



Jilly became an instant celebrity. Her popularity at Farrow's Music Hall soared. She had even taken to finishing her performance by describing the Ripper, re-enacting their conversation, then issuing a defiant boast that she could identify the villain on sight and would gladly send Jacky to the gallows.

Ruthie's own engagement at Farrow's had been cancelled to make room for Jilly's expanded act. But that would soon change, she told herself. Ruthie was younger and prettier—and she could even sing. Already the thirstiest members of the audience were starting to retrieve drinks from the bar during Jilly's dramatic re-enactment.

"Course she saw him," Danny replied. "Jilly and me was out pub crawling that night when she steps into an alley to relieve herself. Couple minutes later, she comes out, all ashy faced. A strange, dangerous man had talked to her in there. Then we hears the police whistle."

When the young reporter from the *East London Observer* entered the Ten Bells, Danny jumped up to greet him. "Thanks for coming so late. Jilly's show just finished. She'll be here any minute."

"Does she really remember new clues about the Ripper?" the reporter asked suspiciously, taking out his notepad and pencil. "It's been weeks since she saw him."

"She always remembered," Danny said smoothly. "She's just been too scared to tell every detail. But after this last bit of slaughter, my brave lass will risk all—as long as you print her complete words with a nice pen and ink portrait on your front page."

Ruthie let out a little moan of despair. It's going to start up all over again, she thought. Amos Pickering glowered from behind the bar. Jilly's opportunistic husband was going to squeeze every farthing he could out of this situation, thought he. And the dark, mustachioed man who'd been sitting by himself in the corner silently got up and headed for the pub's rear door. No one had any idea what might be on his mind.

THE RIPPER'S LAST VICTIM

London, 1888

IHEY THINK HE STRANGLES 'EM dead before he cuts 'em up. That's what they're saying." Ruthie Tanner shivered, then ordered another pint.

For months now people had been talking of little else, especially in London's East End, most especially in this pub, the Ten Bells, where two of Jack the Ripper's women had been seen shortly before their grisly deaths. The latest victim, Mary Kelly, had been a regular at the Ten Bells, dropping in to drink and sometimes to pick up a bit of company for the evening.

Danny Wainwright nodded. "My Jilly says he's got big hands; she recalls it clear."

"Your Jilly?" Amos growled as he delivered Ruthie's pint. It hadn't been so long ago that Jilly was Amos's girl. After an evening of pouring drinks, he'd been proud to step out with the pretty little singer, even if she wasn't as young as she'd once been. And now, to see her married to a fast-talking character like Wainwright—it was almost more than Amos could bear.

"She really saw him then?" asked Ruthie, her voice tinged with jealousy. Jilly Jones, in one of those fateful accidents of life, had exchanged a few words with the Ripper on the last night of September, just seconds before Catharine Eddowes's body was found in Mitre Square.

The clock on the wall struck midnight as Danny bought the reporter a pint of bitter. "I gotta go watch me brother's brats," Ruthie said. She plopped down a shilling and headed for the door. Ruthie's brother was a fish porter at the docks. His shift started at midnight, although Ruthie usually didn't show up at his flat until after one. Tonight, she'd get there early.

"It's dead tonight. I'm closing up." Amos rushed the two men through their ales, then ushered them out into an alley. "Think I'll meander up to the Horn of Plenty," he yawned, then turned the corner onto the main thoroughfare of Commercial Road.

Danny fumbled nervously for his pocket watch. "I don't know what's keeping Jilly. What say we head over to the music hall? We'll probably meet her on the way."

Night fog drifted in from the Thames, diffusing the gassy glow from the street lamps. As they walked, going from populated streets to winding lanes, Danny kept up a monologue, promoting his bride's talent and integrity, even her financial acumen. "No singer in Whitechapel has done better." The further they wandered into the shadowy alleys, the louder he seemed to speak. "S'got her own house, she does, free and clear, plus something in the bank."

The reporter was the first to hear it, the sound of scuffling and a woman's muffled cry. With a raised hand, he halted Danny in mid-sentence.

"Help! Someone help me!" The words echoed in the fog, sounding desperate and strangled.

"Jilly?" Danny turned in circles, trying to pinpoint the source. "Where are you, Jilly?" There were no more words, only the sound of footsteps.

Danny listened until the footsteps stopped. "Over here," he said and led the way through an archway into the narrow alley known as George Yard.

Jilly Jones lay motionless on the ground, face up, the crown of her head facing them as they approached. "Get a copper,"

Danny yelled as he knelt by the body. "Quick. On the run."

The reporter rushed out onto Wentworth Street and, as luck would have it, within seconds found a constable making his rounds. When they returned to the site, Danny hadn't moved. He was kneeling behind her head and sobbing her name. "Jilly, my lass. The brute has strangled her dead."

Inspector Abberline gazed down at the body lying on the morgue slab. "Looks like he didn't have time to cut her, but she's just as dead."

"Not all murdered women between Spitalfields and Whitechapel are the Ripper's victims," Sergeant Godley reminded his superior.

That was true. Of the seven, now eight, women the newspapers were listing as victims, only five were confirmed as being killed by the beast who had labeled himself Jack in those sickening, taunting notes.

"We're checking out the patrons of Farrow's Music Hall," added Godley. "Perhaps one of them followed her."

"Good," said Abberline approvingly. "Let's also check out the people at Ten Bells. According to that reporter, they all heard Danny Wainwright say that she was coming to the pub from Farrow's. George Yard is on a direct route between the two."

"Already done," Godley said and opened his notebook. "Ruthie Tanner claims she went straight from the pub to her brother's place in Pinchin Street. The little nipper who unlatched the door for her, he says the Bow Bells struck midnight just a few minutes before she came."

"Hmm. A nephew might just lie. What about the barman?"

"Amos Pickering says he was drinking at the Horn of Plenty. No one remembers him specifically."

"Seems odd to close down your own pub, then go off drinking at another. Any luck tracking down this stranger with the mustaches?"

Godley flipped a page. "Name's Ezekiel Braun. A genteel, shabby foreigner, like a few of the Jack witnesses describe.

Pretends not to speak much English. But I did get him to swear that he went from the Ten Bells to St. Botolph's in Aldgate High Street to light a candle and say a prayer."

"St. Botolph's?" the inspector muttered. "Isn't that called the Prostitute's Church?"

"Right. It's also the spot where Catharine Eddowes was seen the night of her murder. Shall I bring him in for questioning?"

"Let's examine a few pieces of evidence first. Then we'll know who to bring in."

- (1) *Who killed Jilly Jones? (2) How did the killer establish an alibi?*
 (3) *What was the motive?*

If you've already solved this mystery, check the Solution on p. 137.
 To discover additional clues, turn to Gathering Evidence on p. 113.

HISTORICAL NOTES: WHAT HAPPENED TO JACK?

JACK THE RIPPER was not the first serial killer in history, just the first famous one. He happened to appear in one of the world's largest cities at a time when literacy was high and newspapers had become a major force in daily life. Between August and mid-November of 1888, London was transfixed daily by the latest rumors, copycat murders, and hoaxes which only served to mythologize a bloody killer, and muddy the investigation.

The number of Ripper victims is a matter of dispute. One well-known historian concluded that there were at least four, probably six. The newspapers of the day raised the total to eleven. Murders of women were not unusual in London's East End, and the press was eager to attribute any brutal attack to the "beast from hell." All of the Ripper victims were prostitutes, making them easy targets, and all were thought to be drunk at the time of their deaths.

The killer's original nickname in the press was Leather

Apron, a reference to a leather apron found beside the second confirmed victim. But on September 25, the Central News Agency received a letter bragging about the crimes and signed, "Yours truly, Jack the Ripper." This letter, along with others received by the police, is now thought to be a hoax. A package, received in mid-October, contained half a human kidney, supposedly taken from Catharine Eddowes. But this, too, may have been a hoax. Medical students of the period were not above such gruesome pranks.

Speculation on the identity of the Ripper has not slowed in the hundred-plus years since. Over two dozen suspects have been suggested, including the professor and children's book author Lewis Carroll and a woman nicknamed Jill the Ripper. The most popular suspect, accused in multiple books and movies, is Prince Albert Victor, grandson of Queen Victoria. The royal family supposedly knew of the murders and engaged in an elaborate cover-up. Prince Eddy, second in line to the throne, died of influenza in 1892.

The most recent solution was proposed by mystery author Patricia Cornwell. Her candidate is Walter Sickert, a famous artist of the period. Her theory is supported by partial DNA evidence lifted from some of the Ripper letters. But most, if not all, of the letters are now thought to be hoaxes. So, the question is still open. Was Sickert the Ripper? Or was he a prankster?

We'll leave the final theory to Frederick Abberline, the real-life model for our own inspector. His prime suspect was Severin Klosowski, a Polish immigrant. Klosowski, a barber experienced with blades, was suspected years later in a similar prostitute murder in the United States and, back in London, was eventually convicted of poisoning his three wives. When Sergeant Godley, the model for our own Sergeant Godley, arrested Klosowski, the retired Inspector Abberline congratulated him. "You've got Jack the Ripper at last!"

We'll probably never know for sure.