

PROLOGUE

LONDON, 1889.

Nobody noticed when Inspector Christian Little of Scotland Yard disappeared, and nobody was looking for him when he was found.

A black steamer trunk appeared at Euston Square Station sometime during the night and remained unnoticed until early afternoon of the following day. The porter discovered it after the one o'clock train had departed, and he opened the trunk when it proved too heavy for him to lift.

He immediately sent a boy to find the police.

Detective Inspector Walter Day was first at the scene, and he directed the many bobbies who arrived after him. He had come to London only the week before. This was his first crime scene and he was clearly nervous, but the blue-uniformed bobbies knew their job well and did not require much from him. They pushed back the commuters who had gathered round the trunk and began to scour the station for possible weapons and other clues.

An hour later, Dr Bernard Kingsley entered the station all in a rush and headed for the knot of people gathered on the gallery of the booking office. The trunk had been left against the railing overlooking the platform. Kingsley brushed past Inspector Day and knelt on the floor.

He opened his satchel and drew out a cloth tape measure, snaked it between his fingers, moving it up and across. The trunk was a standard size, two by three by three, glossy black with tin rivets along the seams. He closed the lid and brushed a finger across the top. It was clean; no dust.

With his magnifying glass in hand, he scuttled around the trunk, scrutinizing the corners for wear. He licked his finger and rubbed a seam along one side where black paint had been applied to cover a crack. He was aware of Day hovering over his shoulder and, less intrusive, the bobbies at the station's entrance pushing back fresh onlookers who had arrived from the street outside. The lower classes were always out for a spectacle, while the better-off walked briskly past, ignoring the to-do.

His preliminary examination out of the way, Kingsley opened and shut the trunk's lid several times, listening to the hinges, then eased it back until the edge of the lid rested against the floor. He peered into the trunk for a long moment, ignoring the sickly sweet odor of death. The body inside was folded in on itself, knotted and mashed into the too-small space like so much laundry. One shoe was missing, and Kingsley presumed it was somewhere at the bottom of the trunk, under the body. The man's suit was gabardine, the hems lightly worn, dirt pressed into the creases. His arms and legs were broken and wrapped around one another.

Kingsley took a pair of tongs from his satchel and used them to move an arm out of the way so he could see the man's face. The skin was pearl grey and the eyes and mouth were sewn shut with heavy thread, the pattern of parallel stitches like train tracks across the man's lips. Kingsley looked up at Day. When he spoke, his voice was low and measured.

"Have you identified him yet?"

Day shook his head no.

"It's one of you," Kingsley said.

"One of me?"

"The body is that of a detective. This is Inspector Little."

Day backed away to the railing and held up his hands, warding off the unpleasant thought.

"It can't be. I spoke with Little just last evening."

Kingsley shrugged.

"It's not that I doubt you," Day said. "But Inspector Little . . ."

"Come and see for yourself," Kingsley said.

Day stared at him.

“I said come here. Please.”

“Of course.”

Day approached the trunk and swallowed hard before looking down.

“Breathe through your mouth, Mr Day. The odor isn’t pleasant.”

Day nodded, panting heavily.

“I suppose it is Mr Little. But what have they done to him?”

“You can see what’s been done. The question is *why* has it been done?”

“It’s inhuman.”

“I’m afraid it’s all too human.”

“Cut those off him. Get that off his face. We can’t have a detective of the Yard trussed up like a . . . like a Christmas goose, for God’s sake.”

One of the uniformed constables standing at the rail looked up. The station was full of citizens who didn’t care about the dead detective in the trunk just so long as they got a chance to see him. Day recognized the terror in the constable’s eyes and could see that he had no idea why he was doing this dangerous job for little money and no respect. In that single moment, in the expression he saw in the other man’s eyes, Day understood that London needed her police, but did not care about them. And he saw, too, that this newfound discovery was something that every policeman on that platform already understood.

The morale of the Metropolitan Police Force had reached its lowest point during the Ripper murders of the previous year and had not yet recovered. The files of the Whitechapel murders had not been closed as the case was still ongoing, but nobody in London trusted the police to do their job. Jack had escaped and the detectives of the Yard had never even come close to finding him. The unsolved case was a harsh reminder of their fallibility, and it hung over their heads every morning when they walked through the door of the back hall. The Ripper was still out there somewhere, and it was likely he’d remain out there.

Kingsley stood and put a hand on Day’s shoulder. When he spoke, his voice was barely audible.

“I will most assuredly make Inspector Little presentable again. There will be a time and a place to mourn him. Here and now, you must fix your mind on justice. It is not outside the realm of possibility that Little’s killer is watching us, and your demeanor may set the course for the investigation to come. You must appear to be strong and rational.”

Day nodded.

“To work, then,” Kingsley said.

He grabbed a handle and lifted one end of the trunk, grunted, and set it back down.

“Inspector Day,” he said, “you look like an able fellow. Lift this end, would you?”

“Where shall I put it?”

“Not the entirety of the trunk, just pull upward on the handle and get this thing off the ground a bit, would you?”

Kingsley removed his hat and set it on a bench along the far wall of the gallery. He draped his coat over the arm of the bench and strode back to where Day had an end of the trunk lifted off the ground. The two men were a study in contrasts. Dr Kingsley was short and thin with sharply chiseled features and wild, prematurely grey hair that matched his eyes. Inspector Day was tall and built like an ox through the chest and shoulders. His short dark hair was combed back from his wide forehead, and his expression was permanently helpful, as if he were in search of an old lady he might escort across the street. He displayed the easy physical confidence that some big men had, but his features were fine and sensitive and his eyes were sad. Kingsley found it impossible to dislike the young detective.

“Higher, would you?” Kingsley said. “That’s better.”

He got down on his hands and knees and crawled under the end of the trunk, Day straining above him. It didn’t occur to him that Day might drop the trunk on his head. Men like Day used their brains to move their muscles about. Their muscles were useful enough.

Kingsley inspected the planks of the platform floor, peering into crevices in the ancient wood, worn smooth by the shoes of countless travelers.

"Aha!" he said. He scrambled backward until his head was clear of the bottom of the trunk and stood up, using one hand to smooth his waistcoat over his stomach. The thumb and index finger of his other hand were pinched together, and he held them up to the light.

Day squinted.

"It's a hair," he said.

"No, lad. It's a thread. This end is frayed a bit where it's been cut. Here, you see?"

"The same thread used to sew his mouth and eyes?"

"Different color. That was black. This is dark blue. It could be a coincidence, someone lost a thread from her coat, perhaps, but I don't think so. I think your killer came prepared with at least two colors of thread. And why would that be?"

He abruptly dropped to the ground and began to crawl around the platform, his magnifying glass playing over the surface, his long fingers poking into the corners where the wall joined the planks of the floor. After several long minutes in which the onlookers behind the railing began to grow restless, Kingsley murmured an exclamation and held his finger up to the light. A drop of blood formed on his fingertip, and Kingsley smiled. He sucked the blood from his finger and turned his magnifying glass around, using the blunt handle to scrape dirt away from the wall.

He stood and trotted back to where Day was still holding up an end of the trunk. Kingsley held out his hand, displaying his find for Day to see.

"Needles," Day said.

Kingsley grinned. "Three needles, Inspector Day. Three, where one might do. I'd say our killer's made a telling mistake. Give me your handkerchief."

"Is it in my breast pocket?"

"I don't see one there."

"I may have come out without it today."

Kingsley nodded and turned to the nearest constable.

"You there, have you a handkerchief?"

A tall, lanky constable looked up from the side of the platform where he seemed to be scanning the crowd. His eyes were bright and intelligent and nearly hidden behind long feminine lashes. He jumped slightly at the sound of Kingsley's voice.

"What's your name?" Kingsley said.

"Hammersmith, sir."

"You sound Welch, sir."

"Yes, sir."

"You're watching the crowd?"

"What the detective said, about it being another detective in the box, it surprised people."

"You were looking to see who among that crowd wasn't surprised. Who might have already known there was a detective in the trunk."

"Yes, sir."

"And?"

"I didn't see anything unexpected."

Kingsley nodded. "Still," he said, "it was a worthy idea. How long have you been with the force?"

"Two years, sir."

"I'm surprised I haven't made your acquaintance before this. I shall watch your career with interest. Now, I wonder if I might borrow your handkerchief?"

"Of course, sir."

"Thank you, Mr Hammersmith."

Kingsley took the offered kerchief and glanced at it. He looked up at the constable.

"This is not particularly clean."

"I apologize, sir. I've been at it now for two shifts and haven't had a chance to launder anything."

Indeed, Hammersmith looked sloppy. His blue uniform was wrinkled, his shirt was untucked on one side, and the cuffs of his trousers were muddy. There was a hangdog air about him, but in his body language and bearing he somehow gave the impression of utter competence.

“Yes, well, thank you, Hammersmith. I shall return this as soon as I possibly can.”

“Of course, sir.”

Kingsley wrapped the needles in the soiled square of cloth. He tucked the handkerchief and the short piece of blue thread into his vest pocket to be examined later.

“This one is a challenge. A real challenge.”

Kingsley smiled and scanned the platform one last time, barely taking in the crowd of onlookers.

“Wonderful,” he said. “Simply wonderful. You can let that down now.”

Day eased the end of the heavy trunk back to the platform floor and breathed a sigh of relief.

“Have two of the men bring that round to the college,” Kingsley said. “I’ll want to examine Little’s body, but I’m not going to do it here. Have the rest of these bobbies search the platform carefully for a man’s left shoe. I suspect it’s in the trunk, but there’s no harm in putting them to work.”

Kingsley shrugged back into his coat, picked up his hat, and walked away. Halfway to the far edge of the platform, he turned and walked back to where Day still stood. He leaned in and whispered so the onlookers wouldn’t overhear. “Shut the lid on that trunk,” he said. “We don’t want that rabble ogling a dead detective.”

DAY ONE



1

TWO HOURS SINCE THE DISCOVERY OF MR LITTLE.

Sergeant Kett took a moment to scan the station. Euston, the metropolitan terminus of the London and North-Western Railway, was always bustling. Hundreds of passengers arrived every day for their first experience of the great city, while others fled to Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Nottingham, and all points between. Kett knew it was unlikely that Inspector Little's killer had remained at the scene of the crime, but still . . . he held out some slight hope that he would spot the butcher. He stood at the top of the wide double staircase looking south toward the great Euston Arch. The grand hall was framed by dark red pillars, and sunlight streamed through a domed skylight in the high ceiling, shimmering across the metallic lava floor. The bright blue uniforms of dozens of bobbies stood out against the grey sea of day travelers and against the white granite of the station walls. But the presence of so many police in the station, while initially novel, was eventually ignored in the urgent press by commuters to get to their proper destinations.

Irish laborers tramped through the massive entrance along with soldiers on furlough and small dirty children traveling to stay with distant relatives. Beyond the wide green awnings above the gates outside, the lingering morning fog had begun to burn away, but Kett couldn't see far into the mist. He liked the swirling grey and the possibility of newness somewhere inside or behind it.

He scanned the crowd while constables bustled back and forth behind him.

Here was a doctor with his family, headed away on vacation, his elaborate beard losing its curls in the sudden heat of the crowded platform, his black bag clutched tight to his chest. His pretty wife bustled along behind, leading a nurse and a young boy, all of them tired and put out.

Two tarts loitered against the wall near one of the meeting rooms and, when he caught their eyes, he made a quick motion with his head to indicate that they should move along. They strolled past him and smiled.

“We does like a man with a full beard,” the shorter of them said.

“Quite masculine,” the prettier of them said. She had a long scar that ran from her scalp to her throat, but it somehow added to her vulnerability and attractiveness.

“Keep moving,” Kett said.

“Pity.”

And they were gone, caught up in the crush of bodies.

Prostitution was illegal, of course, and they were a cheeky pair to be plying their wares so early in the day and in so public a place, but they were brave in their fashion, too, and arresting them would have been fruitless. They would be back at it within the day.

Kett shook his head. Murderers, thieves, whores, and swindlers were all pressed together alongside that rarest of species, the honest citizen. He could spend the entire afternoon studying the crowds at Euston Street and never sort the decent from the damned.

He turned and watched his men do their work.

The hierarchy of the Yard was unusual in that nobody outranked anyone else. The detective inspectors specialized in certain types of crime, the cases that required the most time to solve. The constables—he never called them *bobbies*, despite the popularity of that nickname among the general public—dealt with London’s day-to-day offenses and walked their beats, familiarizing themselves with whole neighborhoods and their people, always with the goal of nipping problems in the bud before they escalated

far enough to warrant the attention of the detectives. And the sergeants, Kett among them, facilitated both constable and inspector, working to ensure that everybody on the force communicated smoothly with everybody else, that everyone was at the top of his game.

His constables made him proud. There were times that Kett felt he had to stride up and down among them, barking orders and keeping everyone on task, but today, with the gravity of the case before them, every one of the men in blue was hustling, working to do his part. Constable Hammersmith in particular seemed tireless, and Kett wondered how long it had been since the young man had slept. He was aware that Hammersmith had worked at least two shifts, and he made a mental note to send the lad home for a rest before he dropped.

The new inspector, Day, appeared to be up to the job, but Kett knew little about the man. There was an innocence about him that bothered Kett. He had seen idealistic men come and go, the city leaching hope from them too quickly. Kett didn't know whether Day would last at the Yard, but he would do what he could to help keep the inspector on the job. There was something immensely likable about the new detective, a sense of duty and of curiosity as well, that could take him a long way.

Not everyone working around the ominous trunk on the gallery floor was under Kett's watch. Dr Kingsley was an exception, as he was not officially a member of the Metropolitan Police Force of Scotland Yard. He worked from a lab in the University College Hospital basement and had created his own position as forensic examiner simply because he felt it was necessary. Before he had taken over the police morgue, forensics work had been nearly nonexistent. Bodies had been shipped to poorly run storage facilities where they were lost or forgotten. He was a strange little man and the police gave him wide berth, but his help was invaluable and he was widely respected within the ranks of the detectives.

If Little's killer was smart, he had hopped on the early train and was already far away.

But Kett allowed himself a hard smile. They had lost the Ripper, but

lessons had been learned. If Little's killer had been bold enough or foolish enough to remain in London, Kett had utter faith that these men would find him and bring him to justice.

The bald man stood at the edge of the crowd and watched as Sergeant Kett returned to the gallery. The gruff old policeman had glanced right at him without the slightest sign of recognition.

Dr Kingsley passed Kett on the staircase without a word and left the station through the arch at the far end. The bald man had never met Kingsley, but he'd heard some of the police talking about the aloof forensics specialist. By all accounts, Kingsley was good. Beyond good. The bald man wished he knew what Kingsley had whispered to the dark-haired young detective.

Across the platform, the detective frowned and gestured to two nearby bobbies.

"Take this trunk up to University College Hospital right away," he said. "To Dr Kingsley's lab. And be careful with it. The body inside is a detective."

He spoke too loudly and the crowd gasped. The bald man composed his expression carefully, mirroring the shock he saw on the faces around him. There was a good bit of chatter, people already late returning to work, sharing the excitement of discovery and danger at a safe distance.

The two men struggled with the trunk. The bald man recognized one of the other police, a young constable named Pringle. He raised a hand and Pringle noticed him. The constable nodded his head and gestured toward a relatively deserted corner of the platform. The bald man moved quickly through the crowd and joined Pringle there.

"Hullo, sir," Pringle said. "Bad bit of business this morning."

"I overheard some of it," the bald man said. "A detective?"

"In the trunk." Pringle grimaced, nodding his head. "Least that's what he said. Bad for us all, if you ask me. Killing detectives."

"But I'm sure they'll catch him, whoever did this, they'll catch him straight-away, don't you think?"

"I hope so, sir. I surely do."

"Well, who's that on the platform? Who's in charge of it all?"

Pringle glanced over at the men shuffling across the platform, the trunk swaying between them, the detective following behind.

"That's Day, sir. Detective Inspector Day. He's only just joined us here last week. Come up from Devon, I think. You wouldn't have met him yet, I'm sure."

"Day, eh?"

"William's his first name. William or . . . No, it's Walter. Walter Day, that's it."

"Good man?"

"I'm sure I wouldn't know, sir, but I hope he's up to the task. Can't have nobody running around offing detectives. Next thing, they'll be takin' aim at us working men. Can't have that."

"No, no, of course not."

"Bad bit of business," Pringle repeated.

"Well, I'll leave you to it, then. Work to do, you know."

"Of course."

"No worries, Pringle. I'm quite sure your new inspector will do the job up right."

Pringle nodded. "Sure an' he will. Bad bit of business, though."

"Yes. Good day, then."

The bald man turned up the collar of his coat and glanced at the sky as he left the building. Grey clouds were rolling in quickly. The crowd would disperse as soon as the rain started, and the bald man didn't want to get caught up in the rush.

He hurried across the street, avoiding a fresh pile of horse manure, and repeated the detective's name under his breath. Detective Inspector Walter Day would bear watching.

But the more immediate problem was Dr Kingsley. Kingsley had shown something to Inspector Day, but the bald man had been too far away to see it. Had he left a clue?

The bald man regretted what had happened. He admired the Metropolitan Police, admired them and tried to help them in his own small way. But Inspector Little had stumbled onto his secret and there had been no choice.

Kingsley and Day. The bald man muttered their names again and spat at the hard-packed dirt of the street. He would have to keep an eye on Kingsley and

Day. If they discovered his secret, too . . . The bald man shook his head, dismissing the thought for now. He would follow the investigation, and if Inspector Day came too close to learning the truth . . . well, Day might just disappear.

Constable Pringle brushed imaginary lint from his trousers and shot the cuffs of his crisp starched shirt. He realized he had a question for the man he'd been talking to and looked across the street, scanning the backs of the departing crowd. Too late. Pringle would have to drop in on him later.

He turned and hurried across the platform. Constables Hammersmith and Jones were shuffling along, the trunk swinging between them.

"Oy, Nevil," Pringle said. "You fancy going along with me? Got some things to pick up."

Nevil Hammersmith looked up and grunted.

"Depends on how long Dr Kingsley keeps us. If he's got nothing for us there, I'll be off duty, but it was a long night, Colin."

"Won't take long. I could use the company. Bit nervous today, you know."

Hammersmith chuckled and switched the handle of the trunk to his other hand.

"Forgot you were taking Maggie out tonight, old man."

"It's dinner. Nothing more."

"How very casual of you. May I assume you won't be returning to the flat until late? I won't wait up for you, but wake me when you arrive in the morning, would you?"

Pringle pursed his lips in a mock frown.

"The morning? You scandalize me, sir. And you besmirch Maggie's good name."

"Get on out of here, Pringle," Jones said. "Hammersmith's got work to do."

Pringle wagged a finger at Jones, but hastened away before anyone could ask him to help with the trunk. He didn't want to get dirt on his new jacket. He would pick Hammersmith up at the college before stopping at the tailor's.

The thought of Inspector Little, broken and mutilated in the bottom of the trunk, passed through his mind and he swept it away. He'd just got a glimpse of the dead detective before Day had closed the trunk, but it was enough. He hadn't known Little well. The detective had never even looked at Pringle, just muttered orders at him. Little had undoubtedly run across trouble on an investigation and been killed for it. But that would never happen to Pringle. He had joined the force strictly for the dapper uniform and the pretty girls who noticed it. He kept his nose out of the detectives' business.

He smiled and stepped into the street, promptly planting his foot in a pile of horse manure.

2

The dancing man was already outside the back hall at 4 Whitehall Place when Detective Inspector Walter Day arrived. Day wondered at the fact that the dancing man had thus far avoided the workhouse, but he had visited that place and had no desire to send anyone there, if it could be helped. At least a head taller than Day, with massive hands and feet, the dancing man looked intimidating, but he kept his distance from people and bowed his head when he spoke. He worked, in a way, for his daily bread and Day, who thought himself a good judge of character, found him somehow touching. Today he had found the top half of a broken broom and was displaying it proudly as he gyrated atop an overturned milk crate, blowing kisses to passersby. Day gave him a ha'penny and went inside.

The Metropolitan Police Force was headquartered in the rear of a massive building located off Great Scotland Yard, and the entrance was commonly called the back hall, though there was no corresponding front