. I do remember talking with someone.”

“Are you in any discomfort my Dear?”

Isabella took another deep breath. “I don’t quite know. I hardly feel a thing.”

One of the other nurses on staff had rushed to get doctor and doctor Hemel was bedside with Isabella in less than a minute.”

After speaking briefly with nurse Gwen doctor addressed Isabella again. “Hello my dear, we did speak momentarily yesterday. My name is doctor Hemel and you did share with us that your name and title is that of Princess Isabella.”

A cross fit of confusion clouded Isabella’s face as she furrowed her brow and pursed her lips. “I don’t Sir, have such a title, Sir. Indeed my name is Anubis.” And once again, the same as the day previous, Isabella sank back into her pillow, closed her eyes and fell as far into her dreams as her mind would go.

It would take several weeks to sort out Isabella’s confusing responses. The medications were lessened in the days, but only after consulting with

Isabella about her comfort levels. And daily would be Isabella's mind would become less foggy and like her words, more focused and more perfectly formed.

She was in of herself appreciably 'lucky'. Sometimes a trauma to the body will be more harmful to the mind in the long stay; even deadly. But Isabella's understanding of what had happened and the truth of her 'parents' led to her ability to recall many of the incidents that led up to the burning of the Pultstar manor. For the time, Doctor lay to rest the uneven parts of Isabella referring to herself on the one hand as Princess Isabella and the other turn of her calling herself Anubis.

Both Pauline and Gwen did the research about whom Anubis was and both had stories of their own of how this Egyptian name worked in the overall piecing together of the girl's heretofore mysterious life. Inspector Dodgson visited the burn ward frequently keeping Doctor and his staff up to date on the investigation of what had indeed become something of a detective novella complete with dead bodies.

Ah yes; dead persons to account for. Mrs. Tumblers; a man supposed to be said, 'Lord Farnsworth' and the recently uncovered corps of 'Pig' buried at his residence address under a heap of ash, portions of cement and plaster and wood.

Being Inspector for the 'Polstar Tale' as the press had named it and, not without equal headlines about a person named: 'Isabella Rose, London's Notorious Child', would in time become his undoing. With great chagrin Inspector thought of this title given to an innocent victim and the privacy of her youth which he knew would be violated from every possible angle.

He had threatened all who were in anyway connected to recovery of the girl that they would pay something of an eternity in purgatory had anyone spoken about any of the particulars of her to the press. But there were just too many persons whose body Isabella had passed by on her way to the burn unit and to and from her bed into the operating room.

Such an incredible story mused Inspector Dodgson! In his subconscious he would turn over every piece of available information until it would all but send him into madness. It seemed everything depended upon him to unravel and then put together all the clues in his possession and Lord knows how many more would come in to this file case before there was a satisfactory end.

Somehow Rancid was lurking about every page of the story. His acrid smell permeated every acquired evidence And the girl, what did life have for her now?

Inspector Dodgson and his wife had already spoken about adopting Isabella. But his wife's health faltered with some disabling condition and it was becoming worse for her each year.

Wiser minds than his would create for Isabella a safe haven when she eventually would leave the ward. Pathetically unfortunate child.

Isabella's sudden fame came to a fever pitch in the time following the Polstar fire. The burn ward came under siege from the media. Police were required as sentries at all entrances. Reporters disguised themselves as orderlies, nurses, doctors, plumbers, even patients. These were all ushered out, some a bit harshly, but there were no arrests.

In time the story of the Notorious Child became monotonous; England was recovering from the brutalities of the Boer War and bracing itself for what might become a World War that was smoldering to near full collision between Britain, France and Germany.

The bodily healing process for Isabella would take two years, working through much pain and physical therapy. The psychological mend was unpredictable.

In time Doctor Hemel's patient settled on her proper name Isabella Rose and she accepted the Tumblers to be her surname, although, she told the doctor, that would be temporary. Indeed both Doctor Hemel and Isabella became quite good chums. To Isabella, without her knowledge, Doctor Hemel became a fatherly figure.

Doctor Hemel was not unused to this. Men would find in him a brotherly affection. Children their father and women something of a romantic muse.

And with his sometime multiple daily visits Isabella began to trust in Doctor Hemel enough to share her recollections of the past, as if she were, unpeeling an onion as one memory unfolded upon another.

As said, the physical ordeal would be long. And the mental healing would be another matter.

Imagine if you will children, that someone had blindfolded you from birth and that you could not remove the cloth. And let us suppose you

were old enough you were handed a cup and saucer. You would know these porcelain objects by their name and touch only and how you used them to drink warm tea. Would it not be safe to assume that taking off the blindfold and seeing these two drinking utensils for a first time would cause a person to reevaluate them as being perhaps something other than a tea cup and saucer?

Here they are white objects with painted on decorative designs. But what is white? What is decoration? If the cup was porcelain white, the painted on decoration would have to be in opposing shade and color. What is color? What does this mean to a person who has never had vision?

Oh my, our child! Our poor, sweet girl, Isabella Rose.

To complicate this introduction into a visual world and her ability to learn to use and coordinate her body into movement as it had been before, was the indecisiveness for predicting Isabella's future.

After two years rehabilitation, she would leave the hospital and live where? Who would be her guardian? The city would provide a small stipend and temporary housing on behalf of Isabella's notable distinction. There were homes for young ladies. Clean, and with food and access to education.

The fact that Isabella was without wealth as by default, the state had claimed eminent domaine over the Polstar wreckage and surrounding land.

There was the perchance that she might though step out onto the right financial footing as a barrage of annoying inquiries by magazines and newspapers bid to be the first to interview Isabella in exchange for large deposits of monies. There was even a book biography in the offering. And certain social charities opened themselves to Isabella's membership. But this was only offered knowing Isabella would be a donation money magnet.

And so Inspector Dodgson and Doctor Heller and several of the city elders devised as much privacy for the time of Isabella's release date and the destination to where she might go to live.

The release date from the hospital was settled and that Isabella would enter into Miss Flower's Home for Displaced Girls and assigned a room with a young lady 'rescued' as it was stated from unusual former home circumstances but according to Miss Flowers the director, the young lady

was of a stable mind; indeed a bit strange in her demonstrative personality and was observed to keep her personal belongings tidy and clean (perhaps too clean and tidy).

News of Isabella's living quarters could not stay hidden long and Miss Flowers in as little as a fortnight had to all but take her broom to whisk away the reporters and photographers from the front landing of the three storied manor complete with a series of towering brick fire flumes and a lookout station with a large bay window that faced the very direction of the plot of land which had one time been the foundation for the structure of the Polstar Manor. (But, of course).

"Lavender, this is Isabella Rose, your new roommate," said Miss Flowers bringing both children together to shake hands. "How do you do," said Isabella cautiously with the same trepidation she had when being introduced the first time someone and considering how her burn scars would affect their judgement of her and just how many seconds this new person would take to scanning her before they realized they were being impolite and adjusted their head and eyes to look directly at Isabella.

But Lavender had been informed of Isabella's unfortunate situation and had of herself taken time to learn all she could about Isabella's 'adventures' as she termed them to be. (True, it was strange touching a harshly wrinkled hand with frail cold fingers and she had but Lavender had prepositioned herself to seek respectfully for the luminous green eyes instead of betraying any shock she might have of charred body and face, but she could see little of these gems as Isabella wore a bonnet and black veil to cover her face and a long dark sleeved blouse and deep cobalt blue jacket.

The young ladies exchanged pleasantries as Mrs. Goblet left to help prepare for dinner as Lavender busied herself as Isabella unpacked.

After unpacking some of her personal items (Isabella had received a bounty of two trunks full of clothing and accessories from the charities and the well wishers for her recovery and her ability at morphing into society) both she and Lavender walked out into the hallway and into the breakfast room which was enormously decorative including an immense chandelier which sparkled out its soft display of many sided glass beads and their reflective lights.



The table was an enormous event with roaring ornate high backed chairs with what appeared to be gold fittings but indeed were imitation. The table cloth masking much of the fine wooden table had a wonderful vase of fresh flowers without question crafted by and expert designer of such things. The plates, cups, saucers and all things porcelain were every bit as well appointed in design and craft as Isabella had imagined Edna's to have been. The napkins, called servete's in England, were each of a unique wove, bright in color with myriad of design. And the silver followed suite being just this, silver, the other ornaments of service as well.

The two girls were holding hands as they entered the breakfast room finding all the young ladies seated and who were arching their heads to see the new, renowned resident. Lavender was resolved that she would support and protect her roommate even if meant being seen in the presence of Isabella to whom the other girls wasted no time privately referring to Isabella as "The Monster".

In the appropriate time Inspector Dodgson happened by Miss Flower's residence and reintroduced himself to Isabella. They had met only twice in the burn unit, Doctor and Inspector thinking it prudent to not cloud Isabella's mind with the murders and intrigues of that story.

Only once though, did the Inspector impose upon Isabella while she sat in her hospital bed and this was to ask her about the most curious, anonymous gift she had received while she lay asleep one afternoon. None of the orderlies or nurses had seen a person come or go who was not authorized, but there it was partially wrapped in simple cloth and laid to a side table. It was something in the form of a wreath, something with small sinewy branches interwoven so complex it had to represent something more than a simple object you may find during the Christmas season in the local department store.

Inspector was only too aware of such mysterious items, for deep in the caverns of London there taking residence like sewer rats, secret societies and cultic religions which met and were more often than not found to be involved with counter insurgent groups and made free use of explosives to demonstrate their commitment to one political cause or another. And with these groups came their idols and, fetish symbols conveying their statements of purpose.

This wreath included at its center a communication carved in hardened clay with an a-typical indiscernible meaning. And for Isabella, who

turned it over carefully with her bandaged palms and with great concentration, as if it had been a child's toy given her and she, leaving it behind while her years increased and her attentions went onto other interests, was baffled by it as well.

Inspector Dodgson took a meeting with Doctor Hemel before everyone of his visits to Miss Flower's home to see how in-depth he could go with his questioning without upsetting the delicate timing with Dr. Hemel's working to heal Isabella's thoughts and emotions.

Eventually Inspector Dodgson became a weekly visitor to the home, staying for lunches, playing badminton in the yard with the girls, even enjoying a noon day Thanksgiving dinner given primarily in his honor. He of course was always with questions, both subtle and direct, and always relaying Isabella's answers to Doctor Hemel and his senior officers.

Lavender insisted upon being with Isabella during all her meetings with Inspector Dodgson to which he immediately agreed to glad to see that Isabella had so soon acquired such a faithful friend. And she, Lavender like a watchful hawk sat rigid through all of the questioning hardly rustling and almost never uttering a sound or a word.

## Part II

One day when the two ladies were taking what had become an almost every time after lunch walk in the glorious garden of Mrs. Goblett's Isabella inquired of Lavender about her last name.

"Well, it's quite new," responded Lavender "It is Standardhall."

"Standardhall," repeated Isabella. "Lavender Standardhall; sounds like the name of a royal family member," said Isabella wistfully.

"Yes, I had just chosen it the week before you came here," retorted Lavender with firm resolve.

"Well what was it before you changed it?"

"Simply can't remember," Lavender said with a severe look on her face. "It is my design for my own life in that I never have to go back; back to that awful home."

"I see," said Isabella quietly not fully understanding but curious just the same.

After a moment passed Isabella said “I was thinking about changing my name as well. I will be keeping my first two names, as I do like them. But unlike you I have little to want to forget as I have so little I can remember. All of my life seems to have been something like a hoped for dream turned into a predetermined nightmare. So very painful,” whispered Isabella not without the familiar subconscious habit of first tugging down at her veil, and pulling her two shirt cuffs as far as they would to cover her burn scars.

“Why not change it to Standardhall,” said Lavender joyfully. “We shall be sisters. An institution of two!”

“I quite like it,” declared Isabella, her gaze having caught the sway of trees outside the window as puffy cumulus clouds passed like candied cotton balls against the currellian sky.

Lavender came and sat next to Isabella who was perched on a small couch and wrapped her arms gently around Isabella’s waist and nestled her head upon her shoulder.

“Those clouds look like giant cotton balls,” said Lavender looking in the same direction. “That is exactly what I was thinking!” said Isabella with glee. “It seems we are already sisters

of one mind!”

“Isabella Rose,” said Lavender cautiously. “Will you ever allow anyone close to you?” “What are you saying?” asked Isabella with a touch of suspicion and even fear resonating in

her voice as she pushed Lavender’s head slowly off her own shoulder.

Lavender turned her head and looked directly into Isabella’s face and said, “Do you mind Miss Isabella Rose Standarhall if I inquire discreetly what it is like to be born blind?”

“What?” asked Isabella with a quavering in her voice.

“I’m sorry my sister I don’t wish to be upsetting with that question.” “Why would you presume I am upset?”

“I...well, you...” hesitated Lavender. Lavender continued, “Look, you very well know the girls are calling you ‘The Monster ‘ and it hurts me so much for you that I so very much want to kill them for you! I want to

strangle them with knitting yarn and poke out their eyes with the knitting needles.”

Isabella laughed...a great chest full laugh...”Think you are on it a bit far my sister Standardhall?”

“Yes, I suppose I am Isabella but i still want to kill them and most especially I want to poke the eyes out of Becky; Becky the Loud Mouth!”

This set both girls off laughing and they held onto each other to balance themselves. When both girls caught their breath Isabella became very still and purposeful and, lifted her

veil from her face for the very first time in Lavender’s presence.

Isabella’s all encompassing eyes made it impossible for any human being to see anything of any part of Isabella’s scarred skin and as the two young ladies starred to one another Lavender found herself inexplicably transfixed in the hue of two emerald beacons.

“Yes my sister,” said Isabella in a mature, self commanding tone of voice “We have hated Becky the both of us equal, but not the extent i have hated The King of the Clam’s son who, did this,” said Isabella touching her face menacingly and with sheer anger as her face twisted, her one time handsome and now forever scared face.

### Part III

On her weekly rides to the hospital to visit with Doctor Hemel, Isabella found for herself to always be in the process of learning the exterior shapes and forms of the world of visual reality. Trees, tree branches, tree trunks which stood taller than the neatly trimmed underbrush of the finely curated grounds of both private residences and business buildings on the road leading to the hospital.

“Quite wonderful to see you Princess Isabella,” sparkled Doctor Hemel with no small amount of joy. Doctor and patient had agreed that she could keep her royal title and both of them understanding that at anytime Isabella could abdicate her throne and join the less demanding duties of an everyday commoner.

Once Isabella and Doctor were set in their opposite chairs Doctor informed Isabella that she would be making a new friend and this would be Doctor Simmons.

Doctor Simmons, was a female rarity in the field of psychology and was an advocate of the robust, recent popularity of human psychology, inclusive the study and interpretation of dreams, and subliminal human purpose and needs and fears. She had been fortunate as her father, a German national and a well respected medical physician had literally forced the review boards to allow his daughter into the psychological program of Brandhoffer university.

Doctor Simmons, whom in their less formal minutes together would address Doctor Hemel as Jeff and he her first name, Jean. Although both were satisfied with their respective spouses they had a deep love for each other and their intermix of professionalism.

“Studies are too few to know how the mind, once shocked and so strained adjusts, if ever to the reality we ourselves know Jeff,” said Doctor Simmons.

And with candor she explained Isabella represented for that days modern medicine, a person whom many untried theories would be tested: in short, Isabella would be a sort of lab guinea pig.

ware that Dr. Simmons was ‘another type of doctor’ a ‘friend doctor’, Isabella upon meeting Dr. Simmons for the first time introduced himself as Anubis.

After the psychologist and the visitor from Egypt had time to get to know one another and trust each one’s motivations Doctor Simmons surprised Anubis with a full scale model of a tudor mansion with its back side exposed.

The owner of the manor or perhaps one of the owner’s playmates, could place the many finely crafted furnishings into each and every room of hers or his decoration.

It was only after Doctor Simmons exited the office that day and the days following leaving Anubis alone, that he, from some internal magic of his own, transformed into Princess Isabella who sometimes had put the furnishings of the toy manor into separate rooms, or sometimes, in some geometric configuration that was something of an audience grouping facing a stool used to put feet upon.

With the appropriate questioning Doctor Simmons found that the now transformed Princess had placed the figurines as she once remembered the floor space of her former court.

“What do you talk about with your doctors?” questioned Lavender who was again sitting side to side with Isabella on a small settee and who was never shy when investigating other people’s business.

“They seem to ask me the strangest things. Always of course how I am feeling. Doctor Heller is always examining me, asking me endless questions and pushing and probing my skin. I am quite used to it you know. He is such a wonderful friend,” chimed Isabella in a sing-song manner.

“And what about your other friend Mrs. Simmons?” Inquired Lavender once again while snacking on a plum ripe from the garden while looking down on her white blouse next to the third button which had caught two droplets of non removable purple stain.

“She is my friend as well; she is a doctor of a different kind. She tells me she is a doctor of the mind and emotions.” answered Isabella with a less than positive tone in her voice. “She has many games in her office; we play a game called cribbage and I am beginning to learn chess. Toad tried several times teaching me chess. But he was a very impatient person and told me it was a fruitless effort. But I did learn all the pieces and their individual movements so I have a fairly good start; now it is only a matter of memorizing the multiple strategies.”

“I know nothing about chess Isabella,” said Lavender flatly. “Perhaps while you learn you can teach me.”

“This may take us many months my sister, I hope you can wait that long.”

A moment or two passed as Lavender finished with her plum and tossed the pit into the small trash can in a corner next to the dresser drawer which both she and Isabella shared. Lavender, for herself had taken the two top drawers and left the remainder three for her ‘sister’.

“Isabella, I truly wonder about our future. It is not as if we can always stay here at Miss Flowers.”

“I never thought about this,” replied Isabella with a worried tone in her voice.

“No, I suppose you have not thought of this yet having just arrived so few months ago. But I am beginning to worry about this more and more. And I tell you my sister I am starting to be a little afraid. I mean, what if am adopted and my new parents take me to Australia or some other

foreign land? We might never see one another again.” she said as tears began to roll down her cheek.

“Actually,” said Isabella joining Lavender’s troubling words for a fretful future as she stroked Lavender’s face commingling the tips of her fingers with Lavender’s tears. “My great concern...,” and here Lavender noticed a marked truncating tone in Isabella’s voice, “is if I will ever find a man to marry me? I mean, who will want an old dried piece of prune?” And with this, perhaps Isabella’s deepest fear laid out in the open, she began to cry as well. And this was only a beginning. Isabella lie her head down hard upon Lavender’s lap and burrowed into her stomach. She then went from a cry to a real ‘boo-hooing’ a pathetic, shocking display of yet another level of terror.

On Isabella wept and even howled for almost ten minutes when Lavender could take no more and pulled Isabella off her by placing and then pushing one hand on Isabella’s forehead and with the other hand on her blouse collar, gently as she might, jerked her back to a sitting position.

Lavender pulled a kerchief from her dress pocket and dabbed it at the corner of the emeralds. “I am sure there is a man for you Isabella,” said Lavender trying to console Isabella in as few

words as possible hoping for the current situation to be over. “Not all persons are as surface oriented as you may presume.”

“You say this,” enjoined Isabella in an almost accusative tone with tears still flowing“ and misstate the obvious.”

“At least you are beautiful Lavender. There is so much more certainty that men will be courting you.”

And it was true. Lavender was quite fetching to look upon. Almost to her full height which would be five foot six inches, quite tall for someone of her era. And yes, too very beautiful. Delicious bobbing brown hair framing a well structured face with permanently pursed lips and ivory skin.

After a few more minutes Lavender resided herself that this session was not to be a quick one and here both sisters sat through the remainder of the afternoon, Lavender embracing Isabella with warm hugs the both of them ignoring the evening dinner call as Isabella eventually lay her head on Lavender’s lap again this time falling deep into sleep.

## CHAPTER 2



### THE REMAINS OF THE DAYS

Scotland Yard, it's officers of British law, were ever thorough in their investigations to the pin point precision of using tweezers to pick through each blade of grass and plant configuration in that which remained unbleached by the fires of the Polstar Manor estate disaster.

Fallen stones and crashed timbers had to be turned over in all directions to see if there were any markings of evidence adding to the burgeoning catalogue of information already acquired.

Inspector Dodgson had left much of the oversight of this mess to his first sergeant and put his concentration to the sure identities of the dead person found in the bramble near the home; the certain identity of Mrs. Tumblers and probable, the most likely cause of the explosion: a fire accidentally begun, somehow combusted with a gas line. Dodgson would spend infinite hours thinking through each character's story in an attempt to put in place all the pieces of what had already become for him, the most curious case of his career.

And Rancid. Let us not forget him. What did he have to gain of this wreckage for surely disasters followed always in his wake, whether they be of his planning or, simply the mechanical proximity of the aftermath that evil embraces? No. No indeed. It was most certainly was this upper crust societal Viper and his mission plan that had been forced in all directions in the getting of the Polstar Emerald.

Somehow Dodgson, like so many other sleuths both legal or intrepid followers of the stone's mysterious reputation, believed that Toad had had the gem in his possession. And Toad would certainly have had it neatly sealed away not far from him. And therein was the story in total. Whatever facts came to the surface about the child, Edna and Toad and the manor altogether and the intrigues with the stone, Inspector need look no further than Rancid.

But why blow up the manor why not just steal the stone; certainly Rancid could have hired the best thieves of London...in all of Europe?



Captain Ralston and Inspector Dodgson questioned reasoning in the maneuvering behind and, within this mad-master genius. Considering Rancid was somehow responsible for the destruction of the manor, was Rancid creating a diversion at some level perhaps in an effort to deflect attention from himself by one of his competitors? Was he seeking to destroy the emerald for some altruistic, perhaps cultic reason?

Inspector Dodgson was long aware of Rancid's obsession with the occult. He was even said by some to belong to a coven a rumor which Dodgson primarily dismissed.

Rancid would certainly be considered among the 3000 persons who controlled all the social and political life at this time in London. And were they not all of them caught in the new obsession of Spiritism? Over one thousand salons or more active in their city offering seances, conjuring's, floating bodies, voices from other realms? Why for this matter, King Edward himself was an ardent believer.

And it was no secret that Rancid was an active member of the Marylebone Spiritualist Association. Perhaps the stone was something perceived to bring a person to purity; god like perfection?

Captain Ralston's concluded for himself and challenged Dodgson to consider, that Rancid had caused the manors disintegration and, when all the dust had literally settled and Mrs.Tumblers body turned to ash, Rancid's plan was to then purchase the property and have his associates comb the mounds of rubbish to see what might remain. Madness!

## PART II

Rancid Rancidous Rancidmore's mind and soul were never still and yet he would take whenever it suited him to a point that he may sit for upwards of two hours or even longer in a chair with as rigid a body as if it might be petrified, the inner comings and goings for his unscrupulous planning was a train yard in flux, twenty four hours every day of the year.

And the topic of the hour as he sat this very day while London shivered with the deluge of rains and freezing air: The Polstar Emerald, exactly where was it? If it was in the bowels of the manor surely Dodgson and his troops would have uncovered it by now; the gemstone and so many other articles of worth that had survived destruction. That Old Toad. Never a shilling slipped from his purse without full accounting and balancing against every other coinage gained or spent.

But what of the stone having had its own demise. Blown to nothing with only its many centuries reputation left to ponder.

Rancid, like all those before him, had been captured by the allure of this elusive green bird. That mythical feathered creature, it's bright plumage casting it's lasting shadow of intrigue across a person's mind and soul.

Obsessed was Rancid like no other thing ever before in his imagination. He would find the stone and secure its possession. Or, Rancid would come to the satisfaction that the stone no longer existed marking the end of this fable and enjoining that which would be said of Inspector Dodgson, soon to be: the dearly departed.

### PART III

The well worn phrase "There is something about a man in his uniform" is more perfectly formed "... and for certain types of women in particular." And a man in a uniform of high

ranking, so much, the more attractive to Rita whom from the very first time she had waited on him at the cafe let Inspector Dodgson know with certainty that she was available.

She had well heard from the other customers the story of Rancid vs Dodgson and that they had played the proverbial cat and mouse adventure which led down grimy alley ways and into grand ballrooms, across slate rooftops and rusty warehouses that which mimicked the life encounter readings of the Holmes and Moretti intrigue.

Rita bragged to her girl friends about her being able to serve and flirt with the Hero of Scotland Yard, a name she had invented for him.

Rita, a Cockney girl, in a family of eight siblings (if indeed if any of them were alive today) was something of an orphan herself, her mother dying of substance abuse and, a father whose name she never knew, and compensating in her mind, adopted herself as a daughter to the Inspector. And the feeling was mutual in some tragic, Dodgston's twisted care and lust for her.

Inspector, raised Anglican, married Anglican with vows of ever love for Miss Catherine Lane whom he often referred to with pride as Catherine the Great, a relation that through the years had become something of a routine pattern to wake to each morning and rewrite with the same familiarity as the day before.

Enter Rita, neither graduate of Oxford or Cambridge nor any of the fine schools to be had in London proper, Rita nonetheless was educated in the low art of human depravity; Raped for many years running by her brothers and lent out as a birthday gift to their friends, she an ever survivalist, learned only too well the animal drive of the male species.

And use this knowledge she did. First, a veteran of the dark, back streets servicing men of low and high estate for as little one or two penny or when she was taken in by a Madam, Rita after one year, and one very vicious attack where she wielded a serrated knife against one of Madams' clients, tried for a better life seducing her way into head waitress at a restaurant with a high end clientele only to become the sole server to her daily and, increasingly randy customer Inspector Dodgson, married gentleman, the very Hero of Scotland Yard.

### CHAPTER 3



The years fly by like leaves of the Autumn winds. Now seventeen, Isabella and Miss Flowers and all the other girls were busy decorating and cleaning and cooking for the going-away party for Lavender.

Most certainly, Lavender had grown into the fullness of her predictable beauty and, became the first selection by visitors seeking to adopt a child.

The couple visiting Miss Flowers home had signed the appropriate papers, under the guise of engaging in an altruistic accomplishment of giving Lavender a true home to live in.

(Then why,” sethed Isabella within herself “If the couple was so saintly why did they not choose me?)

The couple had come only once to the receiving house and with just their body language alone Isabella correctly guessed the young woman they would select among all the others as she and the other girls were made to walk single file before the visitors through the receiving room in the most humiliating promenade.

The couple made grand appraisal of Lavender and how they sought to “cherish” her as their own birth daughter. The woman elaborated about how she and Lavender would go on shopping trips and lunches together while she held Lavender’s both hands as if she had clamped them in handcuffs the husband caressed Lavender’s cheek with the back of his gnarled knuckle hand and with his other hand wove his fingers through Lavender’s long, luscious, brown hair.

After the party Isabella and Lavender went up to their room for the final packing of all Lavender’s possessions.

“What’s wrong Isabella?” asked Lavender with great concern that her friend would be inconsolable once they were separated.

“You ought to know,” snapped Isabella.

“Whatever are you talking about?

“You know; your beauty. Those old goats didn’t even bother to interview anyone but you. One look at you and that was the end of it. Damn old goats!”

“You think I actually want to go with them? You are crazy. What I want is out of here. I want a chance at life. I want to be free. I want to travel. And yes I want to be married. Why can’t I have a happy life? Besides, you and I have no friends other than ourselves. Without you I have no one I can trust. None of these wretched little beasts living here would I give a copper for. And Miss. Flowers. My, did she miss her circus clown calling I’ll tell you. She couldn’t perform even as a sagging chair on an off Piccadilly stage farce.”

“And do you really think I would forget about you? I love you Isabella. I cannot say how much I trust and love you. So if you are jealous I think you might take a closer look within yourself.”

Lavender walked to Isabella with the most stern look on her face and her body was monolith in its move. Lavender stood directly in front of Isabella and began unbuttoning her blouse. She then untied the under garment and unbuckled her bra.

Scars. Huge welts ran laterally upon Lavender’s chest. The skin burned by hot metal bars.

“My God!” screamed Isabella.

“My parents,” said Lavender disdainfully. And then taking one of Isabella’s hands she laid it upon her naked breast where her nipple had been cauterized. “Yes my parents you see” said Lavender with even deeper disgust. Isabella worked to pull her hand back but Lavender continued to press her hand on the welts.

“No, no screamed Isabella. No! No ! No !”

And when she did manage to pull her hand back, Isabella brushed her hand on her dress as if to wipe away what she had forced to feel.

Lavender began to laugh, a screeching jeering laughter while Isabella as if doing a ritual dance began to move around the room in no particular pattern rubbing her both hands on her dress and saying “No Satan, no. No King Crab, no! No! No! No!”

Lavender then stepped lively following Isabella and grabbed her by the arms all but wrestling Isabella to the bed and forcing her to sit. Once

Isabella calmed to the point she was not in a form of hysteria, Lavender began to talk in a low voice.

“My father worked the docks. When his shift was over he would join his friends and drink all night at the pub. He would then come home sometime in the early morning hours and beat the members of our family. He would always start with my mother. And when she was half unconscious...” Lavender controlled her welling tears. “What I was trying to share with you is that you are not the only one with scars, both mental and physical. None of the girls who live here are without them as I am sure you have well guessed.”

Isabella sat in stunned silence trying not to look at Lavender whose hip was touching hers. And once again Lavender took up Isabella’s hand and placed it in slow motion up to her bare chest. Forced to feel the welts on Lavender.

Isabella could take no more and bolted to the door and, when opening it, ran straight into the arms of Mrs. Flowers. “What is the meaning of this?!” yelled Mrs. Flowers. Isabella pushed past Mrs. Flowers and ran down the stairs, out of the front door; a child gone mad, running zig zag down the street.

Diary entry in the year of our Lord King Edward 1429, County Court, Britain

Dear Diary: I have only these few moments before the battle ensues. The battalion leader tells me we are duly outnumbered and yet we do have the strategic advantage as we are encamped atop this hill with a steep incline from the floor of a ravine, a river rushes by in a torrent to our left and, an impenetrable forest on our other flank. So there is no other plan that they can contrive but to make a full on assault and this upon us with nothing more than our prayers in our defense. “Dearest Lord, I pray thee my archers arrows be true, the horses and men be valiant and if there is such a thing as a miracle may it befall my army this day.”

I Princess Isabella will for all history give thee my Lord due tribute. This sacred prayer is laid open and bare for all those who follow me that they may see Thy great workings. Amen.

## PART II

The Labyrinth of Mirrors “She’s gone interior Bart.”

“Meaning....?”

“I’ve lost her in a sense. Something shocked her and she won’t tell me.”  
“Did you talk with Mrs. Flowers?”

“The very day she came in here calling herself ‘Princess’ again. She’s talking about going into battle with her troops. God, I feel horrible.”

“Well, what does Mrs. Flowers know?”

“It had something to do with her roommate. I interviewed Lavender. She said she really had no clue as to why Isabella ran from the room.”

“Do you believe Lavender?”

“No, Lavender was the only one in the room with her; I am guessing it was something she said to Isabella. Something ugly.”

“But you said the two girls were chums.”

“You know about jealousies. There can be deep chasms. It’s not as if Lavender is living in that home because her mind are emotions are stable.”

Dr. Simmons normally erect posture gave way to slumping shoulders and with eyes which were cast to the carpet. She continued, “There is also the development in that Lavender has been adopted. Mrs. Flowers says the parent’s to be were thoroughly reference. Middle class husband and wife just looking for some child companionship. Let’s hope this will be a good match for her.”

With a few moments passing Dr.Hemel asked “So what are your plans?”

“I’ve put it to my staff. Between us we’ve come up with what may be a possible solution. Something heretofore untried as far as anyone of us know. I am going to shock her back into reality. It’s all i’ve got. I can’t just let her drift in a fantasy world. She has so much potential, she has seen so much improvement. I would just hate to see all the efforts wasted.”

“You are referring to the fantasy we all live in; the world of ‘Reality.’”

Doctor Simmons looked up with a wayne smile on her lips. “I didn’t know we were allowed humor on the job, Bart.”

### PART III

Time is more cruel than any fantasy story for you may always live in the fantasy if you choose. Isabella could not live in Mrs.Flowers home forever. Once Lavender had moved out Isabella

had been let to have the room for herself alone.

By the time Isabella was seventeen, she was now the eldest of the young women who had taken sanctuary in the all-girls-home. Sadly for Isabella, The Crown of England had taken eminent domain over the Polstar property, and in the particular prism of justifying its own actions, gave not a farthing of compensation to Isabella. And yet there were the bonds and stocks of Toad's savings and investments and after gorging themselves upon many of the pound notes, there was still a goodly portion for Isabella's inheritance but not to be released until Isabella had turned eighteen.

Isabella was experiencing resentment by the younger girls who did not see her as an older sister, but more of a target to work out their own lives misfortunes. In that Isabella was famous, she did have many people come by to see her and take time to have tea, gossip and take her on special outings.

Isabella made lite of her outings trying not to put more division between herself and the girls and so said little or nothing about the evenings and days she enjoyed with her escorts whom took her to the theater, and fine restaurants and parties wearing her fine clothes which others had paid for to make her presentable.

It was not as if Isabella's skin had cleared to perfection, in that her scars would not show, nor the tips of her hair follicles did not not look as if they had been sewn in and where she was still referred to as 'monster' by her fellow inhabitants of Miss Flower's home. Indeed, one the wretched delinquents had taken the book cover of the novel 'Frankenstein' with the illustration of the Dr.Frankenstein's breathing cadaver with a bolt jutting in under its coat collar, attached a note to the picture reading: "Your future husband, Isabella" and slipped this under Isabella's bedroom door.

And so we have for our poor Isabella that it became quite obvious that she did have to move on, as the wording goes, or perhaps a more cruel way of saying this is that she was worried that she was being viewed as



a burden upon London society and to be discarded like the morning trash. But what to do and where to go?

She was turning eighteen in several weeks but what of her basic social needs of hearth, home and feeling secure in human interaction and purpose. London's air was beginning to show signs of the ensuing winter. Something or someone would have to rescue her.

Indeed Isabella was a popular name in London society; even famous. But alas, no family had heretofore sought to take her in. That is, until one great bit of fortune did ensnare her, and this was in the personality of one of the grand dame of the London three thousand whom stepped forward to inquire and propose a trial period of adopting Isabella.

Mrs. Fortunate Goblet was her name, a person who was not only familiar with Isabella's story but had in past years been an acquaintance with Edna and Old Toad Tumblers. And Mrs. Goblet was recently widowed living in the country home she and her husband Vison Bandie Goblet III had retreated to each summer when London became a cacophony of noise and unbearable heat.

And so just as the clock had struck the proverbial eleventh hour, Mrs. Goblet, her maid Miss Tepid and, her butler Lunce whose identity of being 'scary' to look upon had been secured from the time of a childhood accident emphasised by the dark patch he wore over his left eye and his imposing six foot four stature, slightly bent at the shoulders and dangling down arms, they three and, a myriad of feral cats and kittens the most auspicious one being named Barbary, whom like the butler, had one missing eye; the right one to be precise, moved back for the winter months into the stately Albagoriam hotel on fourth and Nemesis streets.

Mrs. Flowers thought to have a going away party put on for Isabella, but she knew to well of the other young ladies disdain for Isabella and thought better to give her small gifts in the stead. These Isabella had packed in her trunks as well the strange woven, wooden, configuration Inspector Dodgson handed her in the hospital. Isabella had numerous times taken the wreath in her hands and as she had done the very first time seeing it, turned it over and over and since there was no explanation for its messaging or where it had come from Isabella decided it would be perfectly fine to say that it was a crown she had left on her throne as she was rapidly ushered out a secret passage of her castle by her maiden servants as enemy troops had breached the walls and were making fast progress to her inner chambers. And that now her maidens in waiting had

also breached history and a dividing dimension of that dangerous time and now living in London in the 1800's and not to reveal themselves physically but leave message enough with the crown that they were absolutely present and very watchful.

And then the day came, and Mrs. Flowers helped Isabella load her baggage onto the handsome and when she was all boarded, Isabella looked to Miss Flowers with nary a sob between them and she left the company of Mrs. Flowers, each promising to write the other at Christmas, but neither did.

"It seems we are on something of an adventure you and I," said Mrs. Goblet as she and Isabella sat in the room of the apartment suited for the morning parlor. "I have read everything I could about you and your misfortunes. I truly am deeply sorry my dear."

"Thank you," said Isabella and nodded her head politely.

"I must confess I was most curious about your eyes. My word, they are in every way grand jewels! Their reputation surely did proceed them."

"Thank you," said Isabella not knowing what else to say and nodding her head again touching nervously at her pinned up veil which draped adequately over her ear.

The air was still and the mood in the room was one Isabella thought felt would be well stated as 'cautious polite'. Miss. Tepid clanked the tea set down and poured tea for Mrs. Goblet and returned the teapot to rest on the serving tray and walked out without offering Isabella the same.

"Don't mind her Isabella. She is very possessive of me. She has no family and no friends. She probably feels I will be doing away with her at sometime, and that you will be replacing her as my female companion and resident maid which of course is absolute nonsense."

There was again a silence and Mrs. Goblet continued her direct look at Isabella as if Isabella were a trophy Mrs. Goblet bid for at auction and now was on display upon the hearth mantel.

"Well my child, will you be pouring yourself tea?"

Isabella rose from her chair and mixed milk and sugar with the reddish dark tea and returned to sit down but found her seat had been taken over by a Barbary who was staring at Isabella as if to challenge her about

whom the occupier of the seat should be. "Oh never mind Barbary," said Mrs. Goblet "she also is possessive."

"I had a kitten once," volunteered Isabella as she stood sipping her tea. "I named her Dinah," said Isabella wistfully having not thought about Dinah for many weeks and her sudden naming of Dinah struck as a sore needle in the base of her memory.

"Did you happen to name her after Alice's cat?"

"Yes," replied Isabella.

"Then you must have enjoyed the story of Alice and the looking glass," confirmed Mrs. Goblet as Isabella answered with another 'Yes'.

"I will tell you Isabella I was for a time acquainted with your mother."

Isabella did shift at the mention of Edna and Mrs. Goblet noticed but cautious not to allow Isabella see.

Mrs. Goblet continued; "I always admired your mother. I of course was very much younger than she. Your father I had met only briefly and then only once or twice. Quite handsome as I recall."

Isabella remained motionless. Of course other persons' through the years whom had been friends with the Tumblers had conveyed bits of information about Edna and Toad which Isabella could help weave a more firm picture of them. There had been presented her many pictures of her parents being at parties and business, social gatherings and candid family groupings at the beach or on forest hikes or in some brightly lit parlor at high tea. And of course neither Edna nor Toad looked any wit as she had pictured them while seeing them only with her imaginatio

"We worked in teams of five at the hospital. Those poor broken bodies, many of them with crushed souls. We knew what we were getting into when we volunteered. Or perhaps only suspected. The stench from the wounds is something I shall never forget."

"Then there was the receiving home. The altar guild at St. Lukes. Tireless we were in those days. Edna was a real workhorse if I may use that term to describe her tireless labors. "

Isabella nodded her head in approval and took back her chair once the Barbary took to walking for a sip from his milk bowl. Miss Tepid refilled

Mrs. Goblet's tea cup while modulating for Isabella the same crimped lip she had given her at their first meeting.

"Your mother never recovered from the loss of her daughter, you know. I rarely if ever saw her after that. Once or twice at the theater. Maybe shopping; it was many years ago you see."

"Burn your tongue?" queried Mrs. Goblet as Isabella froze into a deep freeze with the casual reference to Edna and Toad's having had a ...Daughter?!

Isabella feigned momentary illness and excused herself that she might go lie down. This somewhat abrupt statement by Isabella caused Mrs. Goblet and Miss. Tepid to look sideways at each other with a mutual feeling they had in some way been snubbed.

And Isabella, as she walked from the morning parlor overheard Miss. Tepid utter several words not necessarily discernible but a communication which floated in the air as something quite nasty.

## PART TWO Troubling news

"I'm taking you off the Rancid case Inspector," said Captain Ralston sitting stiffly back in his chair and not bothering to look up from what he was working on. It was a professional courtesy. Captain Ralston wanted to save Inspector Dodgson any shame or embarrassment that might betray with his face upon hearing the unfavorable news.

"It's starting to wear on you Jack," said Captain Ralston after a few moments before looking at Inspector Dodgson whom by now would have recovered himself. "You are only human my diligent Inspector," said Ralston in an affectionate tone as Dodgson stood motionless. "I understand," continued Captain Ralston " your wife is gravely ill for which I am very sorry. As you know I lost my Laura only two years ago. We always think it will last into eternity and the ironic thing is, it really does; just not on this planet Old Man."

"I have several cases for you to see over. Your team is already assembled. And as for the Rancid case, Thomson will be taking over. I know you loathe him Inspector and I concur that he is a total ass, but you will have to admit, next to you, he is the best qualified."

### **PART III**

It is a form of death unnamed, indeed it is a sure, slow death when the Eskimo, say 'Inuit', sled driver pulls his lead dog out of point position and puts the animal in any rear position. The Inuit is aware of this imminent death but his goal is in the interest and the best performance of his carriage.

For twenty five years Inspector Dodgson has pulled himself from his wife and the warmth of their bed so that he might put on his uniform and perform with the mindset of a simple constable and purpose: enforcing British law.

How unbelievably proud he was when Captain Ralston pinned on his breast the badge of Inspector. His wife sitting in front row of the performance hall, dabbed with her kerchief the corners of her eyes, not wanting to be that vapid wife who shamed her husband in public.

Even with the badge and the title remaining, the Inspector felt he had been replaced and bumped into a lower rank. The Rancid case was his and everyone knew this. And to be leased from his position by that egomaniac Thomson was as much as to have been publicly slapped in the face by the king.

For so long he dreamt of being the one to bring Rancid to the drop. That solid, sure sound when the floor below that lowly snake collapsed and all of the dark mischief Rancid had procured would hang eternally in the past.

## CHAPTER 4



### **“COME ISABELLA, GATHER YOUR THINGS.”**

Isabella looked up from her reading of the Times fashion section. “Where are we going?” she inquired rather casually as if, once again she and her mother were to visit yet another friend for tea or shop for things they did not necessarily need but which the very activity gave them something to fill in the time with a not necessarily busy day.

“We are off on the grand adventure of suffrage young lady, it is about time we joined the real world of women and our mutual plight,” said Mrs. Goblet curtly.

This then would be even more an entree’ into society; the world of Women’s Suffrage, a movement begun by a handful of heroines and, whom by most accounts, had become a real force for the men of England to reckon with.

Their ‘sisters’ in America had led the battle against the oppression of women and were not only an inspiration but were setting the rules for engagement.

Such a novel concept, was it not, that women and men would be of the same passions and desires? This was not the mindset of the men and society in these times; rolls were well delineated as indeed all British society of the time. Banking, monetary rules of order were as secure as tort of municipal law, the assurance of right versus wrong, schooling, the raising of children, roadways, waterways and men who lived with women and women who lived as it were as secondary citizens with men.

And today Isabella would find herself in attendance at a constitutional women’s meeting in Tadworth Village where Vera Brittain and other such esteemed leaders led discussions on education, celibacy and marriage. Miss Soulsby was there, an ardent yet discreet feminist, presenting one of her famous lectures on ‘The Virtuous Woman’ and when she concluded she was met with standing ovation.

(“Strange, and painful indeed”, thought Isabella “this ‘virtuous woman’ was one who was admonished to be a skilled housekeeper, and a strong

support for her husband, with knowledge of public affairs with which she could converse in evenly.”

“But what of myself?” contemplated Isabella as she sat upright in her stylish, fashion finery with its edge of masculine design. “Well, here I am indeed a famous person. My story is everything new in the minds of her country's dwellers. And yet, by this time I am something of a great novel everyone has read and now put upon their bookshelves as they seek for other stories to interest them. If anything my fame has faded into something no one person felt comfortable talking about and, not at all interested in looking at and whom, by the end of the story, would never have a husband? Why should I care about women and their sufferings?” On their travel home Isabella and her mother took the return route and were carried first by a shiny handsome to the curbside of Favored Station, then walked down several flights of stairs for the tube. And as they sat crowded into one of the back seats and the train jerked forward, Mrs. Goblet looked caringly to Isabella. “To the care of your small fortune young lady, I think Mr. Tupponce securities advisor of The Bank of Lords, shall do very well managing it for you future. My late husband and I had the greatest appreciation for his skill in investing. I think he shall do right by you.”

It was later that week that once again Mother and daughter boarded, this time, a trolley and traveled the sooted city landscape, crammed and jostling with every kind of vehicle and buggy imaginable in the direction of The Bank of Lords with a secured appointment with one, Mr. Tupponce ‘Securities Advisor’.

And with little more than the initial meeting where she, Isabella her mother and Mr. Tupponce met in his private, high walled, expensively decorated office and a few signings of papers their transaction was complete. There was also the protracted discussion for the eventual moving of the gemstones from the holding vault at Scotland Yard; Isabella would be given her private deposit box where only she and Mrs. Goblet would possess keys and, Isabella's wealth would be secure.

## PART II

### THE FANCIBLE MR. FANCY

The immediate thing you would note of Reginald Fancy, had you not heard his name pronounced first, would be his shocking red, full head of hair. He wore his hair short on the sides but upon his crown the hair rose up like a great sea wave with a peculiar curvature on the brow end which

when he spoke he would flip for emphasis upon whatever remark of his he wanted to punctuate.

Mr. Fancy was known for being a ner-do-well, or, someone at wits end or, simply a ‘creepy sort of soul’.

But Reginald was not an imbecile. Rather, genius in his mind and actions, preying upon anyone’s common decency and trust to achieve his immediate end which was to live a slovenly life with pockets full of notes and coins and free of responsibilities.

Reginald did break rank from his habits and, from time to time, by making his many tricks of larceny and vice made available to one employer whom he served in measure as a loyal dog does towards its owner and, this would be for our Edwardian/Isabellian story: Rancid; naturally.

With less than a slight twist of his golden cufflink in his finely crafted shirt sleeve Reginald now onto the case of stealing the Polstar emerald found himself as none other than clerk typist in service to His Majesty the King: clerk typist and mail room boy, Scotland Yard headquarters.

And in a short time another night at Treasure Trove Inn was unfolding and not much had changed since Rancids last visit several months previous, save for a few more broken pieces of furniture mended back together, or those too badly damaged piled in one corner. There was also a sizable hole in one of the walls and perhaps a few chips of paint were peeled, gathering of mold and spider webs.

“Sir,” said Reginald Fancy as Rancid motioned for his employee to sit.

“And what is it you have found for me?” questioned Rancid pointedly not calling for Daniels to serve Reginald a drink.

“Sometimes they are a bit sloppy; leaving the vault to the confiscated articles door open and unattended, but not for any great while. Actually this has only happened twice since I began working there.”

“And have you been inside?”

“Yes, but only once. I helped one of the officers roll in a cart stacked with parcels. I no way had time to examine where the gems might be. There are shelves with packages of varying size stored on them, closet doors and locked, metal storage boxes; my guess is the gems are in one of the metal boxes.”



“Why one of them?”

“There is not a label detailing the contents on the one I am referring to and all the other boxes of any varying sort do.”

“The emerald is most certainly there. The log book records all the gems by name and their description and photograph each. But for what I assume is the emerald there is only the encryption within parentheses of a capital ‘E’ between them and no description and no photo.”

“Your assumption could be no other than fact Mr. Fancy. I congratulate you.” Fancy beamed as the ends of his mouth reached up to his ears.

“So the question and of course and the answer Mr. Fancy is when will the stones be moved?” Reginald sat silent as Rancid mused. Rancid tapped his palm to the table as if in time with the waves of his questions wearing on his mind.

Rancid signaled for Daniels, who in his shuffle to Rancid’s table tripped on one of the floor boards reaching out his hand and knocked a customer’s arm sending the man’s raised beer across the table and onto his mates. Once recovering his footing Daniels moved in bee line direction and bowed grandly to ‘his finest customer’.

“I shall be leaving in a few moments Sir,” said Rancid to Daniels.

“I want you to feed this man to the full and make certain his drink never is dry.”

“My pleasure Govn’r,” said Daniels inclining his head towards Fancy expecting an introduction to yet another of Rancid’s interesting friends but none did come and even Daniels with an IQ equal to one of the wood tables in his pub understood the understated message and shuffled back towards the kitchen.

“For the time Mr. Fancy,” instructed Rancid “I want you to do nothing out of the ordinary; no snooping round or trying to sneak into the vault. Rather I want you to listen. Surely gems are not the normal confiscated property from a crime scene. And with the fame of of the story and all...”

“Yes Sir, Mr. Rancid.”

And not saying another word Rancid left Mr. Fancy for the evening with a plate full of food and his cup frothing over.

This meeting had taken place several months after the Polstar disaster when Toads ‘secret’ chamber had been unearthed, not by Scotland Yard, but by several school chums who had snuck into the guarded grounds one deep, cold night and were making plans with fellow students the next day at school planning an excavation of Toad’s underground fortress. But their plan had been intercepted by their Headmaster who then reported it to the police. The fact about there being a small steel vault hidden there with the other items of Toad’s collection could not be kept secret from the reporters who were always hanging around the police station which added yet another dimension to the Polstar Manor mystery, the Polstar emerald and the life of Isabela, London’s Notorious Child.

“Im proud of you Isabella; I am proud of both of us,” said Doctor Hemel to Isabella as he examined her skin that sheathed the face he applied most work on for the last six years. I think I can now tell you the first time I saw you I almost joined the nurses and wept. I don’t know what it was about you in particular. I’ve had any number of patients in thirty or more years while working the burn unit. I guess it was just that you seemed so unbelievably innocent; so young...and your eyes; almost mystical they are.”

A ‘thank you’ was all Isabella wanted to say but her fear of what was jostling around in her head overcame an innate embarrassment.

“Doctor Hemel,” asked Isabella with a hesitant voice “will I ever be normal?”

Doctor Hemel knew this was something of a winner take all or lose all question. “Don’t think of yourself as being a normal person or something else Isabella...can we just say ‘unique’? Unique and wonderful. Famous and so I hear, now quite wealthy !”

Isabella gave Doctor Hemel a side glance.

“It’s Inspector Dodgson, as well as the pernicious press dear, we all share your life.”

“I am not offended in the slightest that you know about my inheritance or that anyone else does at all,” said Isabella evenly.

Both doctor and patient sat still as Isabella contemplated Doctor Hemel’s response. “Then I must assume,” said Isabella again evenly “this is me, my skin and hair, I am

something like a stitched, tethered teddy bear aren't I?”

“Should we call you Teddy then?” said Doctor with a warm grin. Isabella laughed lightly and turned to look at her reflection in the mirror which hung on the back of doctor's door; the exercise she had only recently allowed herself.

“I think this is the day I shall not wear my veil at all. No, I shall never wear it again. A hat perhaps but not the veil. I shall go shopping and allow them all to stare at me. And when I look at them and they turn away for being caught staring then I shall go up to them and reach my hand out to them in friendship. But perhaps I shant”, said Isabella whimsically.

Isabella turned from the mirror and stared defiantly at Doctor Hemel; not without affection, but to see if he were staring.

“Isabella, said Doctor Hemel, I wish I could adopt you.”

Isabella ran to Doctor Heller and wove her arms around his waist burying her head deep into his chest weeping. “I wish I was never born said Isabella making damp the doctor’s smock damp with the wetness her tears and he, in turn releasing droplets upon her sewn-in, transplanted hair.

## CHAPTER 5



Doctor Sullivan's office was bright and breezy with yellow tinted walls, high polished furniture, chairs that were full and fluffy with pastel coverings and a light green couch where Princess Isabella chose not to sit, rather, opposite Mrs. Sullivan in one of the chairs. This is where Isabella had sat each visit from the first, and so this gave Doctor Sullivan the advantage of arranging her props. Behind Doctor Sullivan's chair upon the wall was a lithograph print of a painting by Manet the French Impressionist. The painting was of mother and child, the mother sitting facing the viewer at the rail station Garduestalon and the child, approximately ten in age, had her back to the viewer looking through an iron fence at the trains.

To either side of Doctor Sullivan were figurines. Over her right shoulder, on a thin shelf was a small bronze figurine of Anubis with its unflinching jackal face, sitting comfortably with great authority as the god of the Egyptian underworld in replica to the figure found in Thutmose's tomb.

And behind Doctor Sullivan on a firm table sitting propped up, and leaning against a stack of books was a beautiful porcelain doll clothed in the finery of a princess with her long, flowing, rather reddish brown hair, remarkably similar to Isabella's.

"I hear you are now marching with the women's movement Isabella," said Doctor Sullivan with admiration bouncing in her voice. "Good for you."

"And you are enjoying living with Mrs. Goblet in the hotel suite?"

"Yes, it has a grand view. Much the same as when I lived with Edna and Toad. The sun would lite my room at the very same time; at the very same season. It was when I was in my turret outlook, I could see all the kingdom of London before me. I so enjoyed my time alone there."

"Yes, you were very well cared for by Edna and Toad. May I ask Isabella, did Edna or Toad ever go to your Court of Forty?"

"Actually no. Edna said she would never crawl upon her knees to pass through the secret entrance and Toad did promise but he never quite did come calling."

“So Isabella, you must surely miss all of your subjects, whom I assume many had become your friends.”

“Actually no, not really. I do of course miss Dinah. Even though Mrs. Goblet has allowed me to have a calico and for herself she has Old Bart her pug dog and her stupid cat Barbary, it’s just that Dinah was my first kitten and after the battle began, she somehow ....I don’t quite know

what happened to her. To this day I still worry about her and wonder if I shall ever see her again.”

As Doctor Sullivan stood to get Isabella a glass of tea, Isabella stood as well, first walking a few paces to look at the mother and child at the rail station and then over to the shelf where she put her hands on the statue Anubis taking it down to examine the figurine.

“What is this strange creature? Is it a dinosaur?”

“Not exactly,” said Doctor Sullivan setting Isabella’s tea cup and saucer on the table by her chair. I bought this in an antique sales room several weeks ago. I too was struck by its inventive face and pose. The person who sold this dog like creature tells me it was an object of worship from a far off land.”

“Well, said Isabella “it most certainly has a curious appearance. And its face looks very dignified as if it has great wisdom.” Placing the figurine up on its perch Isabella set back down in her chair.

“Indeed,” said Doctor Sullivan sitting down as well and both ladies began drinking their tea.

“Mmmmm”, signaled Isabella agreeing with the mint flavor.

“Choose the flavor while thinking of you; sort of a symbolic gesture of homage to your beautiful eyes.” Both ladies grinned.

“So Isabella what adventures are you involved with these days? I take a chance perhaps that I may be trespassing upon a royal secret.”

“You are my closest confidant Doctor Sullivan. You and Doctor Hemle. You both are privy to all of my plans and at the moment we are mounting an attack upon Deydon’s castle. An old fort where ancestors of the Norsemen hold a young boy taken from the township of Greyingstone. The child’s parents are close relatives of the captain of my guard. He has on more than one occasion risked his life for his troops which altogether

he was risking it for me. So I shall show my regard for such bravery by laying siege to the castle fort and rescue the boy child.”

“This is very noble of you (and, here Doctor Sullivan swallowed with difficulty) Princess Isabella.”

The moment became frozen the two humans looking at each other; sizing the other one up in a way they had not here-to -fore.

“So, Princess Isabella you have taken-up the charge to rescue this boy child.”

“Yes Mum, it is the decree of myself and my legions and if it takes the very last breath of every last man, and their Princess too, we are willing to pay this price.”

“How do you manage this burden upon your shoulders?”

“Did not Christ carry a cross for all of us for an example to all of us? Jesus the cross of death. Jesus cross of sacrifice; Jesus cross of torture?” said Isabella in an impudent tone?

And of this, the two ladies looked hard into each other's eyes.

“Death and torture,” said Isabella with an unnerving firmness. “All to the greater good. Jesus hung on the cross like many before him..but unlike so many others he was not burned at the stake.”

“No Isabella Jesus was not burned “ repeated Mrs. Sullivan, and then taking all courage and

calling upon all her skill, “but you were burned while you were attempting to rescue your

mother...you acted as a heroine something akin to Joan of Arc. She was burned at the

stake...You know the story of Joan of Arc? Isabella, you know this story. Isabella you know this story.”

## PART II

Rancid was holding high court in his residence at number twelve Kensington street. “A table of knaves” he thought to himself. Nonetheless a gathering of societal elites; everyone of them he had consulted his own craft of contrivances on how to fleece them.

The most honored guest was Dame Foppish who sat at Rancid's right hand, her frail, rakish husband upon her right elbow, she, being one of the prime leaders of the women's suffrage movement.

Rancid carefully allowed her the length of the dining room and beyond if she needed to impose her self importance and that of the suffrage movements greatness to every listening ear.

And with every punctuation from her pompous preaching, Rancid would nod his head and sometime even utter a sound showing his deep alignment with her, his facial expressions reflection as if he sat at the foot of a towering sage. At one point, so enthralled with her own message she stood up, raising her voice and began pointing her index finger at the men seated. "Here! Here!" shouted Rancid in agreement and appreciation.

The fact was he despised the women's movement and the idiotic woman who sat at his side with her shorn hair and the men's bowler studded with that stupid pink feather held in by the decorative band. But alas, Mrs. Foppish, or as she was referred to in the ranks as 'The Locomotive' had unfathomable wealth attached to she and her husband's names and whom better to fleece than someone so high on a pedestal that she could not see what was being chipped away from down under her?

Rancid's new gentleman's gentleman was Colonel Leftwanster, Old Poole, a man who had distinguished himself in the Boer War, leaving behind one of his eyes and three fingers from his left hand, came to the side of Rancid who was in mid sentence and lowered at the waist to whisper in Rancid's ear. Rancid grimaced momentarily then rose to his feet "Ladies and Lords," he exclaimed "something urgent has come knocking at my front door." And turning to walk away from the dining room said "I shant' be long."

Death's door has many entrances. Some people die in their sleep, some by disease or pestilence. Some die by violent and or vile action and some when taking their own initiative, choose to leave this planet by engaging the brass door knocker upon Rancid's manor without having been invited.

Marching into the receiving parlor with Poole at his side Rancid was taken shockingly aback when standing there before him in his raincoat covered with droplets of dew and muddied boots was Fancy!

Before Rancid could find his words he instinctively and with primal ferocity proceeded to the hearth and then stopping just short of picking

up the poker to crush in Fancy's head, turned to Fancey and demanded: "What?"

Poole had by this time slipped from the receiving parlor and so was out of hearing range when Fancy answered all but out of breath, "They are moving the gems tomorrow!"

Fancy, a curator of images and gatherer of moments of amazement, through his less than thirty years of life, believed at that moment he had witnessed what very well what might become the greatest of visual dialogues when Rancid's face ripped into high gear, his primall being seconds ago wanting to break open Fancy's head with the metal poker now contorted into its evil genius changing course towards the opportunity at hand.

Indeed, all had been worked out in advance by Rancid. The intercept of the car/patty-wagon or truck of transport. How many men of his would it take to complete the theft. The diversions; two would be needed at the least, depending upon which one of two obvious routes the transport unit drove and backup units following. The killing of the officers and accompanying, shotgun wielding guards; this being a calculated necessity. The getaway. The temporary storage. The necessary elimination of certain of his employees who worked the heist. And then, finally, the placing of the emerald in its new home, Rancid's.

### PART III

Inspector Dodgson gained a fascination with crime and disorder through his Uncle Lawrence, whom he would seek out on important family occasions, Lawrence, seeing he had an avid audience would pull Jack aside and tell him of his harrowing stories of being a detective.

Of course, as any good storyteller, and Lawrence was a master, Jack's uncle would embellish the tales of his profession as if he were retelling a fiction detective novel, sparing his young nephew from the more gruesome details.

And it was he, Jack's Uncle the most respectable man on London's police force, chosen to lead the investigation into The Ripper!

"Shall I be like you Uncle Lawrence when I grow up?" questioned the young and impressionable boy his eyes glazed over with awe and adventure.



“I right think I do see something of an officer of the law when I look upon you my nephew., Fatihul to the force, loyal to our King and country. Yes!, I do see it very clear...the eyes; Detective Lawrence is never mistaken when reading the eyes,” he said with calm assurance.

And here, the seed had been sown, that rainy day he and his beloved uncle sat side to side on the porch of his parents house while all the world in that one minute slipped by and visions of 221 B Baker Street came into crystal clear focus.

## CHAPTER 6



Rita propped her head upon her hand as she lay next to Inspector Dodgson who was only half awake, having led a grueling day in his police services and a very long evening with her.

“I so love your touch my love Jack, where have you been all my life?” Inspector rolled his head in Rita’s direction.”And do you say this to all your men?” “I have only had one true love before being with you.” “You are in love with me now are you?”

“I never dreamed I would be sleeping with an Inspector. All those times I served you your lunch, I was always so jealous of any other woman looking at you let alone those elegant ladies who seem all your best friends.”

“It’s for the most part my badge. That symbol of power....attracts women like moths in the

night. And now you see me in all my nakedness and vulnerability do you still have respect for me considering I am a married man?”

“Your question is as unreasonable as it is unfair. For I see a man whom I assume has been faithful all his married life and yet I also see a man tortured. A man who has not had touch or tenderness in a very long time. Her illness plays it out upon your face...in the quivering of your body...., You may allow yourself some level of guilt for being with me but you are a strong man, one I respect with or without your badge on.”

## CHAPTER 7



Isabella and doctor Sullivan did agree that while in doctor Sullivan's office Isabella could indeed remain upon her throne as Princess Isabella, guiding and protecting her subjects in peace and if necessary into war.

But in that she, Princess Isabella walked out onto the streets of London, rode the trolleys with the common folk, ate dinner with Mrs. Goblet or attended another women's march she would be Isabella Rose, daughter of Mrs. Goblet, resident of Albagoriam hotel.

And of Anubis, well, the underworld would have to care for itself for the times she was absent. At her request Isabella was given the statue of Anubis to take home and set the figurine on her dressing table next to her turtle shell comb, next to her pearl handled brush, next to her solid silver hand mirror. Isabella had developed into one of those persons who followed routines in the way a strict religionist would and not allow any object nor daily task to wander far from her control.

Isabella would usually rise from sleep a quarter hour before seven and rinse her face in the porcelain basin filled the evening before by Miss. Tepid and covered over with a wood platter so as to preserve a warm temperature.

Through the months Miss. Tepid continued to wall herself from Isabella with nasty glances and, terse, if any remarks. Lunce on the other hand had seen his monolithic ice exterior thaw a bit and even allowed himself a few bits of chiding at Isabella's expense. None of this moved Isabella in a negative way, instead she found it rather entertaining.

It was obvious to everyone that Isabella had matured well. She continued to meet with Mrs. Sullivan but on an every other week basis instead of every Monday for noon visits. And the efforts of social grooming by Mrs. Goblet helped give Isabella the confidence she needed for stepping out on her own as she took a handsome from her home to the doorstep of Cafe Sable just two blocks up from Downing street and of herself walked with appointment to the receptionist desk being led to table seven where Lavender awaited.

The two friends hugged warmly, and even with Isabella letting off a bit of a squeal for joy, Lavender, noticed Isabella, seemed a bit reserved, almost cautious.

The two ladies had a sumptuous lunch, and both their favorite dish being the grand deserts for which the emporium was noted.

With a small bit of chocolate cake pasted onto the corner of her mouth Isabella ventured, “You haven’t spoken much of your daily routines with your adopted parents; have you been comfortable with your new last name?”

“It took a bit of adjustment as you no doubt experienced yourself. They are very kind to have taken me in. I feel blessed,” said Lavender, but her body movement and stiff voice suggested a different story.

“Just as I imagined,” lied Isabella in turn. “I knew you were getting along amiably or I suspect I would have found you months ago sitting on Mrs. Goblets doorstep. And if there comes a time when there ever really is a need I would be happy to share my room with you. Mother is very well off and we have a suite that can only be called ‘immense’.”

Isabella noticed all through lunch Lavender’s eyes drooping a fraction as well her head and seemed to be speaking out as if in rehearsal for a role she had been given by a play director none to her liking. “Well,” continued Lavender “my mother is keen on my education and has hired a tutor for me. I really do well in the sciences, but with geography and the arts and crafts of stitching and mending cloth I really have no interest. And yet if my mother and father are correct in affirming, there is really no calling for women of science.”

“Nonsense!” proclaimed Isabella softly pounding the gorgeous woven table cloth with intricate needlework designs of horses and clowns and balancing elephants. “There is a woman’s movement about, surely you are aware dear girl. I can’t in anyway say I am at the forefront but I certainly am a participant. Mother is very active and she delights taking me along to meetings and rallies. Its good to be in the company with people all having the same cause.”

It is really quite exciting! The police are terrible though; they are supposed to protect the people, instead they arrest us. There have been huger fasts in the prisons; some of the women have all but died of starvation and I am sure that there might be one someday with all their intense devotion. But then again it is not very likely. They are force fed

if the fast goes on to long. Its as if they were stable animals. Rubber tubes stuck down their noses while liquid food is poured down the tube where it reaches the stomach. For myself the indignity of this is a real form of death.”

Lavender cringed at the thought of this and to Isabella the look on Lavender’s face made it look as if she herself was mentally relapsing into some grave sort of similar experience.

From Isabella’s perspective the two hour lunch had been not a joyful reunion but an arena of tension. It was to her very obvious that there was something Lavender wished to tell her but in her own reasoning knew she could not; but what? Something wrong? Perhaps terribly wrong.

The two ‘sisters’ parted with a hug, warm wishes, and more hugs and kisses and gave the promise to see each other again soon; perhaps a picnic at the zoo. A visit to the theater? And then with mechanical dexterity both young women boarded their respective handsones and sped in opposite directions.

## CHAPTER 8



Byron Fabian Tutts was a small man with small hands who owned a small gem store with a select, tidy clientele. Mr. Tutts knew little of current day world affairs for his was a microscopic world centering around precious, beautiful gems which were sought after by a serious group of buyers and traders. And within this world there were the infinite, innumerable varieties of gems and their ability to capture and contain infinite measures of light which then, in micro terms, meant Tutts knowledge was quite expansive.

Mr. Tutts father was a gemologist and once Byron Fabian had dispensed with his schooling he stood daily and sometimes into the wee night with his father, who called him by his middle name, learning the precision of gem cutting, polishing and learning the skill of occasionally switching part of a customers jewelry piece and transferring an expensive diamond with one of the lesser grades that were kept under the cutting table in the back room.

Once his father died Byron Fabian took full control of the business, he being only seventeen but in full command of gem craft. At first the clientele dropped in numbers not quite trusting in junior Fabian's abilities but word got round London as to the marvel by which young Byron Fabian had inculcated the craft, and who had also demonstrated his father's polite, gentle manners.

Mr. Tutts now well into his sixties need not look up from his receiving desk as he polished gemstones, brass and silver lamps and other ornaments of his wealthy clients when one person or the other crossed the threshold of his emporium.

A heavy footed person would undoubtedly be a man and his particular voice of greeting would proceed him at his entrance. A fast moving, light foot indicated a woman; the more sure the step, the more confident the woman, one who had frequented Byron Fabian's shop other times and considered herself quite the welcomed guest. There were other tell tale traits of Mr. Tutts clientele but there was a particular shuffle that was undoubtedly that of a first time visitor and the caution even to the turning of the door knob and closing the door. Mr. Tutts understood that this

person, be he man or woman, was the ‘other’ client from the ‘other’ spectrum of society.

And this day with less than a blink of his eye Mr. Byron Fabian Tutts looked up to this new visitor’s face when the said gentleman placed before him a small leather satchel and then opened it to take out its contents to lay on Mr. Tutts table.

Mr. Tutts took the gemstone which lay before him into his hands then looked into his visitors face “I do believe I am holding the Polstar Emerald.”

The man with the reasonably fine gray overcoat, whose left hand showed the signs of once having a wedding ring, the unmistakable white mark of his second finger, his bowler hat pulled over his brow, his stance that of a man at least six foot in height purposely bent to appear not as tall, the ever so slight adjustment in his voice to make it less resonant than a man who easily weighed an approximate one hundred eighty pounds and whom obviously was in no mood to chatter and one very much in a hurried responded, “Yes, it is The Emerald.”

“And today Sir you have graced my humble establishment bringing with you the simple question as to its monetary worth; yes?” Again the visitor made an affirmation.

“Well Sir I must remark in all candor it’s worth is inestimable.” The visitor shifted from one foot to the other and asked “Meaning?”

“Meaning my friend that whatever price you put upon it within reason I can bring you a buyer.” “And you will be taking your percentage.”

“Yes, of course my friend but you will see my part in the transaction is ever so slight. In my world I must keep my reputation so that both seller and buyer believe there has been a satisfactory transaction for all parties.

“I shall need a bit of coaching on a reasonable selling price.” “Rest assured I am ever at your assistance.”

“And how many days or will it be weeks that I could expect a sale?”

“You have only to let me know what price you are willing to part with it for and I could have a trolley full of buyers this very day.”

The visitor stood motionless thinking as Mr. Tutts had seen other clients wrestle in their mind the very same question. His method to fill this void

of time was to simply return back to the work he was engaged in before the stranger from the other side of the counter had come in.

“And your suggestion....?” asked the visitor in a hesitant voice.

“Well,” replied Mr. Tutts with evidence of a smile on his lips which he could not hide....”let me think...”



## CHAPTER 9



The ‘heist’ of a Scotland Yard transport was nothing if not impossible unless you possessed an unusually creative mind. The security upon transferring the Polstar gems was taken as an exercise of second nature. The average number of guards. Two drivers, one for the carriage wagon and one for the backup car. Altogether there were ten officers. Easy as a helping oneself to a portion of Yorkshire pudding that is unless you had something Rancid wanted.

Fancy had meticulously checked the routing map where transport vehicles would travel after leaving the Yard, average time of travel (heavy rain, fog or not) and the underground entrance to access the bank, the hurried unloading by officers as well as bank guards and assorted bank employees.

The transport left the Yard’s gates at exactly nine AM, summoned as it were by Big Ben’s last clang, forward charging almost, as if to battle. Enroute to a series of back streets, the double back over Lyson bridge, and the curious, sinuous wind from Topper Hill down multiple rows of middle class housing and then directly to Times Square and the back, lower gate entrance to Lords bank.

It was the double back which cost the officers their lives. As chance would have it there had been a collision of one Lorie and a truck of wood pilings which were strewn in every direction blocking all but a walking path.

And so sergeant Rend decided upon re doubling back in the direction they had just come where, now disheveled and ruffled in their sure line of success and with the carriage wagon having been separated momentarily from the back up car suffered a volley of machine gun fire from three directions immediately killing the driver and two other officers inside; the third would die later that day in hospital.

For the transport wagon a bomb exploded as it made a slow, lumbering turnround. All passengers were either disintegrated or maimed beyond recognition. Obviously, the safe holding the Polstar emerald was secure against such an explosion and when Rancid’s man Fancy opened the back door to the vehicle the safe simply rolled out onto the pavement.

Fancy could not contain his pride when stopping his car in the secured garage. He jumped sharply out of his seat and pushed open his door and going round to the passenger seat door opened it revealing the metal safe. Rancid said nothing but motioned to Poole to take the safe to the utility table and with little effort he and one other man popped open the lock. The men moved away as Rancid put his hand on the lid and pulled it up to reveal the contents. Securely packed in cardboard and cloth lining, each gem alone in its own privacy, each that is, but the emerald.

Rancid, not believing what he was not seeing, looked again. There were bracelets, diamonds and assorted ring configurations but no emerald. And there was no false bottom or hidden side compartments; his examination had been thorough.

There are things you do not want looking at you straight on: a locomotive moving in your direction. A lion bearing its teeth, a shark with its mouth open and Rancid when he was not satisfied. Fancy understanding the situation became paralyzed with fear.

Rancid reached for Fancy with both his gloved hands and lifted Fancy by the collar so that only the tips of his shoe toes touched the cement. "Where is the emerald Mr. Fancy?" said Rancid in a quiet, stiff voice.

Fancy, so terrified, could only gasp while shaking his head wildly.

In smooth fashion Rancid lessened his grip on Fancy's collar allowing his shoes to settle fully upon the floor.

Rancid turned and looked at Poole angling his head in Fancy's direction. Poole, having pulled a revolver from his coat pocket walked up to Fancy placing the barrel of the gun directly on Fancys forehead and pulled the trigger. Fancys head snapped back as if he were that of a wooden puppet cut free of marionette strings and his dash of vibrant, red hair whipped back for what would be its very last wave goodbye.

As the blood from Mr. Fancy's decapitated body streamed onto the cement floor in all its crimson glory Rancid walked to the middle of the warehouse. Through the ceiling skylight a single stream of light engulfed him in a cone of brightness. Rancid stood without a muscle bent in excess and breathed the breath of a marble statue. Poole and the other accomplices, standing in deep shadows, remained equally still.

Was it an hour past, no, less than a minute, perhaps only a second gone by and then as if a genie resting inside a lamp for several millennium

and, in proxy for Rancid spoke: “The Girl. The Girl,” whispered Rancid.  
“The Girl; She has my emerald.”

## CHAPTER 10



Diary entry in the year of Our Lord 1429, Court County Britain

Dear Diary:

For the moment all is quiet; all is still. The Lord has shown to give my armies victory over the enemy and yet, not without the sacrifice of so many loyal soldiers. We pray then that this horrible battle will be a lesson for those who would cause trouble and bring hatred to those who only want to live simple, productive lives, loving their families and enjoying the fruit of their labors.

And yet, alas! Troubling news from my sister Princess Lavender. She has for whatever illogical reason been taken to the tower, a place she is not free to leave. Those who attend her say she is troubled of spirit. Oh how I am troubled for her!

The plan of action is to rescue her. And this plan I am constructing while I am awake and do sleep. I pray then I shall be as successful with Lavender's release as our victory has shown this day.

And with these words I end this diary of war and tragedy and now hope I am fit for the foreboding future.

With most humble contrition and thanks, Princess Isabella Rose

End/ Book one

# *Book Two*



## CHAPTER 1



The Women's movement was winding down as all that would be accomplished for this century had been secured. And now finding herself in full pose of what she should be doing for her daughter(?) Mrs. Goblet contrived to bring Isabella together with a suitable lifetime mate.

Isabella, despite her promise to Dr. Hemel, appeared more often in public wearing her veil than not. Perhaps she had sealed her own destiny speaking out to Lavender that distant day at Mrs. Flowers, emoting herself to forever being unmarried as her charred countenance would ever prevent her from being attractive to men.

Mrs. Goblet in an unassuming manner brought up the subject of Isabella's future one day as the two of them took tea in the parlor thinking about a profession which would bring her into contact on a daily basis with eligible men. Miss. Tepid still on occasion showed her facial signs and body symbols of disdain towards Isabella but did at least by this time, set Isabella's tea cup and saucer down upon the table closest to her.

"No mother," stated Isabella emphatically at yet another proposal that she enter the legal profession to become a barrister, a position difficult for a woman to achieve but not impossible now that women were accepted, if only begrudgingly, into positions of employment reserved hitherto for men alone.

"Mother," spoke Isabella almost apologetically "my love and interest lie in horticulture you know this. If you would send me to a place of learning please understand my passion is to be among flowers!"

Months progressed into the late summer and no amount of coercing would assail Isabella to even so much as walk into a legal admissions office to see what a pre law curriculum would encompass.

And so, as a tree relinquishes its leaves in the fall, so Mrs. Goblet gave up hope of her daughter becoming a barrister and began inquiring round where she might find tutelage in the fine science of flowers and all things gardening; those things so many years lost since the days of Toad's pristine rows of plants and vegetables, the Pulstar manor and the time of

Isabella playing her fantasy existence in the mythical halls of the Court of Forty.

And as fate delivers opportunities upon its own appointments, one fortuitous day as Mrs. Goblet and Isabella walked into the Hotel Heines and, after inquiring of the front desk attendant, they hurried with other guests to the hotel elevators to be lifted to the grand ballroom for a wedding and reception. But a flash of color caught the attention of Isabella and she almost skidded to a stop in front of a stall of beautiful flowers where a wee man, Mr. Esteme, peered through entangled stems and leaves at her.

“Help you Miss?” inquired Mr. Bloom Esteem.

“Please Isabella,” said her mother turning, having realized she had for the moment lost communion with her daughter.

And as she walked up to fetch her daughter Mrs. Goblet understood at some deep, even magical level that her adopted child was caught in some sort of trance as she had begun communicating with the diminutive Mr. Esteem who looked something like an elf with a large red nose, broad spectacles, ears that stuck out and displayed a broad, kindly smile.

“Evening Madam,” said Mr. Esteem to Mrs. Goblet in his obvious Welsh accent. “Seems your daughter has an interest in my wares.” And in his most effective, sales mode “Now if you were going to the wedding in the Grand I suspect a bunch of flowers would be appreciated by the loving couple.”

“Can we mother?” pleaded Isabella.

“Of course dear,” said her mother wisely. “You pick out your favorite design with the help of...” “Mr. Esteme, Mame,” said the elfish looking man now standing up from his chair and tipping his well worn leather cap in polite accord.

Isabella took her time gathering a lovely assortment from the seasonal flowers, all the while as if a light from another realm was wedging itself into Mrs. Goblet’s consciousness, Mrs. Goblet had tangible evidence of the power of plants over her daughter.

And it was all through the wedding ceremony and into the long, spirited reception Mrs. Goblet formed a story in her mind she proposed would come true.

The flower stand closed long before the reception was over but it would be the very next morning that Mrs. Goblet paid a visit to Mr. Estem, and after an approximate one hour of sharing her idea about him training Isabella and simultaneously interviewing the man, to see if he would be an appropriate mentor, she proposed to him a generous monetary offer.

And thus began Isabella's second education into the art and science of horticulture, a rather hands on approach to be sure, the Hines hotel conveniently located a mere two blocks from their residence and a joyous Mr. Esteem's receiving a suitable amount of money to have an astute protege' whom he would gladly have taught his aged craft for free.

And with anxious endeavor Isabella rose each morning barely eating food enough for what could be termed a decent breakfast and walked with great, impatient strides for the long, twelve hour day, where she would learn and relearn the color and placement and configuration that went into the 'fooling' of the eye as Mr. Estem phrased it, into believing the florid display before the potential customer was worth the asking price and even more if the flowers, vases, and petals conveyed the right emotion intended: a funeral attendance perhaps, a person in hospital recovery; a birthday celebration. "For you see my studious Isabella, we are the priest and priestess of emotion; we are the angels of nature's love and we must respect these our plant friends who give us these banquets of feelings with our placing them on perfect display."

And every day at the stroke of seven o'clock, Mrs. Goblet or Miss Tepid or Lunce would be there at the folding up of Mr. Esteem's display space which was presented in a red wheelbarrow and with hanging trellis and ornamental umbrellas tucked neatly into the right hand alcove of the Hines, to escort Isabella back home, sometimes stopping at Drapers Bakery for evening treats to be eaten after supper and on occasion to bring to Mr. Esteem in the morning, so joyous was he to have a reheated hot cross muffin, or some syrupy treat dripping with melted sugar to consume with his tea.

And within just a very few months one Monday noon, Mr. Esteem in his nasal sounding Welsh accent excused himself that he might walk down to the bank for a deposit, indicating that she, Isabella, would be in control of the cart and all business transactions to take place for her very first time.

Isabella, not expecting Mr. Esteem's absenteeism, did not have time to guard her facial expression for her care and worry about being the one to



work with customers and money alone. Adjusting his cap upon his head as he looked in the small mirror leaning against an umbrella pole and, picking up the small leather satchel holding the days revenue, Mr. Esteem reached over and touched Isabella gently upon the shoulder, “I shant worry about you, you know,” he said with an endearing, fatherly smile before he bounded off.

But it was true, what time she might have worried had she had days to think about what it would be like to work the cart alone, did not realize itself for the moment Mr. Esteem as he faded into the busy day crowd, a woman of formidable stature and obvious wealth demanded that Isabella be quick about designing a gift bouquet for a women’s lunch she was just a little late in attendance to and, wanting to know exactly what this would cost her, the ribbon specifications and, did Isabella have a blue ink pen to write upon the greeting card and, where were the envelopes and, did they only come in cream color?

Fast upon the feet of this harried woman came yet another woman with one child in a buggy and one little boy who embodied the phrase ‘monkey business’ for not only was he climbing the alcove side wall while trying with outstretched arm and hand to touch the top of Mr. Esteem’s umbrella, and when coerced by his mother to come down from the ledge the little boy-monkey proceeded to rummage through the boxes of foliage, those not yet arranged to be put in vases.

And so it would be right up to closing time that Isabella did, as it were, hold down the fort of flowers and beautiful vases when Mr. Esteem with little apology, that he had met several old friends and the quick lunch and beer had somehow turned into many more beers and “Just the same as I see you have done quite well for us,” said Mr. Esteem slurring his letters slightly and seeing the depletion of bouquets and looking in the money box which was full to overflow continued “I feel very sure one day I shall be fading into the background as the true owner of this establishment comes to take her rightful place.” Isabella blushed red in her cheeks and forehead which was something of an unequal display as her dark, scared face showed little variance of skin coloration.

It would be Miss.Tepid who came to pick up Isabella that day the very person Isabella could not share her delight about her first days success as a merchant, but unloaded the entire days events upon her mother at tea time who was sitting closest to the fire built to the full by Lunce and she with a caring, motherly adorning smile, her always rosy cheeks and

more so by the heat, thinking as Isabella spoke with her rapid enthusiasm that yes, perhaps, not a barrister she, instead a child of nature fresh from the flames of horror and the womb of healing, the child she had adopted and now loved as if she had born her own self, perhaps, at last has found a place in this torrential life.

“Months pass, seasons pass and before me yonder fair maiden sits; how doth your garden grow?” came Mr. Bloom Esteem whose voice was ringing his unique creative way of saying ‘good morning’ to Isabella. Mr. Bloom Esteem was finding his leisurely walks to the stall more to his liking trusting his protegee Isabella was full on capable of opening by herself the flower cart and of counting the monies, arranging all the displays, she had proved gifted as every morning she would come up with a variety of different designs.

It was summer now and Isabella for all her personality and grace, and not without her notoriety had something of a growing covey of clients who stopped by to visit and pick up for themselves specially designed bouquets, sometime consisting of only one flower and a ribbon, an idea invented by Isabella herself, and the compliment that upon their birthdays the clients received their ribboned flower for free.

“Tis the poet in me, it’s my tribe the Welsh” said Mr. Esteem explaining his quips and witticisms which he interspersed throughout the day. “We’ll have ye there someday Isabella; Wales is the land of open minds and giving hearts. Find a good man for yourself there fair lady; strong, hardworking: someone to start a family with.”

With this Isabella blushed furious red. As she composed herself she said in a hushed dreary voice “No man would ever want me.”

“Blast!” said Mr. Esteem with the punctuation of a horse kicking its holding pen. “The’d be lined up with the sincerest offers the minute you stepped from the train and onto the boarding deck.”

“I think you flatter me Mr. Esteem; besides, I do not speak a word of your native language.” “You can say ‘I do’ that’s language enough,” roared Esteem laughing at his own cleverness and wit. And the fine, fair lady unable to help herself laughed deeply, more from the depth of pain and sorrow than mirth.

Isabella had not grown thus far not to be carrying an impressive backpack as it were of experiences. There were the multiple tragedies of her life such as decapitated bunnies, the loss of her Princess Court, the death of

her two lying parents for better or worse and, her beloved Dinah now lost it seemed certain forever; her two year recovery in the hospital with all the excruciating skin grafts. Then, the several trying years living in Miss. Flowers girls home, topped off by the encounter with Lavenders scars (her own scars both mental and physical hardly healed). Lavender's abandonment of their immediate kinship for the comfort of being adopted seemed to leave Isabella parentless and then sisterless. And now the checkered topsy turvy existence of being once again 'sort of being a family member' adopted this time on tentative terms by the widow Mrs. Goblet and, her tag along employees. All this notwithstanding and, to have all her human sensitivities honed to their highest level of comprehension and understanding, Isabella somehow understood that the person approaching her stall was someone walking unevenly, perhaps even hesitantly and was predestined to become pivotal in her life.

"I say," said the tall, nattily dressed creation who came to a stand in front of the flower cart, "my name is Freddie and I must say I am quite honored to meet London's Notorious Child!"

"I," said Isabella, hardly looking up from her task at hand "I own nothing of what you say, Sir. My name is Isabella Rose and if I may show you a lovely bouquet, for a gentleman named Freddie with as fine features as yours, your female companion would only have an equality in features as yours and deserving the complement of mirrored beauty in the pedals and bloom of my flowery creations."

"Notorious not, as you say," bleated Freddie. "Shall we say rather, a person with colorful wit and even savage charms."

"Perhaps it is only a show for the purpose of marketing, a well tried delivery taught me by the owner of this modest emporium, Mr. Bloom Esteem who shall be by any moment now...Oh my, I do hope I have a fine sale receipt to show him, I do wish to prove my worth."

As the hotel lobby was rather quiet at this midday, the gentleman Freddie did take his time looking over the display of plants and bouquets while Isabella sized up Freddie's missing left arm, and club foot believing him to be a casualty of the Boer war; it was not an uncommon identity of men these days with missing limbs and eyes who walked politely in gentele clothing and carried polite demeanors but were merely shells of what their mothers and fathers had raised and then forced to sit powerless as

they watched these boys walk jauntily off to battle as if they were going to participate in a rugby game.

“This bouquet is quite a delight,” said Freddie “one of your designs or that of Mr. ..?” “Mine, Sir? I would like to think I possessed Mr. Eteem’s skills; he is Welsh by birth and he

has such an intuitive understanding and possesses a magical gift of talking with plants.”

“But I would like to purchase one of your creations. This is one?” he said pointing to a mixture of poseys and translucent leaved roses.

“Fine selection again, Sir Freddie, but once again not one of mine. All the same I would wish you to purchase it, for if I were a lady in waiting I should be honored to see it given me.”

“Well, then I shall make perfect on your wish,” said Freddie in a whimsical tone. “But this would not be the woman you would suppose. Indeed a fine woman; my sister, she is having me to supper. It is she who has wealth enough to live in this neighborhood.”

“Then I see you to be a caring brother.”

“You may compliment me so, and yet I do not feel myself so good as perhaps you might say, mostly just simple awareness and obedience to the care of polite civility. On the whole it is a difficult task to spend time with her.”

“Then you two do not quite get along well?” offered Isabella.

“Actually we do on so many levels. It is just that she is fascinated with the occult; she almost speaks of nothing else.”

“The occult!” called out Isabella with a confused, objectionable sound. “Are you saying she is a conjuror of spirits?”

“Well it is really not that severe,” said Freddie with a slight chuckle. “She holds seances in her apartment. I assure you she is not a witch nor does she conjure demons.”

Isabella looked on skeptically while slightly shaking her head.

“Have you been to a seance Isabella?” asked Freddie.

“I haven’t. But Mother has. Mother says they are not for me.”

“I see your mother has great concern for your safety. But there is nothing to worry for. I speak the truth.”

“Well I shan't be going to your sister's cultgatherings or anyone else's and this is my truthfor you.”

“And this is your reward for your efforts in polite civility, Sir Freddie,” said Isabella handing Freddie the flowers.

“I suppose it is. Honoring the obsessed can have its benefits.”

After paying for the gain and the intricate, hand sewn greeting card which was made of crepe and lace and decorated with small buttons, Isabella, finding a strange attraction to this war veteran (presumed) inquired innocently “And do you live near east end?” to which Freddie faintly smiled.

“Actually, I live near the west end...not very enchanting, you see. “ I”, and here Freddie stammered a trifle “I am rather incapacitated,” nodding his head to what was once his left arm which looked to be severed right at the elbow. “I live on a pension. The war and all. And yet I have begun on the great adventure of being a purveyor of bonds. I seem to have a knack for sales. And my sister. I allow her to help with the month to months, but only in a pinch.” To which Isabella responded with a firm, accepting smile and a slight nod of the head.

“Well, I shall be off,” said Freddie as he clutched the flower arrangement to his chest, having inserted the greeting card in his vest.

“It was nice to meet you Sir Freddie. You have given me worth to brag to my employer for which I am grateful.”

Freddie hesitated momentarily before walking away. “Perhaps you will be here the next time I need a gift.”

“Or Mr. Esteem,” returned Isabella, perhaps too sharply, she pondered later.

“Right,” said Freddie turning abruptly on his club foot and hobbled off.

Within the hour Mr. Esteem walked back into the hotel lobby his movement showing the effect of one-drink-to-many, thus swaying a little but not so noticable where he need explain himself to an officer of law.

He was feeling quite grand in the resolve he would now relate to Isabella, that being earlier in the day he had reserved passage on the ferry to Wales

and then catching the Dwarf train he would visit his home village in Tuppenhappenstance while leaving Isabella to her own devices running the stall for which he felt she had proven herself altogether competent and willing.

Mr. Esteem when first approaching the cart from the side did not at first see Isabella and walking closer he peered over the wagon and saw her down on her knees copying with twine and chopped branches the strange arrangement of interwoven twigs and strange inscription she had received while convalescing in the hospital.

Isabella looked up and greeted Mr. Esteem with a wan smile. She then lifted up with her hand both arrangements and showed them to Mr. Esteem. "I'm attempting to copy this one. Someone left it for me while I was bed ridden in the hospital; strange isn't it, they, whoever it was, left no note identifying themselves and the nurses had not a clue either?"

Mr. Esteem came round the wagon, tipping one of the vases with his coattail which would have fallen to breakage had he not been able to catch it first and placed it back into a stable position. Mr. Esteem was wild eyed beyond his level of intoxication and, reaching for the wreath-like configurations said to Isabella almost breathlessly "May I?" to which Isabella relinquished her hold on them. Mr. Esteem took the strange ornament and carefully turned it many times in his hands without uttering a word. He was no longer feeling 'grand' in the moment and, any alcoholic tipsiness he had felt left him.

"And you say, there was no notation by a person or persons who left this in your hospital room? And none of the orderlies...?" To which Isabella again merely nodded her head seeing in Mr. Esteem's face the same unbalanced curiosity as she had originally felt in that there was something mysterious, even a bit magical about this woven arrangement which Inspector Dodgson had so indepthly questioned her about.

Mr. Esteem, having held the wreaths for upwards of two minutes, looking at the curious bent, interwoven stems and portions of sticks as if he were reading a mournful love poem meant for eyes other than his, gave them back to Isabella without conclusive words.

Sitting on one of the stalls two chairs, his chair, the one with the pillow seat that puffed out cotton tufts each time he placed his bottom down, forgot about telling Isabella his plans to travel and simply stared into dead space.

Dear Diary

A most handsome prince came unannounced as I was trimming roses in the garden this day. He, obviously being wounded, the battles he had engaged had taken the lower part of his left arm and the hand with it, and he limped noticeably; They say the battle field medical tents can be the most ugly location on the planet. Oh, the screams of those young men, some mere children, having their limbs sawed off so that perhaps they will live on.

Shy was he, this prince of a nearby neighborhood, even with his impertinence demonstrating this slight vulgarity by arriving without an invitation; but it was his handsomeness which somehow did compensate for the misdeed, and the underlying trickery of his tongue.

If I am not mistaken I think I shall be seeing this prince again. .

In the year of our lord King Edward 1429

## CHAPTER 2



Isabella awoke from her sleep and her imaginative dreams of bunnies, a queen in the form of a walrus, strange dreams and, of the special notation in her morning memory, she would have a visitor this day and that would be Lavender.

“My, you have done well for yourself,” said Lavender almost in a tone of subtle mockery. “Join the club then if you please,” retorted Isabella as she removed her friends coat and hat and Lavender her gloves, and Isabella placing all the articles in the entrance closet pretending she had not understood the intended, rather nasty affront.

Isabella led Lavender into the living room of daunting chandeliers and lush carpets which felt to Lavender they were walking over a misty pond in the everglades of Louisiana (not, of course that she had ever done so herself).

It was Lavender who had rung up and set the meeting of the two (perhaps no longer) ‘sisters’?

Many months had passed since they had spoken and for certain there was a differing air between them.

Mrs. Goblet and Miss Tepid were shopping, and Lunce was somewhere polishing silver or asleep in his room, which left the two young women staring at each other once Isabella had poured the tea and served Lavender a small plate of cookies and she, Isabella, took the seat opposite her guest.

Lavender took several sips of tea while she continued looking round as if she were surveying the room for a small heist.

“Do you mind?” asked Lavender as she pulled an elongated cigar from inside her maroon vest and lighting it with a stiff wooden match which she struck hard upon the heel of her fine leather boot “it helps me focus.”

Isabella noticed again as she had at the restaurant when last they were together, and now considered Lavender’s countenance and overall demeanor to be a natural adjustment into adulthood. But this day Lavender’s countenance was something altogether different again and,



frankly, a very uncomfortable change indeed. Lavender looked hurried, no, Lavender looked distracted; no, troubled.

A wall of smoke rose between the two ladies and there was a steril silence in the room save for the dull drone of the bustling city out of the windows and down to the street below. Besides puffing her cigar and tapping the ashes upon the cookie plate and on the cookies themselves, Lavender picked at her dress and the covering upon her seat both which were of fine quality as well.

Isabella broke the silence: “Yes, I have done well..., yourself as very well. Can’t say I don’t admire your boots. Mrs. Goblet is extravagant in some things such as furnishings, things she can show off I guess; practical things she tends to frugality,” and to illustrate her point for wearing conservative clothing, Isabella pointed to her rather coarse cloth shoe and then reached over to touch Lavender’s fine boot as if they were young girls again and could have that sort of ‘fun’ play between themselves. Lavender considered kicking Isabella’s girlish ‘reminisce’ back with a sure force, but allowed this childlike interplay as to ease her friend to familiarity for what she had come to tell her.

“So you are in the flower business,” stated Lavender with a even tone. “And Mrs. Goblet is your mother and you are well housed and fed and have not a care in the world.”

Isabella without her own knowing what her own body language was conveying and, in particular her never ever poker-face messaging, tilted her head from one side to the other as if one of her neck vertebrae disks had slipped.

“Look, dear friend,” said Lavender while spewing out another funnel of smoke and then again tapping her cigar ashes. “Why not free yourself? Why not be free of all this...” and straining hard to come up with the adequate phrase “this, entrapment...this cage you are in like some trapped animal. You are not an animal Isabella. More than anyone other than yourself I know how you feel about the way you look; your accident. But you are famous my friend and surely any ounce of fame a person attains is not given without price.”

Isabella guffawed. “What in the King’s land are you trying to say?”

Lavender, even with the apparent hard casing she had grown around her, struggled to sit up a little bit more straight in her chair before making her

pitch. “What I am saying or rather propose is that you could be making a so much more money doing what I do than wrapping flowers.

And you wouldn’t have to rely upon Mrs. Gobble for your livelihood. Freedom is what I am talking about my good girl, haven’t you been through enough? Haven’t you earned the right for making a grand life for yourself? You could become a grand dame in society instead of the quaint little flower girl tucked away in some corner of a hotel lobby. You have become something of an embarrassing novelty don’t you see? “Oh, look!”, the little Flower Girl of London. London’s own notorious ‘Child’”.

Isabella was hurt as well as confused. But of course, mostly hurt. Perhaps her only real friend ever, the one who had been with her during her transitional phase, the one she was able to tell about her experiences in the Tumblers Manor; more in depth than she could with Mrs. Sullivan. Actually, it was Lavender whom she would ask what she had shared with Mrs. Sullivan and if it had any real significance for her healing. And there Lavender would sit on the bed with Isabella listening, not judging, only asking the most insightful questions while in some way Isabella would figure for herself what she was trying herself to understand.

“So Lavender, is this what you are ‘a grand dame of the British aristocracy?’” said Isabella in an harsh attack of which she had not wanted to say.

Now it was Lavender’s turn to guaff, or was it cough? “In a sense I suppose you could say I am a grand dame. Or more precisely, the Grand Dame of Gossip. Knowing multiple persons privacies is literally quite grand!” said Lavender gleefully and laughed while her face modulated a sneer.

Isabella and Lavender stared at each other moments more while Lavender puffed another plume of grey. “So,” said Isabella finding herself in an angry mood. “Will you tell me what you are meaning to tell me altogether?”

“What I am saying Isabella, my friend Isabella, you could make fabulous money being a lady of the night.”

At first Isabella did not think she heard Lavender properly.

“Lady of the night, my dear. An escort for gentlemen with favorable taste. Even you my dear; ‘In the dark it is all good’, as the saying goes.

Perhaps we need a new title for you; what about ‘London’s Notorious Woman Confidant,’. Nothing was moving in Lavender’s person ; she was in business mode, bargaining mode, and this was a cool, calculating mode, as she had been trained by her adoptive parents in the delicacies of barter: “Your money Sir for...”

It was Lavender’s beauty. It had always been her beauty. And now it was also the clothes; that extravagant watch on her left wrist, the extravagant coif, the sure, calm and directness of her proposition. Her parents’ had crafted Lavender a professional.

Isabella literally could not answer. Stunned, or call it electrified as if caught in an unkind double current of both incredulity and fear.

“I notice you are no longer looking at my boots. Is there something I need explain? Look sister,” said Lavender leaning over and looking directly into the most famous, fabulous eyes in all Britain. “ It is only a matter of business. You are selling something and someone is paying you for your time. Fine hotel rooms. Fine dinners. The theater. The better you service your gentleman callers and the more elusive you become, the more they pay. You have a fine teacher with me. I had to learn. I realize any apprehension you may be feeling. It is, I know a bit ugly sounding of course to earn your wages this way. Confusing. Dirty. You feel as you will be compromising your soul, but to whom ...the devil? There is no devil Isabella. Indeed if there is, you have already met him and look what he has done to you. You would have been one of His slaves had it not been for your doctors and nurses. Your scars are nothing in the world of ‘ladies of the night’. Let me repeat again, ‘everything is good in the dark’ my dear. You can rest knowing all the “gentlemen” you will be escorting are known in society as faithfully married. My mother and father are in care of the introduction to these ‘fine, upstanding gentlemen’ who crawl to you like scarred, wounded animals wanting a few moments of mothering and flattering. You can do that. You can earn your own way in life Isabella my sister and you can afford to have your own lodgings, go when and where you want; you can even afford a pair of fine boots. Multiple fine boots; and dresses, hats. Everything. And yes, you can look at me like that; stare at me as if this conversation was not happening. And to draw the circle to a fine close: What of my mother and father, my parent “adopters? In truth they really just day to day business partners. Not married at all.”

Lavender left off speaking while, shaking her long, beautiful brunette hair, as she adjusted her collar, took another drag from her cigar and let out one more long, thin, white silent stream of tobacco. .

Isabella, still trying not to believe what she had heard from her friend Lavender, while simultaneously attempting to position all of her words into an acceptable context, nervously rustled the pleats of her skirt and looked to the windows as if she were a bird trying for escape.

Lavender snubbed out her cigar and stood from her seat. She then took Isabella up by the hand and walked to her to the entrance door and while putting on her coat and gloves also moved her hand up and stroke Isabella's cheek with the fine leather glove against Isabella's rough cheek. "My sweet sister," said Lavender with great affection and then placed her lips on Isabella's holding them there as she stared deeply into the fabulous emerald green pools, both young women somehow understanding they would never see one another again.

Isabella went to the window and watched as Lavender boarded her handsome. The mechanical carriage of man's design sped away at an impressive speed and blended rapidly into the bustle of London's traffic.

Unnerved, stunned and even sickeningly terrified, Isabella walked around the apartment in a daze of psychological hurt she had not experienced before. She felt an inexplicable grief for her friend that pushed her mind into the depths of fright. The remainder of the afternoon and until the time Mrs. Goblet and Miss. Tepid came from shopping and through dinner and until Isabella could excuse herself early to her room did she seek physical solace for her combative mind.

Isabella removed her clothing as the tub was filling with water and turned the lamp light low. There was a full length mirror by the dressing cabinet and there, for the very first time did Isabella look at her body with no clothing on. And even with the light dim, and with the wonder at having a perfectly structured body, tall, lean, a finely chiseled head and facial structure, it was the skin that was not right. True, the doctors had performed miracles in grafting her skin and implanting donated Londoner's hair for her eyebrows and head, but the fact was, it was not natural, it was not really hers. What she saw was ugly. Isabella sucked in her breath and moved close enough to the reflective glass to reach out and touch this Notorious Child. No, no man would want her; no man would want her in the bright or dim of day. No man would want her even in the dark.

Dear Diary in the year of our Lord and King Edward:

Just when all was at quiet rest, word has come to me that one, Lady Lavender, princess of the house of Theral Knights has been kidnapped and enslaved and forced to perform unspeakable acts in the most gastly of situations. It is I Princess Isabella, even to the loss of all my kingdom and perhaps my life as well, that I do pledge to lead the rescue for this harmless sister princess. In God's name, Amen

Isabella's steed was an enormous size. Duke Toffler she had named him for a reason she could not recall.

The drums of war and battle were beating and it was Princess Isabella's armies that were creating this foul, menacing noise. And yonder lay the castle that she and her troops were to assault with its imposing ramparts and towers. Isabella had given full command of her armies movement to her most trusted captain and he with his extended index finger pointed to his troops positions as they were delineated upon crude parchment (the information of perchance inadequate logistics) had been hastily drawn the situation of urgency dictating the terms of rescue.

Yes, it was the long, hot, too warm bath where upon Isabella, Princess Isabella composed and verbally articulated her battle strategies as her thoughts swirled round with the bubble bath spheres rising up to the ceiling and with no outside disturbances burst their brief, clear-soapy existence with fragile 'pops!'. How sad you know, their brief existence, it was as if they had never lived at all. But then we are talking about bubbles whose purpose could not be put upon a comparative level with a kidnapped sister.

And so to the task at hand, Lavender. "What had happened my sister?" challenged Isabella of her inner strenghts? Already she had experienced torture. Burned with an iron tool by her very own father. And now what, a street prostitute; vile whore of the evening? Street walker. But not she; "No, Lavender is a princess like unto myself. What enslavement and the twisting of her mind must have occurred? Did her new partner/parents burn Lavender with metal rods as well? I love thee my sister and I would put these people to the sword of decapitation could I get to them."

And while Isabella rambled on with her curious words, Mrs. Goblet's shadow moved round the walls of Isabella's bed room as she turned down the wall lamps to a contemplative orange hue. She and Miss Tepid had used all their combined strengths to pull Isabella from the tub, dried

her and placed her between cool sheets putting cold pressed upon her forehead as Lunce sought out Doctor Hemel. Doctor Hemel had given poor Isabella a sedative and assured Mrs. Goblet it would not interfere with her child's other medications, those which enhanced her blood flow and those promised to repair cell structure.

"Sleep Isabella," said her mother with tears of fatigue. "Sleep my dear, your fever will soon pass. Sleep my precious child, sleep."

### CHAPTER 3



“We are luxuriant my love, if there is such a word as this. And we are in love. And we are rich,” said former Inspector Dodgson as he lie in bed with Rita, the two overlooking the Davishian bay and beach Portsmouth, England.

Actually Rick Dodgson was not officially “former” his job as there had been no paper signing or turning in of badge. And the last he had seen of any of his fellow officers who came to support him at his beloved wives funeral two months earlier. She slipped so fast and became eternal while she slept one night, turning, moaning breathing sporadically. It had come as a painful blessing.

Captain Ralston, understanding about loss of a partner, granted Dodgson as much time as he wanted free of duties. And this had been just enough time for the fragile Mr. Tutts to confirm a buyer for the Polstar Emerald, when once he had let leak through his nefarious channels, there had come a buyers frenzie of interest, each party bidding up the price until Tutts thought better to be rid of the item; someone may have been to aggressive and he may have found himself dead once all the clamour had ceased.

Of course Tutts had been near the top of the list when it came to a missing gem and of the persons most likely to have knowledge about it. And as usual when questioned by the Yard, poor little Mr. Tutts had not a sliver information about the gems whereabouts and, was wonderfully relieved to know that it really was once in the beloved Mr. Tumblers possession and was hopefully safe now in a ‘good home’. “How incredible!” he gasped before the questioning officers, they both looking at each other, rolling their eyes as Mr. Tutts went about his predictable, vaudevillian routine.

Indeed, Mr. Tutts was planning a vacation for himself and his wife of many years. It was a blustery day in Jolly Ol’ England and Mr. Tutts half skipped his way home and to his walk up apartment he shared with his willowy wife Mabel, a rather introvertive spirited woman, who had not much of life’s experiences but was nonetheless content to tend to the plants she placed each morning on the balcony porch hoping they would breathe in what little light the grey fog of her city would allow. And there to greet Mr. Tutts on the landing step, curled up in her favorite pose, the

little female kitten of the neighborhood no one had bothered to name but all the neighbors in the connecting flats cared for with bits of food and generous bowls of milk. "Hello my little friend," said Mr. Tutts as he placed his hand on the kitten's head and petted it softly.

"Land of the skyscrapers, fabulous museums, Broadway shows, parkways a plenty!" the very words he used to express and entice Mabel who worried about the ocean voyage to America a voyage with the potential to capsize in rough storms and being eaten by sharks and, how she feared going up to great heights; "What if the elevator got stuck?" she asked in a trembling whimper. "It would just be our bad luck."

"Tutt, tutt," replied Mr. Tutts in the same soothing, comforting voice he had cuddled his Beloved from the first time they had met through mutual friends. "You know you can always trust me, my Sweet," he said kissing her lightly on the forehead and then the lips.

## PART II

Rick and Rita would only spend the one morning walking the beach, the steamer would leave mid day and they planned to board as early as they could so that they could hide in their room until the boat left the dock. They registered as Mr. and Mrs. Benchin, recently married, Rita showing off her fine ring of small diamonds as they walked arm and arm, the day not terribly cold, and yet sufficiently foggy, the couple thought themselves to be alone, it was a perfect time to let their thoughts fly free. But once they went round the rock formation that jutted out almost to the incoming tide mark left in the sand, they wandered into a tight little cove and there they encountered Mr. Poole.

Dodgson's first thought was that he had no weapon. His second thought was that he had to explain: "I don't have it. I fenced it...how else could we afford a this?"

"And whom did you use?" required Poole who was holding a revolver towards Dodgson's mid section.

Here Dodgson hesitated. All the thoughts of what type of violence could happen here; looking at Poole's drawn pistol he could think of only two directions the story would go. Poole displayed his impatience by swinging the gun barrel directly at Rita's head.

"I haven't the foggiest; there was an intermediary, one whose name..." said Dodgson defeatedly.



The churning of the ocean waters was just loud enough and they were in the cove far enough that two shots from Poole's pistol were hardly sound enough to raise concern from any other human that may be around.

### PART III

It was not as if Isabella was looking out for Freddie, she told herself as she bound together bouquets and greeted each customer with a gleeful smile; some days beneath her veil, some days with it slightly pulled back, one of the corners being tucked under her bandanna.

But it did eventually happen that Freddie, as it were popped from the shuffling crowd and was standing directly in front Isabella and her cart as she, blushed not having that second of time to prepare not show her overt joy. "I say," said Freddie in his jovial voice, his body lopsided only by fractions in deference to his wound. "I have brought money in the event you thought I might be a vagabond intent on harassing you."

"Well Sir, if ever I saw a vagabond in such fine clothing I should ever remember. And again, your name sir, Freddie I think you gave me the last time I met thee or, do vagabonds in fine clothing have the cleverness of mind to change their names as well?"

"I quite think Isabella, I could never tire of your wit. You must have had a dashing career in theater, and, if you have put your skills off until you think the time would be far more suited, I tell you 'cease the day' my friend your thousands await your curtain call."

Both Isabella Rose and Freddie laughed gently at the making of their own merriment. "Perhaps Sir, we should play a opposite one another," said Isabella smartly while placing the

corner of her veil up under her headband, showing most all her face, just one eyebrow covered and a section of her forehead.

Freddie did not so much as miss a portion of his breath. Charred skin was nothing he had not witnessed countless times on the battlefield. "Yes, I do agree we should play opposite let us say, for lunch, The Trellis. Tomorrow. Are you free?"

The question would have been more perfectly put, "Are you free of spirit?" Isabella blushed and hoped it was not too obvious that her bottom lip was trembling.

"Ah yes," said Freddie "the contemplative silence. Never make a decision without attempting to see the far reaching consequences.

Tomorrow is a distance; twenty four hours. I could ring you at 11:40. Would that give you enough time? And your guardian, Mrs. Goblet, she sounds like a fine lady. I would be honored.”

And so the date had been accepted and arrangements had been made. Eleven forty, Isabella’s and Mrs. Goblet’s flat. Freddie would be there and, of course, he would be with flowers and candy.

Mrs. Tepid opened the door to Mrs. Goblet’s apartment with the motion of someone who expected the person waiting on the porch carried a contagious disease. “I say,” said Freddie “My name is Freddie Lace, I am here to escort Mrs. Goblet and Miss. Isabella for lunch.”

Mrs. Tepid looked up at Freddie with a scornful eye. And with nary a word, pulled back the door to allow Freddie entrance placing his fine coat, bowler and walking cane with silver handle on the parlor bench.. Both Mrs. Goblet and Isabella awaited Freddie as he was led into the drawing room. Mrs. Goblet immediately stood and strode forward with outreached hand. “My pleasure Mr. Lace and welcome to our home,” said Mrs. Goblet with an affectionate tone. “And my great joy,” exclaimed Freddie in a grand if somewhat exaggerated manner. Freddie then walked over to Isabella and shook her hand he, also placing the flowers and small box of candy he was carrying under his left, truncated arm on the coffee table, while looking to Mrs. Goblet and saying “Is this good?” and she in return, nodding her head simultaneously thinking, and not necessarily in a negative vein: “charmer”.

After pleasantries were exchanged ( Mrs. Tepid offering Freddie the temptations of tea and treats, and he declining) found him imploring in false bravado that she, Mrs. Goblet, accompany himself and Isabela for lunch (“I’ve made reservations for three; it has all been settled!”) and Mrs. Goblet shaking her head several times with a pleasant, demure look on her face. “Nonsense, I will just be underfoot. You are two adults, I am sure you can find so many things to engage about.” There were more pleasantries and bravado and “Oh, just a little something.” said Freddie in reference to the candy and flowers.

And within the click of a light igniting, Isabella found herself walking along the busy London sidewalks with a gentleman whom of course walked on the side of the busy traffic.

They clapped along to the timing of Freddie’s walking stick and they made quite a pair, turning a few heads as their interchange of

conversation and laughter made for a delightful site, the city's residents trotting and shoving off to go shopping or to their places of work. Freddie displaying a bit of forwardness, thought Isabella, as they crossed the street with all its rushing of traffic and the potential of injury or death, having taken her by the arm (she feeling the hard wood of the walking stick) and not letting it go until they reached the sidewalk on the other side.

The Trellis was crowded when Isabella and Freddie came in from the street blinking away the sunlight which had forced itself thru the fog and was bright, even stinging to the eye. The host, Blanche Frown a sometimes friend, showed Freddie and Isabella to a table set for two, not three; Freddie quite certain Mrs. Goblet would have refused to attend the lunch, and if she had, it would have embarrassed her to see that in the end, she was not really wanted.

Their server, attentive with all the necessary politeness of her job, left the couple with advice about her choice for the specials of the day.

Freddie looked around his menu to the veiled young woman across from him. "What do you think?" he asked.

"I don't really know," answered Isabella "there are so many items." "No, I mean about the decour. Do you find I have made good choice?"

"Yes," responded Isabella "it's pretty. I bet you could order a beautiful bouquet of flowers without any coaching."

"It is very possible you would be correct," he said and they both smiled with mirth. "And may I offer, I find you more attractive than any other women in the restaurant."

"So, you have been looking at the other women; should I be offended?" asked Isabella coquettishly.

"No you should feel proud."

"I am proud to be sure, I said 'yes to the lunch invitation ' to the most handsome man here."

The food and service at The Trellis was, as always, very fine. With the quiet moments in between conversation or chewing their food, Isabella began to wondered how Freddie could afford such a venue as this and also about his fine clothing but reasoned he must have an other source of

income than simply his pension; possibly someone other than his sister whom he said he only tapped when times were tight.

And through the course of the meal and conversation Isabella learned that Freddie's profession was bonds, that he had achieved his education at Oxford where he graduated with honors. He was an accomplished archer, that is until he lost his arm and, he had run on the varsity track team. His dorm room was never not flooded with chums which was enough to say he was popular, first for his winning personality, which was complemented with his great looks, his physical build and athletic abilities.

Freddie insisted they have dessert, and when Isabella exclaimed that the portion delivered was far too large for her to eat in one sitting Freddie came to the rescue: "No worries Isabella, I promise you your chocolate cake will not go to waste; I have an extra pocket inside my vest where I put such things."

"Freddie, I think you are partially crazy."

"It is a wonder I am not after all I have seen and experienced," he said wistfully turning his head down to the plate.

"I am sorry Freddie, it must have been so horrible," said Isabella touching Freddie lightly on the cuff of his jacket. I often read about the war; they always coupled the stories listing the casualty counts; all I could do was pray; I felt myself very feeble.

"Yes," said Freddie in a bewildering tone. "And they tell us it was for a good cause..." Freddie's voice trailed off as he looked from their table out to the green of the patio garden. "Shall we?" asked Freddie once he had paid the tab and thanked the waiter wishing her a wonderful remainder of the day, and taking Isabella's arm directed her to the garden with its

beckoning, winding paths, overhanging wisteria and occasional bird song from some overhead branch somewhere not in sight.

The couple strolled in silence, digesting their food and enjoying the relative quiet compared with the clanging of dishes and the cacophony of conversations in the cafe. "May I ask you a personal question, Freddie?" said Isabella sheepishly.

"So my adventures at Oxford were not story enough, I see." "No Freddie, what I mean is..."

“Perhaps you are enquiring about my wounds? In particular my arm; you are the first to ask.” “I am sorry I really didn’t....”

“Intrude. No I don’t see it as an intrusion. I see it more a comparison to what you yourself have suffered. Alright then, I will make you a deal. I will tell all if you in return tell me how you have retained such grace and beauty through your trevails, Miss Notorious Child.”

Freddie and Isabella scuffed along the gravel path as Freddie expanded upon the situation he and his fellow soldiers found themselves in, the reality of being in the heat of a battle, the terror and then the moment he had been hit, apparently by a cannonball. “It is as if it did not really happen. There was so much going on around me. Gunshots, explosions, screaming, blinding smoke; when I was struck down it was as if it was happening to someone else. It was like watching one of my fellow soldiers take the hit. I almost didn’t feel the blow; my body went into shock according to the surgeon the next day I woke up in sick bay. No lower arm; a shattered foot. But I was alive. All I could think of is “What would my mother think?....Can you believe it?” said Freddie laughingly. “I was more concerned that my mother would be angry with me for getting into such a situation.”

The following day as Isabella arrived for work Mr. Esteem looked up from the business of his early morning and saw that Isabella was walking as if on a cloud. And surrounding this billowy, light hearted step the sun of the morning shone round about her encasing her as if in an angelic coat.

Once Isabella had settled in among her task Mr. Esteem could not help but inquire in the round bout way he always engaged her when approaching a personal question or comment. “You seem to be more lighthearted than normal Miss. Isabella. Something coming on with you....tis’ your birthday perchance?”

Isabella only gave Mr. Esteem a side glance while continuing to work on the multiple bunches before her.

“It would not happen that you enjoyed your lunch date now, could it be?” he said with a wide grin.

“Perhaps,” said Isabella coyishly.

“Ah, but of course,” said Mr. Esteem and then made no more of it. (“Youthful love for our poor Isabella,” thought he. “Well, let us hope the

feeling is mutual. I would have bet against anything like this happening,” he had to admit to himself.)

Several months will pass in which Isabella and Freddie met casually for coffee, Brindy’s Corner was just one block up from Isabella’s stall and we will come to find one Saturday evening that Isabella is hardly able to contain her enthusiasm.

“Set still,” said Mrs. Goblet feigning a harsh crossness as she brushed Isabelas hair and set in ribbons. In reality she could not believe Freddie was interested in her daughter enough to invite her to the theater this night; and dinner too!

The cab arrived at half past seven (Freddie was always punctual, even before his military service where he was ordered about like a dog on a leash, he had an inert knowledge of being at a ‘said’ location a few minutes before the agreed upon time).

“My Isabella,” said Freddie in a tone that Mrs. Goblet knew not to be spoken falsely “I wonder at your beauty.”

Isabella had never known such complimentary attention and instead of blushing as she always seemed to do despite her best efforts not to, simply smiled wryly and even curtsied a bit and saying “thank you,” and returned with the polite remark that he, Freddie as well, was looking quite fashionable, as indeed he was.

“Shall we be off then?” asked Freddie of his evenings date and Isabella took up her wrap and they, upon being given leave by Mrs. Goblet, Freddie took Isabella by the arm saying to Mrs. Goblet, “This Princess shall be safe with me and I shall bring her home at the appointed hour, never fear.”

Mrs. Goblet followed her daughter and her escort to the front door and watched the couple descend down the portico staircase and pop gracefully into the open carriage. With Miss. Tepid at her side looking disdainfully at the couples union, Mrs. Goblet not believing the good fortune Isabella had been bequeathed meeting such a fine, nonjudgmental man, watched as the cab sped off and, then shutting the door put her sleeve to her eyes as tears welled and Miss Tepid looking on with a “tisket” for a farewell.

The dinner at the Royal as always was wonderfully prepared and all that made for a fine atmosphere enhancing for Isabella and Freddie the ease

about their ability to communicate and quip as they intertwined their budding friendship which began an invisible merging into the direction of romance.

Surprisingly, both Isabella and Freddie impressed their own selves with their ability to engage at such a high level of give and take when touching on subjects of their pasts and dreams and, plans for their separate or, possible mutual future. It did not even seem to Isabella strange that she felt so unquestionably comfortable talking with a man with the ease of her having had intimate relations with men before when of course there had not been even a single one. But unbeknownst to Isabella this was not the case for Freddie, whom in the evaluation of Mrs. Goblet was indeed a ‘charmer’’, and before being called to serve his country on the stage of killing or being killed, he had enjoyed numerous affairs of the heart and body.

After dinner Freddie again held Isabella by the arm as they followed the wonderfully lit walkway that led from the Royal down along the rivers embankment and as the lamplights twinkled in the night it seemed the most romantic of all paths. Isabella took the freedom to rest her head on Freddie's shoulder and while neither said a word there was a tangible communication between them. At one point Freddie halted their procession and turned to Isabella full face, lifting up her veil and began to kiss her lightly upon the lips.

But before either she or he could enjoy the experience a crackling noise called out from behind them as if someone had thrown a downed branch into a blazing fire.

Freddie in a most protective pose pulled Isabella hard against his body as an image in the form of a woman walked to them from the shadows. So sculpted was this person's face with makeup and, a great swath of hair hiding most of the right side of her face, it was all but unrecognizable and, save for her frame and the very idea that this person called out Isabella's name did Isabella know it to be Lavender.

“Well now if it isn't London's Notorious Tart,” said Lavender with such mocking and scorn the very words could peel an onion. Isabella stepped out from Freddie's body guard so that she could face her sister directly.

“And with a rich one no less,” continued on Lavender with her scornful approach. “And will you look at the silver tipped walking stick, top hat

and overcoat that could only have been paid for with a bag full of shiny shillings.”

Freddie and Isabella both shuddered as this figure with a purplish black frock approached like some demon spirit on a mission. Face to face with Isabella Isabella could see her sister was very high up on an intoxicant; her eyes wild and swimming, her head bobbing slightly from side to side.

Lavender took a very hard look into Isabella’s face, evaluating it as if she were considering to purchase her from a storeroom shelf.

Lavender then turned her attention to Freddie who was in no way moved other than by disgust from what he could only surmise of this person that was obviously the ‘sister’ Isabella had spoken of so often, was that she was a streetwalker. The appearance of Lavender who moved so close to Freddie that he could smell the unmistakable mist of whiskey, saw that this woman was little more the apparition of a human and all but a skeletal shell under her clothes.

Lavender looked to Freddie with discerning eyes as she put her icy, bony fingers up to Freddie’s coat lapels and ran them over slowly. She then reached to straighten his bow tie but Freddie drew up his gloved hands to Lavender’s arms and gently pulled them away.

“I see the gentleman is not in the market this evening,” said Lavender cruelty. “But then,” she continued while tipping her head in Isabella’s direction “we see he seems already in good care.” Lavender put her head back and began to cackle like a sullen rooster, but in doing so lost her balance and began to fall. Freddie reached forward and arrested Lavender, stood her upright that she might keep her balance at least for the moment. When Lavender was a bit more composed she sniffed saying “Well, it appears the gentleman might have had a change of heart. Handling such a poor girl so without her permission.” Lavender puffed at her hair with her hand and said “I am quite available; just a call away.” Cackling once again Lavender turned and walked to the shadowy area she had been stationed. “Just ask her,” she said nodding to Isabella “she knows how to get hold of me.”

#### Part IV

It had come less than two weeks from that night which had morphed so romantically into something so distasteful even horrid in its own sickening way, that Isabella upon coming home late in the afternoon, just too tired to think of doing anything but bathing and going to bed, that



Mrs. Goblet met her in the drawing room and taking Isabella's hands, sat her down, to tell her that Lavender had taken her life. "I am sorry Isabella, I know Lavender was the closest thing to for you as having a real sister; Mrs. Flowers called, the police had called her."

"She really was my sister," insisted Isabella who sat stone like looking directly out to no one object in the room. With nary a sniffle, Isabella excused herself politely and told her mother not to worry and that she would be fine.

And Isabella did have the liberty to take a day off work if she wished. So on the morrow Mrs. Goblet included in her many errands that day stopped by Mr. Esteem's flower cart to tell him about Isabella's absence. Mr. Esteem wished Isabella well and told Mrs. Goblet that he had manned the cart several decades before his meeting with Isabella and that Isabella was free to take as much time off as she felt necessary to mourn the loss of her sister.

Strange, and not even questioning her own motivation or asking of herself a reason, Isabella rummaged through the storage boxes she had in her clothes closet and began with the one with writing on the top simply stating "Things of the past" and set to the unraveling of its contents.

Digging up the past has its own peculiar jolt on a person's emotional memory but going into, as it were for Isabella, the tomb of some former life, had a searing unpleasantness about it.

Even Miss Tepid did have that which must be called 'an empathetic side' and when walking into Isabella's room the next morning to change the sheets and gather Isabella's bath towels and strewn around clothing, she came upon a most curious and startling configuration on the floor which she responded to by simply standing unable to move.

And later that day, when the time was appropriate, Miss Tepid led Mrs. Goblet to view a strange setting of doll furnishings and a figurine of a dog with a jackal's head sitting as it were like a composer before and orchestra. "What do you make of this, Mum?" queried Miss Tepid in a voice that quivered with confusion and fear.

"I am not sure dear," said Mrs. Goblet as she touched Miss Tepid upon the shoulder for balance experiencing a mutual trepidation. Mrs. Goblet bent down to pick up the jackal-dog and studied it intently. "I have seen this creature before...; the Egyptian exhibition is my guess."

“And the chairs, Mum, what could this possibly mean, them being arranged in a circle around that dog creature thing?”

Mrs. Goblet heaved a very strong, long breath. “It means Miss. Tepid that our child is not well; not well at all. And I fear she shall never be.”

## PART V

There was something very grey hanging over London these past two weeks and this was the cloud hovering over Isabella. Freddie had not called on her since the pretense of a wonderful date which had turned very sour. Isabella’s attempt at coming to terms with Lavender’s death bounced between playing with the Anubis figurine and with her memory filling the chairs of her former throne room with the guests, officers and subjects of her former princess domain and, working with Mr. Esteem in the flower stall and, thinking every moment that she had just heard Freddie’s tempered footsteps upon the hotel lobby floor and that he would be calling out to her in his quiet, gentlemanly way.

“You seem to be preoccupied, my dear,” said Mr. Esteem to his employee not wanting to interfere with the privacies of Isabella’s life away from the work at hand but, she was distracted enough that she was not paying as much attention to the duties as he had need for her to be. “Oh I am very sorry, Mr. Esteem” blushed Isabella having been caught thinking of Freddie’s eyes and lips and reciting his spoken words that rang like the nearest thing to the feeling of love she could imagine.

Mr. Esteem laughed slightly “Our last customer you gave posies to instead of daffodils. A first for you and the funny thing about it is he did not seem to notice.”

Isabella blushed again. “It’s just that...” Isabella’s voice trailed off into a gloomy silence. “Been in touch with your gentleman caller lately?” inquired Mr. Esteem who was sure that

Isabella’s distractions had something to do with this Freddie gentleman.

“I... he seems to be very busy these days,” said Isabella trying not to sound despondent.

“I see,” said Mr. Esteem “He is no doubt a responsible chap, attending to those things most important. For a young man his age, he had better be keeping his mind to making money; it’s now when a person establishes his fortunes. When you get to be my age you tend not to have as much energy.”

And so Mr. Esteem left the conversation with all his wanting and well wishing good fortune for his now (in his heart) adopted child.

## CHAPTER 4



### PART I

Once again, let us not be uninformed of Mrs. Goblet's personality and the status she and her former husband held and now she alone does in London society. Mrs. Goblet is a member of the London prestigious elites, a collection of three thousand high society persons who are neither elected to their standing or have won by lottery. The qualifications for membership had nothing less to do than with a person's net financial worth or family birth, and most respectfully, both.

And of Mrs. Goblet's formidability, she would very well command that something of, shall we call it, a strange arrangement to be made, with a nod in affirmation by Dr. Hemsel and Mrs. Sullivan, that Isabella take on a playmate; a twin. "A twin sister," is how she put it. The plan she explained to Dr. Hemsel and Mrs. Sullivan would be an actress of sorts. "Someone who lived in the A....apartments; I of course covering all costs. It does grieve me, but I must face the truth

that I am not a sure confidant for Isabella. Some young woman with a kitten. We are just going to have to find her."

And this was the scheme. Mrs. Goblet realized that if Isabella would ever come to the level of stability where she, once Mrs. Goblet had come to her own end on this planet, it must be a firm fact that Isabella could live on her own. And this Freddie, whomever he thought he was walking into Isabella's life with some sort of farcical introduction is altogether a rude distraction. "I shall put a quiet end to his clever ways," schemed Mrs. Goblet the more.

Mrs. Sullivan had suggested that in Mrs. Goblet's search for a suitable mentor, 'sister' by tipping off her close friends that an offering bordering on that of professional caretaker be brought forth. The idea that any of those girls all of whom by default would have to be of wealth, would need help in any financial way was absurd and, yet if the young woman wished, she could donate the monies to a charitable cause.

But such a notable candidate was not to be found among the siblings or relatives in the three thousand circle.

Next Madame Goblet looked to several of the local parishes to see if a compliment could be found for her daughter. And yet, none that came into consideration seemed adequate enough. They were either too old, too young or, too-something very wrong. Now what to do?

And yet we find that Mrs. Goblet need not have bothered herself with what had been several weeks of tense searching. Mrs. Goblet for those several weeks might have simply sat in her favorite armchair reading the daily chronicles when, as does happen in the realm of human existence and true need, nature takes a big step out to rescue the woeful human heart and thus presented one particular day the surprise appearance of Freddie to the flower cart.

But before Isabella allowed herself to become excited she instead became panicked. For alongside Freddie and with her arm embraced with him was a startling good looking woman, older, but not so much older, that she could not have been Freddie's lover.

Freddie, in his wounded foot way hobbled up to Isabella and said, "My dear friend Isabella, I have been tardy; Isabella, I am pleased to introduce you to my dearest sister, Tess of Cornwall."

And with this greeting he bowed deep at the waist and thus with interlocking arms pulled sister Tess with him to the high degree that she found herself a bit disheveled, her broad brimmed summer hat having fallen forward and, once she had bobbed herself back, the hat rested on her brows and gave the brief moment a tone of her stance a silly humor.

Isabella stood promptly, even joyously with the knowledge that this fine lady was a sibling and not perchance a girl-fancy.

"Hello Isabella, so nice to meet you," exclaimed Tess with outreached arm and wide smile as she adjusted her hat with her other hand. The two ladies shook tenderly, Tess like those before her having never touched the grafted hand of a burn victim, winced in her mind, hoping desperately her reaction did not show on her face.

"I just had to bring her by to meet you," said Freddie.

"He says you both have so much to talk about; never a gap in your conversation," offered Tess.

"Actually," said Isabella diminutively "I never noticed, which I suppose altogether must prove the point." and they all laughed at this observation.

“I say,” said Freddie “we are on our way to lunch after just a bit of shopping and we would so like you to join us.”

“Oh yes, please Isabella,” encouraged Tess “I would love to be an observer of your friendly banter!”

Mr. Esteem had again been away from the cart but just that moment returned and with brief introductions and polite communication between the four, Isabella left with her friend who had been absent for two weeks and his sister whom Isabella’s subconscious was trying to find a category ‘type’ for the personality she embodied and how it worked into her hosting seances.

Tess was on the surface carefree. She was well polished in her diction and her dress was sparkling as were her nails and blouse, skirt and to spectacular heels. She seemed very much to ‘prance’ as the three of them shuffled down the sidewalk to the emporium of Freddie’s choosing. Her laughter was gay and infectious. But there was something else. And over lunch Isabella did find a category to place her and, this would be one of treachery. Rather, a sociopathic performance of deep seated anxiety coupled with a deep anger or hate; perhaps even ferocity. Something akin to the queen of the walrus; or perhaps even closer to the feeling she felt while encountering the queen’s two mermaid body guards. Isabella had also witnessed this clever shifting of person in the once living Lord Farnsworth whom she had enjoyed tormenting. In practical terms Isabella’s, by the unconscious schooling of her early days did observe the ebb and flow of human character which qualified her for nothing less than a qualified full out doctorate program.

They were to meet again, after this lunch, as Freddie promised that he would not be so careless about visiting with Isabella and so insisted that the two ladies allow him the honor of this Saturday’s live theater at the Crown and supper to follow. A surprise for you both; the theater is new and I can’t help but think it will impress you. I took a quick look inside when construction was nearing completion. Charming, intimate and elegant as well.”

And that evening did arrive with a blink of an eye; Freddie and Tess were received by Mrs. Goblet cautiously and Miss Tepid, once again, tepidly; nonetheless the three left with well wishes for a grand evening.

The play was a bit of a farce; coppers and robbers, a failed bank robbery, a newly arrived immigrant to New York speaking little English, falls in

love with a woman far above his social standing but not without reach of her wanting heart.

Freddie, Isabella and Tess laughed over each act as they, and afterwards all three were very much impressed with Ned's Table a venue named after the owner's one time living father with its luscious servings and intriguing atmosphere complimented with a small orchestra which featured a lovely female singer.

"Oh, I had such a grand time!" bustled Tess as the three waited on the porch for the handsome to arrive. "What shall our next adventure be my baby brother?" crooned Tess whom rested her head onto his shoulder as Isabella sat opposite enjoying their closeness.

"Well I am still planning on Wednesday attending..." Curiously, Freddie's voice trailed off. "No, I mean all three of us," insisted Tess. "What shall we do for entertainment? You may

wish to invite Isabella for Wednesday, after all the times we have are quite entertaining." "Isabella wouldn't be interested in going this Wednesday," stated Freddie flatly.

"Isabella would not to be interested going this Wednesday," repeated Isabella half mocking half wanting to sound hurt. "So where would she not be interested in? Aren't we a threesome after all...at least while we are together? And what entertainment are you depriving me from?" said Isabella with a faux sulkiness in her voice.

"One of my seances my dear. I hold seances in my apartment."

Freddie looked across to Isabella both he and she remembering her stalwart, determinant ill regard for the mystical realms that she would never enter the curtained off table of dubious enchantment.

Freddie tapped Tess on the arm. "My sister is something of conjuror of spirits," he said as if to introduce Isabella to the idea for the first time.

"She also tells the future....sometimes even accurately," said Freddie jokingly.

Tess hit Freddie playfully with her glove. "I'm almost never wrong about the future; the only thing I'm a little bit unsettled about now, is if I will ever invite my Freddie over to participate again."

“But I would love to go to a seance,” sprouted Isabella having made her inverted decision on the basis of the intense curiosity she felt for her new friend. “Mrs. Goblet attends one with some of the most grand people of London. And I must say I am still waiting for an invitation from her,” she said in something that was for both she and Freddie a shared lie.

“It can get quite spooky, Isabella,” said Freddie in a low, mysterious voice. “You just might find a ghost flying about you; a distant vulgar uncle or something. Young ladies have been known to run, screaming out the room.”

“I am hardly the type, Sir,” said Isabella directly. “Perhaps this is something you have experienced yourself; your uncle Davin asking for a few pounds to carry him over until the next millennium?”

“You two stop it. Of course you can come if you wish, Isabella. It would be my great favor to have you in my home. You shall be our honored guest,” said Tess. “And the only really spooky thing you might hope to encounter will be some of the other guests,.

“A real hodgepodge,” emphasised Freddie while looking directly at Tess.

“I think we shall be polite and simply say ‘interesting souls,” commented Tess.

## PART II

### Seance in the parlor

And interesting souls they were not the least to confront Isabella was Tess her very self. Tess, or what might possibly be someone else entirely or, more likely now the real person Tess, the person first introduced as Freddie’s cousin was something of a myth and now something of a waxen figure?

Tess stood still, all but comatose; no smile, hair in a bun, her entire body covered over with a full length red cape which scraped the floor, and, drawstrings of gold intertwined lace with embedded beads configured around the hood.

“Isabella and her fine escort Freddie,” greeted Tess holding out her hand “welcome to my salon of many missions, many adventures. I hope you do not leave without a story for yourself.”

Tess’ voice was modulated in the manner of summer storm on the horizon and moving menacingly in Isabella’s direction. “Please follow



me you two searchers,” said Tess as Freddie took Isabella’s arm and at the same moment let the corner of his mouth to tilt open simulating a smile to let Isabella know the salon was a place that was more theater than real.

Down the hallway the three walked to two very large doors made of dark mahogany wood. Tess put her hands upon two triangular brass knobs and pushed them forward not with little effort then stood aside while waving with her hand for Isabella and Freddie to enter.

They entered a dimly lit octagonal room with marble floors and high, drawn curtains that allowed in no light. In the middle of the room was a thick, round, wood table with ten or so chairs surrounding it and at a quick glance Isabella they were something of an odd minageri of curious looking persons ( or perhaps they were otherworldly creatures?) sitting in all but three empty ones.

Freddie pulled out what had to be Tess’ chair, the only chair identified by a silver ornamental star rising over the backing. Once Tess sat and was pushed in, Freddie helped Isabella with her chair and when she scooted herself in, she noted and nodded to a man she thought looked more like a truncated tree stump with his two arms resting on the table formed in their smallness like miniature branches. He was dressed in a silken tux and as he turned his head slightly to acknowledge her presence merely nodded his head to Isabella. The gentleman then turned back to looking straight ahead staring as if he was trying to calculate the dimensions of a cloud of fog.

Isabella continued to observe him out of the corner of his eye and noticed that this tree stump of a man was actually considerably small in size and was sitting high upon two pillows. At this point as in any encounter with never before witnessed a person Isabella’s mind ran uncontrolled freight-train-crazy placing him in a story of uncertain and yet fun adventure.

Apart from this the woman to his right Isabella assumed to be his wife was no more a compliment to the stump than a primate to a whale. The woman sat high in her chair, towering over hubby with a larger than life torso, a long, thin face, and a hair design that was formed to look like a smoke stack formed with an intricate balance of interwoven braids and an ornate stickpin on the side keeping the configuration in place.

It was difficult to obtain the proper evaluation Isabella wanted for the other type of persons at the table due to the dim light so she simply

hinged her surmising upon what Tess had said in that they were all ‘interesting souls’.

Tess, who had pulled her hood over her head and left little of her face showing, in a stern direct voice prompted everyone’s attention by saying “Now we begin.”

In the center of the table was an object under a velvet wrap and Isabella was not the least surprised when Tess extended her reach and pulled the cloth revealing a crystal ball set on a small wooden platform. A light beam coming from a source out of sight up high was focused directly on the ball which then sent thousands of tiny, multi colored speckles onto every person in the room catching portions of their clothing, their ostentatious jewelry and most especially the rims of several persons who were wearing diamond rimmed glasses.

“Oh spirits of future past, messengers from worlds beyond, persons who have gone on before us,” said Tess and let a moment of silence hang before she commanded: “Speak!”

From meeting Tess on the porch, observing her clothing and demeanor, picking out Mr. Stump and Wife to muse upon and now this extravagance at drama, Isabella thought this might already be the most fun day of her life.

Nothing happened immediately. All the guests remained silent and still perhaps like she, Isabella thought that if any of them moved they would “what?”, scare the spirits? Tess remained motionless as well and Isabella taking notice of her own breathing by closing her mouth afraid she might make a hard swallowing sound.

And then she saw it; a small, green floating light near the heads of the people directly on the other side of the table. Everyone started but no one moved other than to cock their heads in the lights direction. “Is there something you wish one of those persons to say?” inquired Tess of the light. “Or perhaps there is something you wish to say?”

Again there was silence until quite startling, a slight whisper, in a male voice which was either that of a child or an aged man saying “Do you miss me?”

Of the two human forms where the floating light was nearest Isabella could see one to be that of a man the other a woman. “Yes I miss you Chad,” said the man in a quivering voice. “We all miss you,” he said

whimpering now. “I should have watched out for you Chad...and yet I was the one who had to tell mother how it happened. We should never have let you into our unit. You could have stayed with the supply lines. I should never have agreed to let you carry a gun.” The man was weeping now. His head sank with his hands to the table and Isabella could see in the glimmer of the crystal balls light there was a wetness on the table from the man’s tears. The woman next to him put her hand on the man’s back and began rubbing his back while conveying comforting words to him. The man got hold of himself and wiped his eyes with a hankie apologizing directly to Tess unnecessarily.

When the commotion was over and there was silence again, the light moved counterclockwise around the table as if it were on an invisible trail rack, evenly and silently stopping over two persons hovering as it had done over the poor man who let down the fated Chad. Another couple, this time two women, one taller, more filled out, and the other, not a younger sister but more on the level of a daughter, a thin build, with long braids on either side of her face like show curtains embracing the stage. Once again Tess inquired if the light wanted to communicate and this time in another couple words delivered again in a soft voice and this time female. “How is she doing in school?” The woman obviously knowledgeable of whom the voice belonged to jumped with a start and began to lift herself up out of her chair but then settled down. The woman took a quick glance at the light and then gave a longing, loving look to the girl. The woman then looked up to the light and said “She is fine; Jennifer is a wonderful student. She works very hard; I am caring for her the best I know how,” said the woman, the glitter from the crystal lights and the floating light giving evidence of her tears as well as the brother of Chad. The woman apologized, and Isabella not knowing who the woman was apologizing to, wiping her eyes with a cloth and took the hand of the child next to her and rested them both upon the table.

The light moved again and now it steadies itself between the heads of Tess and Freddie. “Is there something you wish from these people to say?” inquired Tess again with an assured, even voice. The room was deafeningly quiet. And Tess asked again “Is there was something...?” and before she could complete her sentence the voice of a woman, young and faint, hesitant “Will the young man free himself?”

There was shifting in what seemed to be every seat and in the vague glint of the light Isabella could see each head tipping to the young war veteran Freddie. Freddie was close enough that Isabella believed he may be

sweating. And it seemed to Isabella that everyone present was about to ask what could this mean ‘the freeing?’. Was he in bondage to someone? A lost love that he places her picture before him each morning and talks to; perhaps weeps of? Does Freddie go to the military graveyard and talk to the soldiers lying beneath apologizing that it should have been himself dead and would gladly trade places with any of his brothers if only there were a way. Yes, Isabella had come to know how sensitive this man was and had heard of stories just as this one she imagined for Freddie.

But unlike the other person’s questioned in this seance Freddie neither spoke nor moved and, Isabella was now certain that he was perspiring.

In a few moments the light began again to move but this time it retraced its own circuit back to the place of its original appearance and, with less than a minute it faded and disappeared altogether.

After the light disappeared more moments of silence passed and Tess invoked the spirit world again and the spirit world answered in the form of a sound as if someone were wrapping their knuckles on the underside of the table.

The guests were prompted to ask of what was presumed to be a different spirit other than the first spirit voice any question they wished. Tess assured them it would be the same spirit which had visited her home several times before as it always introduced itself with the knocking and was quite good at communicating with humankind.

“I have a question,” spoke one man whom the roving light of a few minutes ago had not descended upon “I say,” inquired the man, “how do you see the stock market moving, let us say in the shipping business for, let us say Manchester?”

“Sir James,” instructed Tess “the question has to be made in a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ query. If the answer is to be ‘yes’ then you will hear one knock in compliance. If your question is to receive a negative, you shall hear two knocks.”

Sir James cleared his throat and again asked “I say, do you see the shipping business improving in the next year?”

There was a length of silence in the room, enough to cause the first time visitors to the parlor and, Isabella in particular, to wonder if the invisible communicator would leave Sir James and all the visitors feeling

sorrowful for Tess having only a partially embarrassing and unsuccessful evening.

Isabella looked furtively to Tess who sat rigid, her hands folded upon the table, her eyes below the hood of her coat tightly shut. And then it came, the under the table knock; a singular knock on the favored behalf of Sir James and those involved in Manchester shipping.

There were several other queries: one about love, one about a former spouse's per chance infidelity. And the invisible communicator came thru, on behalf of good form; behold love was on the way, no, Spouse had had an affair, as nothing seemed amiss or out of good form to this all-seeing spirit beyond which Freddie later confessed to Isabella insured a full salon the next meeting.

"Then it is all a farce, Freddy?" inquired Isabella incredulously.

"Oh, not all together. True my sister and I do believe there is a vibrant spirit world; how interactive and present they are in my sister's salon is of course a matter of faith, wanting and, simple self storytelling."

"Then I do hope I am not being petulant but was someone indeed talking to you from the spirit world and what did it mean by asking 'will you free yourself?'"

Freddie laughed. "My, my. I guess the only thing I need free myself from is thinking about you so much."

"How am I to believe you Freddie?" asked Isabella in a frustrated tone. "You disappear for two weeks; you don't call or write. If you have other lady friends you take time with it is certainly not my business. And yet we were in contact almost daily, I invited you to meet my mother and that wretched Miss Tepid and I even allowed you to kiss me. I really don't know what to think," said Isabella whose speech was headed into gloomy territory causing her to feel shame, coupled with sorrow.

Freddie looked at Isabella and stopped their procession which was in the direction of one of Freddie's favorite dinner cafes and looked directly into Isabella's face. "My business is very particular and needs intense attention at times. I am very sorry if I caused you to stress about our relationship. Yes, we are not actually dating in the romantic sense of the word. And yet," said Freddie looking most deeply at Isabella, "I rather did enjoy the kiss." And once again Freddie, as on that first date, with

the most gentle touch, Freddie lifted Isabella's veil and again placed his lips upon hers.

### PART III

#### Poole returns from Portsmouth

And with his return from Davinshian Bay Poole went directly to Rancid's home. Rancid reclined in his favorite easy chair while the fire in the hearth seemed to be wrestling with its own consciousness as to continue to burn or extinguish its own existence.

Poole was led into report to Rancid by Mr. Gurney, the substitute gentleman's gentleman for Poole when he, Poole was away on 'assignment' and was greeted warmly by Rancid who expected a favorable report as to whose hand the emerald did lie.

The news was not favorable. "I even threatened to torture the girl," said Poole in rapid discourse fearing the potential of Rancid's fury. "Dodgson said little; in fact I can report I got nothing from him. I am sure he was aware I was there to kill him whether he told me or not."

And with a few ticks of the clock Poole concluded: "I thought about the girl, but we knew of her commonality; as you said Dodgson would never share the details about his sudden wealth. I simply disposed of her just as you ordered."

Rancid did not rage. No fury came forth. Rather, he rested back deeper into his chair and raised his eyes to the ceiling and tipped his fingers in the chapel format of his deep concentration.

"Ah yes," said Rancid in a low tone. "Just like a Yardie; true to form; even acting the part of an ex patriot he remains a Yardie." Rancid grumbled a low laugh. "So where now Mr. Poole? Our dear Inspector could not have hoped to go into retirement on his meager salary and with no pension. Again we will ask the question of ourselves, to whom would he go to pass off the gem? With his multiple years of mingling with the best and the brightest he would have gone to whom ...?"

"Or perhaps the dregs," offered Poole.

"Yes," said Rancid slowly as he again grumbled out a slight laugh. "The dregs of society as well. I feel there is but a farthing between the two." Minutes again ticked into the drawing room long enough that Mr. Gurney came to stoke the fire and put on another log.

“My man Wilson is the most skilled of fences to go to see for big payouts. Dodgson would certainly have known of him and this is why he did not go there with the stone; thus I have satisfied myself with this answer. I do know a man named Blake. He deals in smaller transactions; likes to stay out of the way, keep in hidden in the crevices. Petty monies from petty thieves; middle class housewives. You would do you well to call on him I think Mr. Poole.”

Both men stared blankly as the machines of their evil minds worked for a sure solution. “We have time Mr. Poole. But not unlimited time. The Tumblers property will be released for auction soon and I will be needing the gem for collateral; and for show of course. My jealous competitors will drul like donkeys on the farm. Oh, how I so love the show.”

#### PART IV **The Chinese quarter**

Mr. Poole for all his physical ugliness, his rail thin, tall frame compensated itself with a severe bend at the shoulders so as to make itself less obvious; his gnarled teeth, chipped and misaligned, his eyes set back in their sockets that at first glance a stranger might think his eye sockets altogether hollow; his whistle when he talked as both air and a fine mist projected outward from the crevices of his teeth were just some of his offense to the image of human comeliness.

This aside, Poole complimented his bodily repulsions by enhancing them with being a murder, much on the order of Rancid’s former employee Lord Farnsworth, being also a thief, embezzler, forger and with the extra added distinction of taking nasty delights in the company of young boys. On this particular day Poole walked the sooty streets of London’s east end, having jumped the rail then cab, to Devon’s street where different races of people intermixed like no other location in the city.

Half way down the block with garbage piled on either side like an overgrown ivy hedge he descended a small brick stairwell and knocked lightly upon an unassuming door that being the entrance into a den for opium users. Poole once again directed by the Chinese gentleman, Mr.Chen, to the bunk bed occupied by Freddie whom even in his daze and haze smiled to Poole much as the Cheshire cat had to Alice when first they met.

“So,” said Freddie languidly “I see you have found me again; a regular sluth you are.”

Mr. Poole sat down on Freddie's bed. Mr. Poole, never said to be one for extending anything but the most formal of greetings, or in this case, formal threat, directed Freddie that he should now take the necessary means to clear himself up, as his employer, was again in need of Freddie's special gifts of seduction.

Freddie of course was unaware as to the why he had been hired to seduce Isabella and, even if he had suspected it was all part of Mr. Rancid's plan to acquire the emerald, what of it? The charming (when not under the influence) Freddie, was being handsomely paid with promises of more and better paying jobs were he to complete this one to perfection. And of course, he would have unlimited access to this unlimited yellow painkiller he had so become dependent upon while laying in the medical tent in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Freddie closed his eyes while automatically reaching for the rubber tube which led to the liquid opioid in the glass container setting on the floor by his bed. But Poole grabbed Freddie's wrist firmly and slowly moved Freddie's hand to rest across his chest. Freddie opened his eyes to look at Poole who had a firm smile on his face, the same smile he managed before pulling the trigger of his gun and killing Mr. Fancy, Inspector Dodgson and the lovely slut Rita.

Five days later Freddie was sitting in a cafe when Poole came in and took the chair across from him. "Our friend," said Poole referring to Rancid "would like an update."

Freddie put down his fork which he had just dished up a nice helping of bread pudding and looked Poole directly in the eyes, his, Freddie's, still showing the effects of the opium with that 'fogged' glazed-over yellowish look surrounding his pupils. Freddie took his time filling in Poole about his last time seeing Isabella, his sister's seance, every detail about the seance, and the kiss he gave to Isabella and the earlier encounter with and subsequent death of Lavender.

"So things are going to plan, it would seem," said Poole. "And of the next seance, do you think she will be receptive?"

"She was questioning," said Freddie "but not sceptical. I suggested she take her time being there with a grain of salt. But I also made it seem enough a possibility that hopefully she would think it true. Yes, I think she shall be receptive. I mean, it is not as if everything that occurs in my sister's seances can be fully explained in human terms."



## PART V

Freddie sees Isabella after being absent ....again.

“Again you have done this to me; but why? I thought...” Isabella’s words trailed off as she and Freddie sat on a bench one glorious day in Kempton Park which surmounted to a small plot of grass and precisely manicured trees and shrubs tucked inside a neighborhood of high end brownstones one block from the Tremble tube.

“I am sorry Isabella, I have been selfish. I should not have sought out ‘London’s notorious etc... I have been selfish. Perhaps it best I never see you again,” said Freddie.

Isabella may not have realized it, but her body quaked noticeably. Of course Freddie noticed this and he smiled to himself. “It is not as if I do not enjoy your company Freddie; and it must be obvious that I look forward to seeing you. It is just that a woman’s emotional feelings are so exposed. It is both our strength and our weakness.”

Freddie looked at Isabella longingly. “Just the same I do have to ask myself if I am good for you. I would not want to cause you or any other human trauma of any kind. I saw enough trauma on the battlefield for a platoon of men.”

“Then tell me what are we to do,” asked Isabella with as much dignity as possible; “that is, if you do want me?”

An empty space the width of the Thames seemed to flow between an agreed upon solution and their physical togetherness. Freddie put his arm softly around Isabella’s shoulder. “I think we shall find comfort in being honest with one another the same as we are and, for myself I shall make the effort never to be tardy again.” Freddie then took his arm off Isabella’s shoulder and moved his hand around again to pull up Isabella’s veil and before kissing her lightly, said “And I shall never not want to kiss you again.”

## CHAPTER 5



### TESS'S SALON, ANOTHER VISIT

Freddie and Isabella entered Tess's home for the third time in the month. It was all rather rhythmic as the couple and all the other guests mingled around talking lightly before walking to the salon, pushing through the great doors and taking their seats. Tess was wearing her gemed tiera and this time for whatever reason her hair was not pulled in a taught bun. Instead Tess had let her hair flow in all its glory, down across her shoulders and openly splayed upon her dress. Tess had also dispensed with her lurid robes and wore a simple, buttoned to the neck and wrists, velvety dress. Expensive? Yes. The buttons were obviously real pearls and she wore a significant pearl ring surrounded with diamonds on the middle finger of her right hand.

This night Isabella recognized some of the other guests and some she did not. After every seance Isabella would question Freddie about newcomers and for most, not only did he know their name but a backstory for each and one or two bits of unpleasant gossip they themselves had rather not anyone know.

Isabella became comfortable being a seance participant and was even anxious about every invitation forthcoming. But strangely enough the floating light that seemed to have an interest in every person in every session had yet to lite upon her. Nor did anyone who went into a trance talk of her or ask her questions; nor did any knocking retorts inquire of Isabella anything at all. She had spoken to Freddie about this who reassured Isabella that if any entity from the other realms wished for a report from Isabella that the spirit or,spirits,would certainly not hold back.

And it was perhaps her tenth time sitting in the muted room that the roving light did set still and hover over Isabella. Isabella felt no nervousness but waited with great curiosity to be challenged by the unseen guest with the familiar voice of Tess's grand parlour.

Those guests who knew of Isabella, her reputation, strained in her direction but all were disappointed. For there was no uncertainty that Isabella was being communicated with, and yet this time there was no

voice to be heard only a dim green light which engulfed her like an upturned funnel. The look on Isabella's face was one of wonderment. She was raped with attention and the ends of her mouth curved up. At one point, Isabella jerked with a gleeful giggle possibly having been told a joke. Isabella's eyes sparkled in the green light and her eyebrows raised upwards as she clasped her hands across her mouth as if she had not only heard a joke but that it may be a bit malicious.

When that which was being communicated to Isabella ended, the light lost its green luster and then moved, lighting upon a stout man who wore a silver sash with multiple buttons and medallions positioned upon it for only a moment and then disappeared to its eerie cave like nothingness.

Tess walked Freddie and Isabella to the door once all the other guests had given leave. Tess did not give the two her regular warm threesome hug. This time with both her hands Tess took Isabella at arms length and looked deep into her eyes and said "My, you have been given a special message, have you not? No one could hear what was communicated to you, so obviously it was meant for you alone. Rarely do spirits approach a room in this way. They are not shy; they are cautious but never afraid." Tess then gave Isabella's frail body a warm hug and kissed her lightly upon the cheek. "My hope is we shall be seeing you two again soon, you are always welcomed" said Tess with affection, Tess then moving to hug her brother.

The two young persons turned and walked rather jauntily down the steps, turned in unison to blow Tess a kiss and then continued onto the sidewalk.

Freddie was careful not to look pleading with his eyes when turning to face Isabella and Isabella returned his gaze with a knowing look. "Curious aren't we Mr. Freddie, Sir?"

"My gosh, how could I not be...a green cone of lighting all for you with a secret message as well; I can't say that I am not only curious but I must admit to jealousy as well."

"You heard what your sister said, 'For myself and me alone'?"

"Never let it be said that your mate is ready to pry into your privacy; but then again if you were to have a change of heart...."

Isabella stopped and Freddie walked a few paces before turning round. “What have I done this time?” said Freddie with a true query of curiosity in his voice.

Freddie came up to Isabella looking down upon her five foot seven figure, her charred face, healed to the degree it ever would, he hardly gave it notice. “You called me your “mate”,” said Isabella sternly. “Exactly what does this mean?”

Freddie stammered. Freddie took in a deep breath through his nose and held it for several seconds before releasing it through his mouth. “I really don’t want to be too common with you

Isabella. What affections I have for you I am confused about. You are very similar to me as a mate; a friend. Trusted friend. Do I feel more for you than this...?” Once again Freddie stammered taking in another long breath. “I would have to say then that I really do quite lean to the side of wanting more than friendship from you. Not that a true and abiding friendship is not something wonderful. I have always wanted to know what love is. I am...just being cautious; for myself and most especially for you.”

Isabella did not say a word nor did the expression of sternness it had gathered up as a defence relent upon her face. Isabella took in a breath for herself and then moved her arm and inter wove it with Freddie’s and positioned them both back to walking.

## PART II **Tutt, Tutt Mr. Tutts’**

Mr. Tutts the gemologist was introduced in our story as the gentleman such. But indeed his emporium’s name was ‘Blake’s’. All persons thought his surname to be Blake and this ‘Blake’, Mr. Tutts, did not always work with the most moral of clientele. Indeed the persons who frequented his shop were on average, at the very least, those who kept partially in the shadow, making their best effort to stay out of sight from the law.

Gems were his passion. Bracelets bespeckled with ruby stones. Cravats encrusted with gemstones. Stones encasing watches and other such ornate creations. and now, the Pulstar Manor emerald.

Oh, the fullness of joy! Never had Mr. Tutts held such an amazing work of nature in his possession. Out of the bowels of the earth it seemed to

Mr. Tutts that with all of its travels for these many years and being held in captivity by so many persons undeserving it, now the emerald had finally found its rightful home. No, Tutts had no plans to sell this lifetime trophy. It had cost him nearly all his personal stock to raise the money to buy the emerald from the stranger in disguise. And how so difficult it was to make the decision. But now he knew it had been the correct decision. Now he was vindicated. The elusive green shone to him as the siren's of Ulysses's tormenters and, he had only to close his hand to grip it!

### PART III

#### **Mr. Tutts meets Mr. Poole**

It was a Wednesday afternoon and fog clamped hard upon the London landscape like a steel trap imprisoning each of its residences, parks and places of business. Perhaps it was a symbol sent from the heavenly hosts that all was not perfect with an institution that had powered itself into wrestling landscapes from the arms of cultures whom were sufficient to themselves; quaint, even obnoxious to the cultured eye, a land once dotted with functioning castles complete with moats, towers of detention and dungeons complete with the latest inventions of torture machinery.

“Again a strange stepping of boots upon my poor wood floor in my poor, small emporium,” said Mr. Tutts to himself. And as always Mr. Tutts did not immediately look up from his labors, finding the ruby ring with small diamonds surrounding it brought in that morning something he could adequately exchange several of the diamonds with false ones.

Today would not be Mr. Tutts last day on the planet but it was near that time. And darkening his door, on yet another assignment for the hideous Mr. Rancid, Mr. Poole stepped each step upon the wood floor with what may be misunderstood as someone who was hesitant, even cautiously fearful but was indeed an eerie charade of violent intimidation. As cold as a gun barrel, having been stored in a box in the attic and there being no insulation therein, Mr. Poole's approach to the desk of Mr. Tutts, the busy Mr. Tutts, caused his blood to chill and still not looking up, inquired of this stranger, “Yes, Sir, may I be of service?”

Poole, with his hovering figure looked down upon Tutts. Tutts, who found his hands sweating, clenched the rag he was holding looked up as well he could into Poole's face. “I am inquiring about an emerald,” said Poole, his chiseled teeth grating slowly among his thin lips. “You would not happen to know where it is?”, said Poole in his tempered voice which

led a person to believe they were somehow secured by fetters onto a train track and were soon to be overrun by a locomotive.

“An emerald you say? For myself I have none in stock. You seem to be inquiring to one in particular?” said Tutts who marveled at his ability to put three sentences together so concisely. Poole, himself was as related, a man on par with Rancid himself, was not fooled by Tutts professional composure. Akin to a dog he could scent out human emotion and, in particular that of fear. A Shakespearean actor could not fool his senses.

“Yes,” said Poole “an emerald, one of size, renown for its fire. This would be for us the ‘Polsar Emerald’ no less.” (This is the fun of being The Poole himself. As a gentleman is oft known for possessing, let us say a rare vintage automobile, so Poole his reputation for championing a task at hand. It might even be said, if Poole was after you, there would be nowhere but the crypt to hide.)

Still with facial and body composure save for his hands knitting at the polishing rag still sweating, “The Polsar Emerald, you don’t say? And you think it may be in the vicinity of our fair city? I have heard this rumor before.”

“Yes, curiously I do,” replied Poole, Tutts now engaging his hideous eyes directly.

“I tell you sir, had I acquainted with the stone I would not be sitting here working with a second level ruby ring. I think I should have fenced it already and purchased a castle on the Rhine.”

“Well, my good man, then you have convinced me. And yet, in the event that the stone does come across your table top I do hope I will be informed. I should be very pleased to be your fence, that is, my employer. This gentleman would only be so very grateful to know of its whereabouts and would be willing in exchange to contribute any price the current owner would feel fair.”

“You will leave me your calling card, sir?” said Tutts stupidly beginning to lose the command of his body and facial muscles.

“Oh, I am so easily found,” confided Poole. “In your business I am certain you have heard of Lord Rancimore.”

And with the mention of Rancid’s name, Tutts lost all but a fraction of his composure as a broad band of sweat brandished across his forehead.

“Once again sir,” said Poole who was turning to leave, tipped his head back to engage the shaking Mr. Tutts “my employer would be so grateful.”

#### PART IV

No matter the small state of his living style Tutts had not so long survived in the world of gem dealing had he not been remarkably sharp about how to stay out of the preview of the onerous tax collector, his competitors, and men whom, despite their fine clothing were altogether highwaymen of criminal enterprise.

It would be the equivalent of having had a few, private moments audience with the King owning the revered gemstone for so short a time. He would recoup his expenses, and gain so much more, not the least gain his own life, once he allowed the silent bidding war go on this day between several of his clients whom themselves he knew would do anything to acquire the stone for their own collections.

When Poole returned to Blake’s emporium several hours later with two of his ‘friends’ Tutts was not to be found, the door not even locked and of course the safe, once located behind a false wall, was moved out into plain view and every bit empty.

It would be a few weeks in passing before the small body of the one time gem dealer was found in a barrel out the backside alley of the popular Tuley’s bar, dismembered; alas, no one would really be sure whose body it was the Yard’s conclusion that cases like this were all but impossible to trace and gave the morose event little reckoning.

#### PART V

##### **To begin at the beginning**

Again Mr. Rancid and Mr. Poole faced each other in Rancid’s parlor. Poole remained silent as the extreme machine of Rancid’s mind raced almost to wreckage. Tutts would have told Poole anything to save his life and to stave off the extreme pain he suffered trying to convince his captor that he could not be sure who possessed the emerald now as there were buyers and there were their emissaries who conducted the payments and deliveries. The few names Tutts had shared of potential purchasers Rancid had already eliminated in his mind in that their movements of habitual acquisition did not meet the sleight of hand it took to grab the stone. And indeed they well would have, with great arrogance, flaunted

about their skill and let it be known that they had outsmarted the other gem seekers such as him.

Moments more moved upon the face of the clock, the great sweeping arms of the Schafer and Johns like birds if prey casting shadows above the numerals when Poole thought he might already have been excused and instead volunteered a query.

“May I inquire,” asked Poole matter of factly as if he were asking the kitchen cook what types of cheeses he had in his ice box “how, with your associates before me did you not have one or more of them ‘visit’ with Toad at the Pulstar Manor to inquire of the emerald?”

“A notion I long fought off,” replied Rancid. “In the end it was Toad being too much of a man of reputation. As you know I am not the only one seeking the emerald. Had I or any of the other members of this invisible “Society of Seekers” placed a direct hand upon the Polstar estate it would have rippled through the underworld like a seismic tremor and that to ruinous effect; all of ‘the Seekers’ and this includes myself, would have been ransacked in their lives by the coppers as their black hooved boot marks left their greece imprints upon my Persian rugs. And in truth and even at my high level we, and yourself I assume, the gentlemen of the underworld, live a verse as if it had been torn from The King James Bible that there must be honor among thieves.”

And so the only real chance at somehow finding and confiscating the gem, and indeed it was a very fraction of a chance at that, was once again to intercept the girl; for even though she was, if we can excuse the pun ‘blind’ to the whereabouts of the stone, the train of Rancid’s mind had molded to conclusion that everything depended upon the uniqueness of London’s Notorious Child.

Rancid was not a religious man except to the degree that evil is a religion of its own institution. But he did know through a lifetime of experiences and witnessing or, reading about situations and stories, that they often were so far out of the realm of believability, but indeed were true, this story had all the marking of a Lord or a God orchestrator, a mysterious and mow5 omnipotent force whose guiding hand, just for the sake of its own entertainment and unchartable fun, would take a mysterious green rock and juxtaposed it together with the blindness of a child.

Imagine the Old Toad, possessing it for all those supposed years; centuries of its own destiny and then held by that fool; he alone looking



into the emerald beauty as if he were peering into a soothsayers vat of conjured thoughts and he no doubt totally dumbfounded by the measagings.

Yes, The Notorious Girl, she and the gem had their own destiny together; stay in proximity to her and you will be in reach of the stone again and forever and, only and finally then she will have used up her unique usefulness upon this planet.

Dear Diary, on this habitable planet in the year of our Lord King Edward 1429

At time It seems I shall never have a ring placed upon my finger. Oh yes, Prince Freddie has suggested at proposal, but I shall not relent; not until he slays the dragon. I Princess Isabella did overhear speak Queen Goblet and the terrible Tepid about this unnatural creature, this Opium monster.

Freddie has only to kill him and then we can make our plans to move into a fine castle. We shall stay at Queen Goblet's until ours is sufficiently built that we may move in and to spend our first night alone and have a loving life with strong, beautiful children born and a kingdom of our own to rule justly and sacrificially for all our subjects.

Now onto the task Prince Freddie, thy promised Lady doth await faithfully.

Princess Isabella Rose

## PART VI

### **Tess's Salon/ The second communication:**

Once again the green light lit upon the figure of Isabella and there was a stirring in the room among the other guests to the degree that this was something unique to the point of not having been experienced in a salon before.

The action would be different for Isabella than the last, as this time the communicator did speak in the open. "Isabella have you completed your task?" whistled a question through the room and it felt for each one sitting as if a brush of wind or a touch of fine satin had quavered over their skin.

"I have yes, your honours; I have been diligent to do so."

“This is all for the good, Isabella,” said the voice which not only whistled its way to everyone again, it also came with an uncomfortable errieness. This may seem obvious, this ‘errieness’ coming from a salon where se’ances were performed as there was an understood Englander rule that participants were to be informed, and yes entertained. But to fear, no.

And yet, for herself, Isabella was not afraid. Like unto the last time, she was enthusiastic to the level of glee in that she had successfully carried out the task of delivering the Polstar emerald to the man named Lord Alanbe.

Yes! It was she, Tess who had purchased the gem stone from Tutts. Rancid’s scheme to obtain the emerald had been foiled. Once Tess figured out that Freddie was being used by Rancid and that Rancid was keeping her brother on an opium leash Tess instinctively purposed to rescue Freddie. And in one of his hazy, opium time, her brother told her the gist of the plan for which Rancid had him under employment.

Tess had her own ‘man’ on the job in Scotland Yard. Rather, it was a woman of the secretarial staff, a long time business associate who had one time worked for her and her father’s company. And of Mr. Poole, he was a notable associate of Mr. Rancid who somehow magically had secured a job in the Yard’s supply room. It was Dodgson’s demotion that tugged at Tess’s curiosity. This sergeant of such high reputation had been taken off the Rancid Case as it was known to her and whispered among the Yard employees; the humiliation Dodgson must have felt, Tess could only have guessed at. And the death of his wife was known to all who associated with him as well. Dodgson was human. Humiliation and heartbreak. And Rita. Another name. Another piece to the puzzle Tess had wrangled from the jumble of intersecting coincidences all spokes in the wheel surrounding Isabella.

## CHAPTER 6



### LADY TESS

Tess Alliana Alhanastay like any other woman her age worried this morning her thoughts around the encroaching wrinkles; the encroaching nasty furrows of lines criss crossing out any semblance of her cherished youth as her face stared back to her from the dressing table mirror. “No trying to fool myself again,” said Tess with a sigh.

Tess the Accomplished One as she was referred to by her friends. And indeed she was. Born into a fine family of privilege and wealth. An only child; pampered but only slightly; expertly educated by private tutors. A degree in finance and commerce from the university (rare for a woman born at her time). Upon graduation Tess worked shoulder to shoulder with her father in his building industry and had taken the position as primary manager when he had begun to slow with age. After his death Tess became disinterested in the full burden of the business and sold it to a group of investors. The market this year was in her favor and Tess gleaned a sizable fortune.

Tess had one weakness or it would be more fair to say, a wonderful compassion for humanity and animals as well. She was charitable to a fault as she was also champion for the poor and downtrodden; she also, as well, at the forefront of women’s suffrage. With as much work prowess as she had managed her father’s business she used her multiple skills and charms to encourage her friends to donate to her favorite charities and donate time and money to women’s suffrage movement.

And it was of no little interest to Tess when the story of the Tumblers manor burned its way into the character of Englishers speaking gossip as there was not one table at any cafe where Isabella had not been the subject of discussion. There was something strange even gothic sounding to Tess about the Tumbler’s orphan story.

Tess’ heightened sense for searching the ‘unknown’ was with her from childhood and had driven her into the mysteries of the science of the mind and into the spiritual practices of the time. She had become so fond of attending seances she eventually opened a salon of her own.

There were of course theatrical tricks she commingled with the sessions; the lighting, the knockings, and sometimes varying voices or creaking noises and music. She would in time hire actors to float above the gatherings. And yet not all was fakery; Tess often found herself ultimately surprised by other occurrences, other voices and unexpected floating objects.

And then there had come that one apocalyptic peak in Tess's life when the report of her beloved brother's maiming in the war and that of his ensuing addiction to heroin had begun.

Before going to war Freddie was full of life; a childish playboy under her financial care. But when he returned to London he no longer could display his eloquence of charming civility, not with only half a foot to dance upon and an absent arm from which to guide a dance partner.

She had seen to it that Freddie walked the challenging path of rehab and with every bit of his labor and her encouragement and that of military doctors he was set free of the addiction to his liquid, lethal addiction.

Freddie found comfort in Tess's salon practices and began helping with the mechanical setting up of props and it was he who often was the knocking, hidden hand or the silvery ghost voice questioning and answering the salon guests. And once he had initiated an electrical ghost sort of image with the help of a private contractor who had been a munitions expert Freddie had met in the trenches and like he was one of the few soldiers to survive. This friend had created an electrical image of a woman walking from beyond the closed door and entering the room walked directly to the other side of the salon and disappeared into the curtain wallcovering.

And between Tess and Freddie, as they mingled about in the community, would gather information about their visitors so that they could speak with foreknowledge about their wants and needs and, needs for forgiveness. It was very efficient and great fun and they took earnest satisfaction in helping persons with secrets best healed by speaking them out in public.

And then one day something changed that Freddie needed not tell Tess of as his increased absent mindness, his tardiness and his mounting no shows for the work could only mean that her brother was back, hooked again on opium.

Tess's possessed craft for finding answers to any question of serious endeavor and as she reached deep into her list of contacts concluded there could be one only source Freddie's once again found ailment and self prescribed cure and this had been a secretive employment to Rancid, dapper man about town. Rumored thief, rumored murderer and purveyor of drugs she assumed. And was not as if Rancid had personally given Freddie access to heroin but the very circle of thieves he associated with had no doubt put temptation to close to her brother.

And on this day when Tess was ready (her face for the day as well she could craft it) she would meet the world with her fabulous clothing, her hair thankfully still full and with that little splash of rinse, still bragging itself for beauty's sake; gems and a fine carriage she had held onto, not quite going the route of the auto which she did take when going to theater or some good distance; altogether a person who had everything. Tess even had Isabella as a sort of surrogate, play doll image to focus her life upon; much the same as the Goblet widow she was sure...something to have purpose for in aging days.

So much had come into play in these months; Tess had thanked her lucky stars that it felt as if all her plans were near to perfect completion. She so wanted Freddie back to rehab and back with his prescribed medications. This Rancid character had played too big a role in their lives and in her estimation hundreds of others. Tess would continue to wait as the grains of justice shifted into their perfect mold and then Rancid would breathe no more.

## **PART II**

### **Poole of Blood**

A roof rafter hung low above Poole's bed. He could lie back upon his pillow and reach up with his knife and nick a chunk of wood representing each kill he had made and did so with great pride. His 'career' as murder had made a faint beginning when he tried strangling his father as he was beating furiously upon his mother. His father simply pried the boy's fingers from his throat and instead beat Poole to a bloody pulp.

By the time Poole was in his early twenties he had already scored two kills: one by pushing an elderly man down two flights of metal stairs, no doubt getting an even hand upon his father in some subliminal way. And the other by ripping into a derelict card player which Poole perceived, wrongly or not, that the man had cheated him.

Both killings had given him such a rush of adrenalin that he waited for the next opportunity with great relish.

Rancid had heard of him of course (nothing happened in Rancid's playground that he did not hear of) and watched for a special mission to hire Poole through a surrogate to undertake a robbery that might require extreme "effort" to complete. This of course was the case and Poole showed his then finely honed skill at murder to be exacting and efficient. In time Rancid used Poole again and, then again.

Rancid did not actually meet Poole for many years but Poole had come to understand that his employer was none other than the notorious Rancidous Rancidmore when one day Lord Farnsworth had shown up on the front stoop of his flat to hand him several notes in payment for a job recently completed. And because everyone knew of Lord Farnsworth, Poole spent many a night in the pub bragging about just whom had given him the money he was now paying for their drinks with.

Serving directly under Rancid once Farnsworth had died, Poole was kept on open end probation.

Rancid did engage Poole directly in his favorite dingy waterhole, Daniels himself not looking well, drink and smoke were do to overtake him in the not distant future. Once Farnsworth had died Rancid had any number of persons he could choose from to be his singular front man.

Rancid even considered Jenny a comely brunette both prostitute and thief; an accomplished pianist as well. Even an international assassin. But in the end Rancid settled upon Poole for no particular reason other than he was assured Poole had no bounds to hinder him from carrying out the most audacious, and filthy of deeds.

Poole did not give so much the blink of the eyelid when informing his employer in his home that he very much suspected Freddie was 'falling' for Isabella and yet Poole gloated and jumped to revelation in his own pride at just how perceptive he was and just how much more his valuation would go up in the mind of Mr. Rancid.

"I could see it in his face Sir,"....."I was in love....once," claimed Poole. "For myself Freddie had that unmistakable look."

"Then it would appear Poole," said Rancid after one of his long pauses "that our Mr. Freddie has come to the ends of our needing him. Nothing quite like a puppy dog in love to convolute all of our plans. The very

next and near thing is that he will be making confessions to his sweetheart about his and mine association.”

And, after a very short pause Rancid spoke evenly “I think your path is very clear my friend; the next time he goes to his opium den, there suffocate him. The case will hardly be of interest to the police; just another corpse to dispose of. Can’t have the buggers knocking at our door, can we?”

It was not difficult to prefigure Freddie’s movements as he would leave his room and make his rounds about the blocks surrounding the hotel; stop in for a coffee, read the Times.

He would then to his room, or shop for food or another tie, have his shoes polished, perhaps call on a friend. Lunch in one of three of his favorite cafes and when his afternoon nap was over, wrapped the rubber sphincter around his forearm and shoot heroin into his veins. This he did daily, the heroine injection, roundabout three.

For this Poole knew of a certainty in that Freddie would be in a fit of the shakes, and panic when he knocked upon Poole’s door, he, Freddie, often forgetting to get his monthly supply in advance and knowing never to disturb Poole until late afternoon.

But it was when Freddie did not come to Poole, Poole figured he had gone to his favorite den to hibernate in a long trance of introspection and hallucination.

And it was just such a time on such a weekday from getting his assignment to eliminate Freddie, that Poole inquired of one of his associates, that yes, Freddie had not returned to his hotel for several days that Poole made his way to the opium den. And as he lit off the handsome, paid the cabbie and walked up two streets of debris and foul odor he turned down the familiar alleyway only to find himself surrounded by police and in perfect eye to eye contact with Inspector Thomson.

“Mr. Poole I presume” stated the inspector with lethal assurity “I am Inspector Thomson and you are under arrest for among many other works of your pathetic trade, the murder of a One, Mr. Fancy, a Miss Rita and my predecessor and colleague Inspector Dodgson. And what I supposed now would be the attempted assassination of Freddie Bower.”

As the officers surrounding Poole did a thorough frisking of Poole's body they unearthed two knives, one in his boot holster one in his belt and a gun in its saddle under his left arm.

Poole said nothing as he stood being frisked, he in a petrified state of fear, unable to move a muscle feeling himself that he was bound with a tress of twine. And indeed this was a good metaphor for in Britain, the law of the land was delivered with swift and sure sentence and, for Mr. Poole, rope would soon be the instrument for his eternal petrification.



## CHAPTER 7



### THE AWAY WITH EVIL

The premises of the Trevor's Manor masked ball was the most anticipated celebration in the Christmas season. The premise was that of a charitable one; the monies collected from tickets were scattered through the multiple organizations whose hands were held out for much needed assistance.

Tess was one of the original organizers of the ball whom with her many friends made it the success each year that it was renown to be. The list of invitees was limited and so those persons, those who could afford the steep ticket price, when the month of October arrived would rush to their post box each day hoping their name had been chosen for the December gathering.

One of several persons in London who was assured an invitation was that of Mr. Rancid who never did disappoint by not only buying for himself a ticket but was also one to deposit a sizable check into the extra offering box placed strategically in full view of those in the ball room so as to encourage donations.

"Lady Tess," glowed Rancid from his dark tuxedo, while undoing his cape for the doorman to take. Once in position Rancid strood with great aplomb with his arm outstretched and gracing Lady Tess with a warm two handed handshake. "Lady Tess," he said once more, this time in a soft, warm, affectionate voice. "Again, another success without a doubt!"

"Lord Rancid, again, how you do so grace our gathering. And again with your curious mask; this time it reminds me of a grown magician ready to cast spells on the least suspecting," cooed Tess in return. There was a moment of chitter chat about this or that before the next guest arrived and Lord Rancid excused himself to find the wet bar.

As any ball, the masked ball this evening was grand and greatly enjoyed. So many people to mingle with, to catch up with their lives and of course to discuss business possibilities.

Lord Rancid as we have related before was perhaps the most sought out guest of any party, he being the one in the 'know' and certainly one to

know. A friendship with Lord Rancid could be worth millions of pounds if he set you in one direction or another with the purchasing of stocks or notes, he of course reminding you of that favor for as many as two decades or more with the inference that you now owed him.

And late in the night as the guests dispersed, of the very few persons left besides the organizing volunteers Rancid and Tess found themselves walking in the early morning on the porch which surrounded the manor. Tess confided in Lord Rancid about Freddie and how worried to almost death about his opioid addiction and how just a few days earlier she was able to take him to rehab again. "My God," Tess all but wept "he's so unbelievably thin!"

Lord Rancid consoled his friend and offered her his full support. And as they walked the cement flooring Rancid, wished he could confide his great consternation about the arrest and certain sentence of death for Poole but of course said nothing, his only thought was how to get to Poole and have him assassinated before he turned state's evidence against Rancid himself. And in the entrance hall as the butler was handing Lord Rancid his walking cane and top hat and cape Tess enjoined "Perhaps I may see the popular Lord Rancid at my salon meeting next Thursday; we have quite a collection of personalities, you would certainly be the brightest stars of that galaxie."

"I have promised before I do not pretend to have forgotten," uttered Lord Rancid.

"Oh please," implored Tess as she held firm upon Lord Rancid's arm with both her hands "I feel I could so use my close friends all the more at this season; it can be so lonely especially with Freddie being in hospital. I admit to being a little afraid."

"Well then, I did have plans that very evening, but for you, my friend Lady Tess I shall be in attendance to aid to assist and to listen for the voices from beyond the grave," he said with a bit of mirth in his voice.

## PART II

Tess was comforted that Freddie would be coming to live at her residence once he recovered in sick-bay. Tess agreed the doctors could try out a new drug on Freddie, a substitute for opium but something that would not produce lethal side effects. She also took the supreme comfort that she would have a breadth of time to see through her plans for the termination of Rancid's existence.

### PART III

Lord Rancid arrived with the other guests promptly at eight, The Bewitching Hour. Most of the guests were 'friends' of Rancid and the few who met him for the first time were instantly aware of his heavily pockmarked skin and bowled over by his thunderous charm.

As usual Tess set at the head of the table and all the guests choose their favored chair (sometimes green lightening did strike twice as they had seen with Isabella) and Rancid was offered the chair Freddie normally sat in and, the one Isabells graced was substituted by a frail maiden known heretofore by no other person than Tess herself and came late into the room with no introduction for her being.

The lighting no sooner dimmed than a whooshing sound coupled with a brisk breeze, more like a young girl calling from down a well, pushed its way among the guests and even threatened to topple Mrs. Symetz showy turban of silk and faux gemstones.

"Well," said Tess "it would appear our spirit friends have arrived before we did," which caused the guests to smirk and chuckle.

But then a serious mood prevailed over the room as nothing else moved or swooshed and everyone just sat in silence until the frail young maiden began to hum in a low tone and then began speaking in a dialect that no person present understood. After several moments she stopped the dialect cooing and then, once again as if by magic, the green light did appear and made a full circle around the room before it came and hovered directly over the seated Lord Rancid.

He had seen this before in the other rooms of seance, or something similar; for himself he was an ardent believer in the occult, that unseen world of spirits, but was also aware of the multiple exposures of fraud and chincinry crafted for the purpose of gaining fame and fortune and though he was long an acquaintance of Madam Tess he, Rancid, would not put anyone above the idea of 'foolery' perhaps just for the simple delight of playing the role of the trickster.

And then as the green light hovered for moments more the shrill maiden began again with her noise making which ascended in rapidity and in volume. On she went, in a moaning that turned to a wailing that turned into something very uncomfortable and weird.

The guests started to fidget and Mr. Kaven pushed his chair from the table with the intention of walking out of the room when suddenly by

projection of the green light Lord Rancid became fully illuminated as it were in a green misty cone. Rancid himself slid his chair back and stood, but not by his own strength or will, rather, by the volt of electricity that was passing through his body.

Rancid's face coiled in a flash of torture, he being unable to scream simply stood erect and as he had suddenly turned to wood, rather fried, before falling face forward onto the table, his arms and hands outstretched, he then, sliding from the table pulling the table covering and the crystal ball to the floor; the green light having gone out.

After the women screamed and bit their fingers with their teeth and the men, some of whom howled like wounded sheep, ceased their bleeping; Tess turned up the rooms gas lighting to full capacity, studied that which was once the person Rancid and then began to herd the persons from the room and out the front door assuring each participant that she would reveal none of their names and would relate to them later that what she and the police would come to conclusion, that there must have been a faulty electricity current was Lord Rancid's unfortunate conduit to death.

None of that evening's participants would remember the young maiden until days after and only when asking themselves if she had had anything to do with the most especially awful appearance of Rancid being lit up in ghastly green; the maiden they reasoned just another of the sometimes real live strange persons whom all but haunted the seance rooms being cartoons of themselves. And of course with so many people in the room the full story would hit London's gossip vine like a tabloid headline, and embellished in conflicting stories with each individual's telling.

The final policing of the event would give Tess a 'pass' as to the misfiring of her gimmicky green light trick, as she could not possibly be suspect of knowing anything about electrical current, she being a woman (no matter what the women's movement was preaching) and, would not have orchestrated anything of an evil deed, as she and Lord Rancid they discovered had been long, trusted friends and above all these factors, Tess was a grand giver of time and money to charities, the police widow and orphans trust fund at the top of that list.

## CHAPTER 8



### THE MEETING OF HEARTS

The mind is a machine with complex mechanisms and with the correct levers pulled by experts of the human race we find that in a theatrical sense both doctor Hemel and Doctor Sullivan were perfectly cast into the roles that the treacherously tender mind of Isabella Rose Standardhall would find rest and peace this very day on a park bench at Kensington Gardens.

And on this perfectly sculpted park bench with hardly a chip of paint loosened sat Isabella Rose flanked on either side by one, Doctor Hemel and on the other the eminent Doctor Sullivan.

“In the end Isabella,” continued Doctor Hemel with a conversation which had gone well on one half hour. “Yes my dear,” added Doctor Sullivan “you are in every way in control of your destiny. As both Doctor Hemel and I have marveled over all this time and observed you go through all your difficulties we jointly agree that you are one extraordinary person to have survived this very far.”

“And so Isabella,” were the words heard in Isabella’s ears as if both doctors had spoken simultaneously “will we all three hear you say goodbye to the past so that you may, please we beg you, begin your life anew?”

Isabella had in some way known this was the reason they had somehow come together this day even though she might not have been able to say this outloud. There was a brief but noted silence and then Isabella who was sitting upright and staring directly ahead spoke: “This is something like going through a door isn’t it?”

“Very much” said Doctor Sullivan. “And if you ever feel like you need to go back to that space, the past, which we are encouraging you to leave forever, then you by all means can.”

Other noted silent moments passed and then Isabella spoke once again: “The truth is I want to be free. Yes, I want to be so very free! I deserve to be free, don’t I,” said Isabella turning her head to look at both her friends.

“For all the world,” said Doctor Hemel with the greatest of assurance.

“All of the leaves of the trees, the clouds, the sky, even the squirrels agree,” said Doctor Sullivan “enough is enough!”

Then Isabella rose. And so also the doctors two. “I think it a quite right day for a walk,” said Isabella taking both her friends hands.

“And after a walk I think we she have a great celebratory lunch,” offered Doctor Sullivan.

“With a fine dessert,” sparkled Doctor Hemel as the trio strode away.

## CHAPTER 9



### TO SAY GOODBYE

Freddie's stay in the sanitarium would take as long as it would, explained Madame Tess to Isabella as they sided arm in arm down the Thames walkway.

Well aware of her time in Kensington Park with both her doctors' and the resolve Isabella had chosen for herself Doctor Hemel and Doctor Sullivan had agreed that leaving London would be a great help for Isabella in her quest to begin anew.

And as they walked Isabella questioned "But what should I do, where shall I go?" asked Isabella. "And what about my home now...Mrs. Goblet and the nasty Miss Tepid whom Isabella had to admit to having a bit of affection for?"

"I will give you what I think is your best resolve my sister and it is something Mrs. Goblet and I have discussed upon and agreed upon in depth" said Tess with as much affection in her voice as she could. "There was a man in your life whose name and origin have to do with the land of Wales. Yes, your former employer Mr. Esteem. He truly relishes the idea of you going to live with him and his kind. He lives in a small village and he says you can live with his sister and her family. Both your doctor friends feel this the best. I understand it is a cold, somewhat harsh land, but gorgeous in its beauty, rich in its history, with stone castles on every other hilltop. I hear there is also a good interaction between the human population and fairies. While we seek for spirits in darkened rooms such as my home I have read you can find the 'Wee Little Ones' under mushrooms and in flowered gardens and forest glens. Sounds quite wonderful to me and if you move there I will have reason and purpose to travel there myself. Perhaps we shall have a 'fairie experience' together!"

And so it was arranged that Isabella upon packing her personal items did just that act of going to Paddington rail station with both Mrs. Goblet and Tess and waited to board the car that would carry her to Wales, the land of gorgeous beauty, castles and hide-and-go-seek fairies.

It was a teary departure both women smothering Isabella, all three crying and wiping their eyes. It was Mrs. Goblet who instructed the porter which bags were to be placed in steerage and which ones to Isabella's state room.

And with one last final hug Tess simultaneously pulled a bundled-up cloth from the interior of her coat. "I believe this is yours, sister Isabella," she said palming it in the hand of Isabella's. And unraveling the cloth yes, there it was, the emerald. "The other gems, those collected from the warehouse, are in safe deposit in the bank of London. They are collateral for you to draw upon for your personal needs. Mrs. Goblet and I will keep a good watch over the ledger and will send you statements every quarter. Now off my child, our child and, go to the land we have talked about; it is your own fable to fulfill and now time for you to return the stone to its rightful place."

That night in her state room, after a tasty supper Isabella sat up in her bed propped against two pillows, her knees balancing her diary...

*In the year of our Lord King Edward 1429*

*And so one more chapter in the tale of Princess Isabella has been scripted. Again such a journey, and again with so much intrigue; even death...nothing that could have been foreseen. Whoa upon those whom doth act in ways that are evil as justice always will find its anvil to hammer out punishment.*

*The future: we live for the future for what else is there but our next adventures.? Castles, eh? And harsh weather; glorious landscapes and new persons to be acquainted with. And the emerald; to return it to its home. So, there is music to this life. Fine themes, riddles that rhyme and resonate with the human soul. All is well.*

*With great regard: Princess Isabella Rose Standarhall*

The End