

THE *FURTHER*
ADVENTURES
OF
THADEUS
BURKE



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MINAHAN

The *Further* Adventures
of
Thadeus Burke

by

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CHAPTER 1

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THE OFFICE BOY GOES MISSING

‘They say that he is the most accomplished lawyer in the City,’ said Gussie Downing, the barrister and ex St John’s College, Cambridge, friend of the Honourable Thadeus Burke.

‘And what do you say?’ asked Thadeus.

‘I say that anyone who can submit fees as enormous as those of Theo Thornhill, and keep a straight face, shows a remarkable talent,’ replied Gussie.

The pair of chums were attending a case at the High Court involving a Lloyd’s underwriter, a Lloyd’s broker and a client of the latter; a three-way action in which the underwriter was denying a claim for errors in material facts disclosed at inception of the policy, the client was suing the broker for negligence, alleging that the broker had not transmitted correctly information supplied; and the broker was defending his honour, and his bank balance.

Thadeus Burke, being a Lloyd’s broker himself, was hoping to find scrutiny from the public gallery educational.

The subject of their comments was Mr Theodore Thomas Thornhill, one of the senior partners at Thornhill & Company, solicitors of Mark Lane London EC3; the other and elder senior partner being the semi-retired father of the one under observation.

The firm had a small batch of lesser partners including the young lady, Miss Constance Catley, who was sitting next to her boss and mentor, filing her fingernails.

The court was spattered with learned friends, rising regularly to advise their lordship concerning the substance of some piece of paper requiring an acknowledgement by the opposing parties, the existence of which was acknowledged in elegant good grace by the relevant barrister; this bobbing and nodding continued for an outrageously lengthy period but seemed to satisfy the judge, who made copious notes at each procedural intermission: the plaintiff and co-defendants ticked items on their lists accompanied by an occasional smirk or sneer at an opponent.

‘This could go on for hours - let us go round the corner and have a spot of lunch at the Law Society before it fills up,’ suggested Gussie, ‘They will break for lunch any minute now.’

They left the sprawling semi-Gothic building, meandered through corridors, around grass patches and eventually out through a side gate onto the public roadway. Around the corner and up Carey Street, renowned as the location of bankrupts in the previous century, turned into Chancery Lane and entered the prestigious home of the Law Society, regarded by Gussie as a sort of soup-kitchen for the entertainment of clients of the warriors of the law.

‘What was it that a *Bleak House* character said about the Court of Chancery?’ Thadeus asked his luncheon companion.

‘I think that you will find that Mr Dickens did not allocate the words to any particular person except to attach the description “an honourable man among its practitioners” from which I have always assumed that the writer could not conjure up even a fictitious name for a character who by definition defied belief. The actual quotation is “Suffer any wrong that can be done you, rather than come here” - very

appropriate in my opinion,' expounded Gussie whilst waving at a waitress.

'Yet this is the very career that you have chosen?' retorted Thadeus.

'Of course - *Jarndyce and Jarndyce* was my favourite case as a schoolboy - reading that book several times was the inspiration for my studies in law,' explained the barrister.

'The pursuit of money?' questioned Thadeus.

'Certainly not. It was the realization that there was a need for a good honest lawyer,' defended Gussie.

Thadeus said no more on the subject; bandying words with a barrister was never very rewarding for a layman.

After a healthy intake of ham salad and two glasses of white wine, then a fruitless visit to a legal bookshop, where Gussie attempted to obtain a volume on Anglo-Saxon land law, possibly under the influence of Thadeus' recommendations concerning the primary division of wealth; followed by an equally frustrating call at a legal clothier, at which establishment both men tried ready-made overcoats, but settled for a half-dozen collars each. Exhausting their perambulation of both sides of Chancery Lane, they returned to the courtroom to find the case completed - settled out of court!

'Split three ways I expect,' suggested Gussie, 'with each side bearing their own costs. Another fat fee for Theo and an extra saucer of milk for the Catley.'

'I have not acquired a great deal of knowledge from the case,' complained Thadeus.

'Nonsense!' exclaimed Gussie, 'You have learned the basic principle of litigation; behind the facade of regalia and ceremonial procedure lies the natural instinctive desires of mankind, first for justice, then underlying this a desire to resolve their differences efficiently and effectively and get on with the enjoyment of life; then deeper still in the psyche, a yearning for peace and tranquillity, this is

why criminals confess, and plaintiffs and defendants compromise.'

After this profound statement they exchanged a few pleasantries, shook hands, and Thadeus boarded a taxi for Lloyd's of London and Gussie walked across the road and down an alleyway towards his chambers.

It was a quiet week in the City, no dramas in the Underwriting Room; Burke & Co, brokers at Lloyd's, ran smoothly, as did the Derby winner on the Wednesday, *Coronach*, a pale chesnut by *Hurry On* out of a *Tredennis* mare, who led from start to finish. The box that Thadeus and his sister Freddie occupied was crowded with racing celebrities, discussing the previous day's meeting between the Turf Guardian Society Committee and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Mr Churchill, regarding the betting tax proposals. There were several Lloyd's men, coming and going between boxes, seeking out free booze and nosh; Thadeus was pinned down by an underwriter, whom he knew vaguely, but with whom he had never negotiated any business; the man, self-introduced as Lindsay Dimmer without even the shadow of a smile, balanced a huge plate of sandwiches and a large glass of red wine in one hand. Thadeus felt pleased that the good wine had been consumed over lunch and a cheaper 'plonk' was now being circulated, not that it seemed to worry the already slightly inebriated gentleman. The purpose of the conversation was clearly to justify the underwriter's uninvited appearance. Dimmer, the preferred title used by Thadeus, was a cricket enthusiast and although Thadeus had engaged in the game in Dublin as an undergraduate at Trinity College, he was by no means an authority and quite unable to debate the sport with an expert. Dimmer spotted this deficiency and rose the tone of his voice spitting out words such as 'googly' and 'long leg', along with pieces of sandwich and speckles of red wine; his knowledge of innings by English and

Australian batsmen was astounding, not that Thadeus could have disputed any of the alleged facts. As Thadeus wilted under the harangue and pieces of food Freddie came across to rescue him, with only partial success; Dimmer now relished an audience of two and the delicious beauty of Lady Frederica Burke added to his excitement; such that he was impelled to invite the pair to a match at Lords, either the Second Ashes contest on the last week-end of the month, or, better still, the Gentlemen verses Players in the middle of July. This proposal gave Thadeus the opportunity to move away and note the dates in his little black book at exactly the same time as a bevy of young men swamped Freddie with invitations to proceed to another part of the racecourse, all of which she accepted. Dimmer's lights went out and he sunk into a corner chair.

Thadeus and Freddie had attended the Epsom race-day as guests of their father and they both skipped all the evening's entertainments, where they were certainly not needed by the vast assembly, returning to Sloane Mews to compile and study the full pedigrees of the first three horses in the big event.

Doctor Freddie had been researching books on genetics as part of her work with children at the Addenbrooke's Hospital in Cambridge and Thadeus, through his involvement with bloodstock insurance at Lloyd's, had access to information on breeding thoroughbreds gained from papers that passed across his desk nearly every day from some of the most notable racehorse owners and breeders in the world.

At their recently acquired stud in Newmarket, temporarily named Burke Stud until some better or more suitable title came to mind, they were intending to breed a Classic winner. At this stage they did not even own a hack, so a promising band of thoroughbred broodmares seemed a long way off.

Freddie was confident that she could now produce a fair crop of peas, so horses was just a question of size and colour; her efforts to label up the six generation pedigrees with X and Y factors was proving a bit difficult at present but she was sure that it could be mastered.

Thadeus confined his research to identifying 'nicks' where there is an oft-repeated combination of stallions or female families that guaranteed success. Proven broodmare sires was what he needed to establish so that he could go out and purchase one of their daughters. Pedigree guidance books, race-form books and magazines were spread around the tables and floor; wine glasses and plates of sandwiches were placed precariously on the same flat surfaces. The scene was one of ardent industry.

The only satisfactory conclusion reached that evening was the detailed explanation given by Dr Freddie to Hilton, Thadeus' man-servant, regarding the three pairs of ladies' shoes that it had apparently become essential to distribute around the room. The colours were being used to denote certain classifications! Why were two shoes of each colour employed? Because shoes come, by nature, in pairs; obvious really!

Thursday had been set aside for more pedigree work punctuated by a visit to an art gallery and lunch in a fashionable restaurant. However the day turned into an unexpected adventure. The scenario had its conception the previous afternoon immediately following the big race; it had been muted and accepted in the previous week that the firm should hold a Derby Sweepstake and a sum of two shillings was collected from each employee, the ten participants yielding a total of one pound. Thadeus, perhaps unwisely, considered this amount insufficient for division between the winner and the ticket-holders of the two placed horses, and therefore subsidized the fund to a total of eight pounds, a fiver for the winner, then two

pounds and one pound for the runners-up. With nineteen runners in the race each person had two horses, except Beth Bateman who had drawn a blank and been eagerly rescued by William Penrose with a half-share in his second horse which happened to be the favourite for the race; it finished third so they both made a profit. Mr Emery was delighted when his no-hoper grabbed second place by a short head. But the sensation of the afternoon was the winning ticket held high by the office junior, Bartholomew Coen. The fourteen-year-old, even at birthdays and Christmas time, had never possessed so much money in his life. The situation was quickly remedied by Miss Mills who confiscated half of the coffers to be invested in saving certificates for the lad's future benefit. By way of compensation for the disappointed face on the youth, James Pooley had donated his old bowler hat, long coveted by Bart, since James purchased a new 'hairy' version from Mr Lock of St James' under the strict instructions of Dr Freddie. The lad immediately retired to the company kettle and steamed a new rakish shape to the apparel, much to his own delight and forlorn looks from the rest of the staff.

It was, therefore, a buoyant young man who left the office that evening, hat tilted almost to his nose and two pounds ten shilling jangling in his pocket.

The drama of the next day was forecast by the non-appearance of Master Coen at the allotted hour of his employment, nine a.m.: but emerged in full blossom with the telephone call from his uncle's shop made by an anxious mother advising a shocked and shaking office manager, Miss Mills, that the lad had not returned home the previous evening. Holding the receiver in one hand Miss Mills immediately questioned the entire staff of Burke & Co, who, fortunately and unusually, were all in the room; they all denied any knowledge of the disappearance. Mrs Coen confirmed that she too had spent the early hours of the morning contacting all members of the family;

directly to those who possessed telephones and indirectly via messages to the others, of which there were many. Uncle Josh had 'phoned hospitals all over London. There was no news; the whereabouts of Bartholomew Coen was a mystery. Miss Mills telephoned the Chairman and Managing Director, the Honourable Thadeus Burke.

Despite the heavy burden of responsibility thrust upon him by the disappearance of the office junior, Thadeus felt obliged to proceed with the lunch already organized by Freddie, in consultation with a number of London girlfriends selected for their exceptional knowledge of the right place to eat in town this season; a table at Fortnum & Masons was apparently *the* place to be seen this week.

But the late morning could be well used for enquiries; if he could think of any!

Freddie telephoned the hospitals in the City area and the East End using more authority than available to Uncle Josh, but the results were the same. Two Jewish boys fitting Bart's description had been admitted, one dead from an accident at the docks and the other injured with a broken arm following a fall from his bicycle. Both had been identified by their parents.

Thadeus telephoned Johnny Jackson, his CID inspector friend at Scotland Yard, for some guidance but got very little help. Briefed by the opening scenario he advised that the local public houses would be a good start. Jackson said that he was busy all day but would be free from about six o'clock this evening and would make contact nearer that time, if his services were still needed.

Thadeus spoke to James Pooley at the office and requested that he check for a sighting at the tobacconists on the corner of Cornhill. This proved a lucky guess as the proprietor remembered young Bart coming into the shop at about five-thirty to buy a small cigar which he was told was a present for the lad's father.

‘So our lad strutted out into the evening in a cocky bowler hat and a small cigar sticking out of his mouth,’ thought Thadeus, ‘where would he go next? Jackson was right; he would go to a pub, but which one? At his age he would not be admitted into any of the respectable city houses so he might have gone down to the East End, but he might be known down there or be seen by someone who knew him! Soho? No. A market area? Yes, in Billingsgate, Smithfield, Spitalfield or Covent Garden. The pubs in these areas kept odd hours congruent with the working times of the markets; you could get breakfast in the middle of the night and grab a nightcap before retiring at six in the morning. They were busy places, anyone wearing a hat would get served.’

Thadeus smoked a full pipe and contemplated the action of the day; lunch, then a trip to some seedy pubs; Freddie would undoubtedly go shopping with some of her friends; Jackson might join him; and perhaps James Pooley and William Penrose could be roped in, and of course he would take Hilton. They might even find Bartholomew Coen slumped in the corner of a bar; or he might have been robbed of his two pounds ten shillings, murdered and thrown into the Thames; no, Jackson’s men would have found him! ‘We will start at Billingsgate this evening at about the same time that Bart might have been there the previous evening; six p.m.’ Thadeus organized his posse; Jackson would join them at the Walrus & Carpenter, a public house in Lower Thames Street with which he was familiar.

Lunch was great fun. Before even arriving at the chosen venue Thadeus and Freddie were hijacked into a different nearby restaurant which was equipped with a bar at which they were plied with the strangest cocktail concoctions. They shook hands and kissed cheeks with, what seemed like, several hundred young men and women apparently re-

Christened as 'guys' and 'gals'; Thadeus chatted with some Lloyd's guys; and Freddie was deep in discussion with a group of violinist gals, arguing on the use of *divisi*, an orchestral instruction that divided notes within the same chord between players as opposed to double-stopping, when all the players play all the notes. As it was impossible for woodwind instruments to play two notes at the same time Thadeus was at a loss to discover Freddie's flute playing contribution, but was assured that technique was not involved - the emphasis was related to the appalling manners of male conductors.

Freddie's three girlfriends miraculously turned up at the same bar and the five-some just managed to grab their table at Fortnum & Masons seconds before a gate-crashing theatre crowd acquired tenure. Two of the actresses in that group, known to Freddie's anaesthesiologist friend, were invited to join them, one of whom, fortunately for Thadeus, was accompanied by a gentleman poet. The two men discussed the merits of the work of Percy French, an Irish poet, songwriter and artist over a massive plate of meat and vegetables for the bard and smoked salmon and scrambled egg for Thadeus. It was only when the new friend rendered one of Mr French's humorous horseracing monologues that the girls noticed their male companions. Polite applause and laughter greeted the reminiscences of Rafferty's Racin' Mare's jockey:

*Over hurdle and ditch she went like a witch,
Till she came where the water shone -
I gave her her head, but she stopped at it dead:
She stopped - and I went on!*

Thadeus made a point of not indulging in further alcoholic drink, anticipating compulsory beer drinking later. He found himself strangely alone when the bill arrived for settlement, to be surrounded once again as soon

as his Coutts & Co cheque had been borne away by the waiter; one handshake and lots of kisses later the girls headed up the road to Harrods; the poet back to his garret and Thadeus in a taxi towards the City.

During the afternoon Ethel Henson, the office all-purpose shorthand typist, had visited Mrs Coen to acquire a photograph of her son, returning an hour later with the image of a small boy standing on a beach holding an enormous teddy-bear - he was aged between two and three years!

As there had been no developments in the search by the lad's family, it was decided that the team of four would set off at exactly the same time as Bartholomew had done the previous evening; including a pause for the purchase of cigars by Hilton and tobacco for Thadeus at the corner shop. Then Hilton and James Pooley would perambulate along Eastcheap visiting all the public houses through to the Tower where they would descend into Lower Thames Street and meet up with the other members of the search party at the Walrus & Carpenter. Thadeus and William Penrose would go down Fish Street Hill and meander around the fish market area tackling the local pub landlords. Thadeus had misgivings about travelling with an ex-alcoholic, now pledge-signed abstainer, partly since he would need to carry the full burden of drink consumption necessary to elicit information from barmen, and because he may find himself responsible for a falling from grace by the new convert.

Fortunately at only their second watering hole, The Mermaid at the bottom of Pudding Lane, and whilst Thadeus had drunk only one pint of beer and William was still capable of a second glass of orange juice, they got a lead, as Jackson might say. A young man fitting Bart's description, fancy bowler hat and cigar, had partaken of a glass of ginger-beer twenty four hours earlier; just the one

drink, then he had departed along with a person known as 'little Harry'. Was little Harry in the pub this evening? - No! Was little Harry a friend of Bart? - Dunno! Where did they go next? - Dunno! Another pub; William winced at the prospect of a further glass of orange and settled for a ginger-beer, more in keeping with the pursued fugitive; no evidence of Bart but little Harry was known: the next pub; same response, except that little Harry had definitely not been there yesterday. It was time to rendezvous at the Walrus.

Inspector Jackson was already at the bar with a pint of bitter and offered drinks to the four-man team as they entered; Thadeus and William refused further nourishment, as did James Pooley, but Hilton managed a pint of lemonade shandy; Thadeus made a mental note of this concoction for possible use later that evening.

James and Hilton could report no sightings of the errant office boy but had heard that in two pubs clients had been relieved of their bowler hats; the suspected felons being Ernie and Cyril a well known pair of *tea-leaves* specializing in second-hand clothing. Bill, the barman at the Walrus confirmed that they too had suffered the loss of two hats and a note had been made to ban Ernie and Cyril from the premises.

James suggested that if Bartholomew Coen's headwear had succumbed to a similar fate the lad would have pursued the villains across London. He thought that an investigation of the two alleged thieves might prove fruitful. Jackson was not so impressed with the idea of a Scotland Yard police inspector tracking down a bowler-hat snatcher but did point the posse in the direction of the East End, particularly at the other side of Middlesex Street where a number of second-hand clothes dealers operated. 'We could call in at the Princess of Prussia,' proffered James, naming a public house outside of the City limits, but one frequently used by City gentlemen when they needed a

quiet place to discuss some devious enterprise; particularly when interviewing a potential new employee without the knowledge of his present masters. At lunch times the P of P had more bowler hats per square yard than the floor of the stock exchange!

‘A stroll in the open air would suit me fine,’ commented Thadeus, and the augmented group of five set off past the Tower and the Royal Mint at a gentle pace.

The customers at the Princess of Prussia eyed with grave suspicion the men ordering vast quantities of lemonade shandy and ginger beer but were silenced by Jackson’s enquiry regarding the ‘Bowler Hat Gang’ currently terrorizing the City institutions, reeking mayhem and fear, threatening the stability of the British currency itself.

They were recommended to visit Mr Markey, an acknowledged expert in the trade of Left-off Wearing Apparel whose premises were just across the road. He would be there – he traded and lived there!

Mr Markey, who appeared to possess the unusual skills of drinking, smoking and eating all at the same time, opened his front door and mumbled ‘We’re closed’ and was about to shut the door when the hefty foot of the law intervened. Jackson’s warrant card was thrust in front of the man’s face and he was advised that a few questions needed to be put to the gentleman. Mr Markey completed the mastication of his mouthful of dinner, drew a sharp intake of smoke from the cigarette held in his right hand and took a large gulp of beer from the mug held in his left.

‘What do you want to know?’ he proclaimed with authority.

The proposition that he might be the receiver of stolen goods, bowler hats in particular, from a pair of villains named Ernie and Cyril, was put to him. He took another suck on the fag and a slurp from the mug, ‘I only deal in ladies’ wear,’ he advised, ‘dresses, bonnets, shoes and fur

coats - I have a very good selection of fur coats if you would like something for the missus.'

'Is that a bribe?' provoked Jackson.

'No, it bloody isn't - I expect you to pay,' was the indignant response.

'Do you know Ernie and Cyril?'

'Never heard of them,' an obvious lie.

'Who do you know who deals in second-hand bowler hats?'

'You could try my brother; he has hundreds of them. His place is round the corner, on the other side of the square. He will be glad of a chat whilst he is unloading his lorry. Tell him that I have been unavoidably delayed will you?'

Feeling that little more could be extracted from this Mr Markey, who clearly knew all about Ernie and Cyril, but was not prepared to grass to the police, the team decided to attack the other Mr Markey.

As they walked around to North Tenter Street Thadeus reminded the group that they had made no enquiries regarding little Harry who could be a key player in the activity, on either side of the law.

'What has she got to do with the problem?' asked Jackson.

'She?' exclaimed Thadeus, William, James and Hilton together.

'She is a tom, a prostitute, who works the Billingsgate Market. Nice little girl, dirty blonde hair and big blue eyes, aged about twelve,' divulged Jackson.

'Isn't that illegal at that age?' questioned Thadeus.

'It is illegal at any age,' informed the policeman, 'but not my problem. We have a team of WPC's that work with the girls and they do not let us men get anywhere near them. I am told it is delicate stuff.'

'This information changes the whole nature of our enquiries,' said Thadeus, stopping at the corner of the

square. 'It is not Bart's head that has been deprived, but his groin that has been satisfied.'

The group laughed so loudly that the noise attracted the attention of a man unloading a lorry up the street.

'What are you lot hanging around for?' he enquired aggressively.

'Mr Markey, I presume?' said Thadeus.

'What of it?' was the gruff response.

By now the two men were face to face, 'I apologize Mr Markey,' said Thadeus in his best aristocratic voice, 'We were sent here by your brother who thought that you ... ' At this point Thadeus' speech ceased, as gazing casually into the loading bay where bundles of parcelled clothing was being placed he noticed a gaggle, if that is the right word, of bentwood hatstands, one of which sported a dandified bowler hat of identical appearance as the Bartholomew Coen headwear.

'Jackson! Look!' shouted Thadeus, pointing at the offending article.

The police inspector loomed over Markey and thrust his warrant card so close to the poor man's face that he went cross-eyed trying to interpret the wording.

'Where did that hat come from?' demanded Jackson

'I have no idea; I have never seen it before in my life,' stuttered Markey.

'It is hanging there in your warehouse,' pointed out Jackson smugly.

'But I do not know where it came from,' said the Purveyor of Left-off Wearing Apparel, 'I have hundreds of hats up on the second floor; why would I keep one down here?'

'I suspect that this hat is stolen,' said Jackson, 'and I intend to search these premises.'

Thus, in the absence of a search warrant, were the City gents given a guided tour of a massive second-hand clothes warehouse. Following Mr Markey up two flights of wide wooden un-railed staircases, that ran from the centre of the

floors through a large trapdoor in the ceilings, to the hat department. Mr Markey pointed to boxes labelled Cokes, Top Hats, Caps, Boaters, Smoking Caps and Homburgs.

Cokes is bowler hats he explained, named after the first man to order one from Mr Lock of St James' and made by a man named Bowler. 'I knew that,' exclaimed James Pooley looking around the group in anticipation of some accolade. The half gross box of bowlers were purchased from a bankrupt shop in Dover, and a receipt could, and would, be exhibited in the office on the ground floor.

Back down a floor to the Military Department, where bright uniform jackets of the Northumberland Fusiliers, the Rifle Brigade, the Royal Horse Artillery and various regiments of the Guards were neatly labelled.

It was above a bundle of ex-troopers of the 4th Hussars splendid gold and yellow braided jackets that a small face with dirty blonde hair and big blue eyes appeared, accompanied by a visage of similar dimensions but with black curly hair and a pronounced Jewish nose.

'Miss Harriet, I presume,' said Thadeus bowing courteously.

'Hello Mr Burke, sir' said Bart.

To be brief Mr Markey had departed his premises the previous evening, driven through the night in his ex-army Daimler supply lorry and purchased a fine collection of gentlemen's overcoats in Gloucester, a full list of the designs and the cloths involved was hastily dispensed with; from that time until his return this evening the premises had remained locked.

Bartholomew Coen had been apprised of the sad tale of abuse suffered by young Harry, and her sisters, at the hands of a dastardly father, and had decided to rescue her with the aid of his boss The Honourable Thadeus Burke, a member of the Liberal Party, the same as Mr Gladstone was, the latter man having a renowned reputation in the field of prostitution and the remedies thereof.

Their chosen hiding place, to avoid collection of the working girl by her father later in the evening, had been the warehouse of Mr Markey, where they had been imprisoned and remained all night and the next day; they were now very hungry, and Mr Markey very short of tea, milk and sugar, for which produce he was compensated with a ten shilling note.

Thadeus took Bart aside to tackle the delicate question as to whether the boy had used any of his two pounds ten shillings on the girl's favours; he was assured that this was not the case and that all his money was intact. The satisfaction of this moral position was shattered by the intervention of Harriet who assured Thadeus that 'I didn't charge him, I did it for nothing!' It was agreed that this aspect of the night's adventure should remain secret between the three of them.

Mrs Coen was later advised that Bart had somehow become locked in a deserted warehouse for the night and only discovered by the owner twenty-four hours later, which was exactly the truth. There did not appear to be any reason to mention the lad's fellow prisoner during this term of incarceration.

Jackson refused to assist in any way with the rehabilitation of young Harry for fear of retribution from the lady members of the Metropolitan Police prostitute-watch brigade and their allies, the female members of the Salvation Army, and it was therefore left to Thadeus to arrange for his sister to admit the girl into Addenbrooke's Hospital for a check-up, and clean-up. A letter was written and signed by Miss Harriet Sadd, the appropriate surname that appeared on her birth certificate, a document that she perpetually carried in her handbag and which showed her actual age as fourteen years; the reduced number apparently being more advantageous for her business purposes. The missive being delivered to the girl's stepfather and stepmother - Thadeus was never quite sure

how you could get two step-parents on both sides of the pedigree - and delivered by a passing policeman, for added strength, advising them that their ward had obtained a new employment out of London and that they would probably not be hearing from her again - love and kisses et cetera. The legality of this device was dubious but it was sufficient documentation for the employment, at a later date, of the new under-scellery maid at Burke Stud at a salary which the girl could have earned in a week in her previous profession.

It was a very tired and slightly drunk Thadeus and Hilton that returned to Sloane Mews in the late evening of that Thursday, after an extra, and quite unnecessary, round of drinks in celebration of the Coen and Little Harry Affair, as the incident ironically became known. At home they found ladies' clothes scattered everywhere, outer and under-garments; this was not unusual when Dr Freddie was in residence. What was different was that on this occasion the clothes were related to four separate ladies who were sleeping in various parts of the house; all the beds had gone and a settee was occupied.

Thadeus and Hilton packed bags and went across to the local hotel for what was left of the night.

The next morning they crept back into a spotless house with only one occupant, who was preparing breakfast.

'I do not wish to know what you two dirty stop-outs were up to last night,' admonished the smartly dressed doctor.

Thadeus and Hilton were speechless.

Breakfast was served; usually Thadeus and Hilton shared the kitchen table for the quick meal before work in the City; but in the presence of the 'Goddess', Dr Freddie, Hilton preferred to remain in the servant's quarters showing due esteem to 'them above', above being only a short staircase away in the mews houses. Thus it was that Thadeus sat at the dinning table to be served scrambled

eggs, bacon and grilled tomatoes opposite his sister. Raising his teacup to his lips, Thadeus said, 'I feel that you have an announcement to make?'

'No. Not an announcement,' she responded with the obvious intention of making an announcement, 'I thought that I would tell you that I have decided to go back to school.' She spread a portion of egg onto a slice of toast and lifted it towards her mouth.

'Is this some latent fetish for blue knickers and gym-slips?' asked Thadeus frivolously, pleased that he had correctly anticipated a revelation; although he had expected the subject to be related to the female army only recently decamped from the premises.

'Certainly not,' admonished Freddie, 'I need more discipline with my music practice and have contacted a girls' grammar school in Cambridge, St Mary's, a Catholic college, and will be joining their orchestra rehearsals to sharpen up my semi-quavers.'

'On my sheet music they put a little sign, like an aitch, to indicate the raising of a note,' quipped Thadeus.

Freddie was seriously annoyed by this flippancy and was about to explode in a tirade of sisterly abuse when the piece of egg-laden toast that she held sagged and plopped onto her plate. The incident brought them both into laughter.

Thadeus took the opportunity to amend his attitude. 'It sounds like a very good idea; I expect that some of these girls are very proficient.'

'Crikey, yes!' exclaimed Freddie, 'I heard the string section when I visited the music teacher, rattling out Beethoven. I shall sit quietly at the back of the woodwinds with the beginners and try to get up to speed.'

'Will you have the time to spare?' asked Thadeus.

'I am booked in for once a week, Wednesdays, late afternoon, when the younger girls perform. I have informed Matron and obtained her permission.'

'I was under the impression that it was the doctors who told the nurses what to do.'

'Good heavens, no,' espoused Freddie, 'the nurses run the doctors and the porters run the nurses.'

Eventually, over the last of the marmalade, Freddie revealed her master plan for musical evenings, or soirees, at Burke Stud involving Thadeus on piano or cello with, perhaps, a violin or two and a viola. Thadeus graciously gave his approval to the project, whilst pondering whether the whole conversation was devised as a diversion from disclosures regarding the small detachment of ladies, known to him and Hilton to have been occupying the two Sloane Mews houses overnight, and of which no mention was made at all.

CHAPTER 2

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THE MAY BALL AND THREE MYSTERIES

Friday morning it was necessary for Thadeus to attend the Burke & Co office, primarily to sign some cheques, but he took the opportunity to scrutinize the incoming post over the last couple of days and ensure that all was proceeding diligently.

Before returning home he grabbed a half-pint of bitter with James Pooley and was updated on the Lloyd's broking matters, then strolled over to Speakers' Corner at Tower Hill to listen to the strange gathering of broadcasters on subjects ranging from Fascism to Communism, via the Labour Party. On his orange box today was an enormous Negro man, a regular attendant whom Thadeus had seen and heard many times before, who lectured the crowd on the benefits of natural foods. Despite his curly white mop of hair indicating advanced years, he was a picture of good health and therefore a proper advertisement for his chosen topic. One of his favourite revelations was that when he arrived home in the evening his wife set down on the table in front of him a large raw green cabbage which he ate entirely as the family meal. Thadeus had heard the story on several occasions but it still raised applause from the listeners which was a good boost to the numbers of his audience.

Thadeus moved across to the religious section where a Methodist was haranguing the crowd on the evils of drink and gambling; an Anglican was drumming up support for voluntary work among the East End poor, and a Buddhist, a newcomer to the platforms, was explaining the principles of his faith. A quotation from The Buddha was given: 'He robbed me; he beat me; he abused me; he defeated me; in all who harbour such thoughts, hate will never cease.' said the saffron robe-clad speaker in a soft but audible voice. Thadeus was impressed with this text and wrote it down in his little black book

Over an hour had elapsed since he departed from James and it was necessary for Thadeus to set off back to Sloane Mews, where he had promised Freddie that they would complete their bloodstock pedigree work. He boarded an underground train at the Tower Hill station and was carried along the Centre Line to Sloane Square.

By the late afternoon Thadeus and Freddie had only established one statistical fact, which was that with a herd of about one hundred well-bred mares they should be certain of breeding a winner of some sort of race. It was therefore with delight and gratitude that they quickly accepted an invitation to a May Ball in Cambridge for the next day, Addenbrooke's Hospital having been coerced into supplying a suitable troop of young unmarried nurses under the half-pretence that they might be required to assist with over-inebriated undergraduates. By some extraordinary mental aberration Matron had concluded that the presence of the aristocratic Doctor Lady Frederica Burke might ameliorate the female position within this dangerous male-dominated province. The addition of her noble, handsome and rich brother as chaperon to the group of volunteers, reduced in number by ballot from the whole under-thirty and proclaimed unattached female staff, was an extra bonus appreciated by Matron and the nurses both!

The festivities were held on The Backs, neutral territory selected in order that each college could deny any involvement with the event, which would undoubtedly provoke complaints about the noise. There were two jazz bands separated by a hundred yards or so, and on a quiet night the combined sound would have been horrendous, but divided as they were by a screaming mass of cavorting youth there was no audible discord between various titles of numbers played or even the different musical keys used.

Champagne flowed and knees wove in and out for the Charleston; everything shook and leapt for the *Black Bottom Stomp*, including canoodling couples trampled below the stompers. Freddie gave advice to her troop of charges, which was always the same - Just say No! Thadeus spent the evening/night also saying 'No' to girls crying out 'Yes'. Thadeus managed to obtain an invitation to play some ragtime piano during an interval which he enjoyed but the audience found too quiet for their volume-adjusted ears. Freddie was busy learning new dance steps and making mental notes of what the bright young things were wearing this summer.

Thadeus was drawn into a heated discussion regarding the alleged refusal by the Cambridge University hierarchy of an honorary degree for Ramsey McDonald; certainly during the week the proposal had been withdrawn, and the subject made an excellent topic for heated debate!

Being almost the shortest night and longest day, dawn turned up unexpectedly early exposing the previously unnoticed party debris. But it was with some pride that the exhausted and dishevelled siblings took centre place in the survivors' photograph. They declined invitations to partake in breakfast at The Orchard in Grantchester.

'Where is my dinner-jacket?' enquired Thadeus of the garment traditionally passed from male to female as the night air cooled.

'I lent it to a student from Newnham College,' replied Freddie, 'She was cold, having just had what she called "a tuppenny-upright" - some form of ice-cream cornet or perhaps a cocktail, I imagine - and it had left her feeling chilly.'

Thadeus obviously had a perplexed look on his face as Freddie asked if he was familiar with a tuppenny-upright; he opined that he would enlighten her later, when they arrived at home.

As they drove back towards Newmarket Thadeus explained to his sister that 'a tuppenny-upright' was not a type of ice-cream or a cocktail drink but a vernacular term for sexual intercourse conducted in a standing position, usually up against a wall or fence; undoubtedly derived from the language of the professional ladies.

Freddie's face flushed a colour that matched her strawberry blonde hair, but said nothing; possibly considering the medical repercussions of conception in that position; had she not been a doctor she might have drifted off into an erotic fantasy; either way she was very quiet on the journey back to Newmarket; possibly she just considered the outrageous under-pricing of the service.

Ten minutes later they were both standing in the kitchen at Burke Stud, Freddie making coffee, Thadeus toying with the idea of an unnecessary pipe of tobacco, when the telephone rang.

'Thadeus Burke,' he mumbled into the kitchen extension.

'Thadeus?' said the voice of Inspector Johnny Jackson of Scotland Yard, 'Is that you?'

'Of course it is me - you are telephoning me!'

'A body has just been fished out of the Cam wearing a dinner-jacket manufactured by your tailor in Savile Row and with your initials inside the collar,' was the unlikely response.

'You will need to interview a young lady undergraduate from Newnham College,' was the equally unexpected and

puzzling rejoinder.

It was explained to Jackson that several hours of refreshing slumber were to be enjoyed by the Burke duo and that upon his return to a reasonably active state of consciousness later in the day he would investigate the matter and telephone the good police inspector at his home. Over a milky cup of coffee the tired pair pondered the new dilemma.

'The Newnham girl was a friend of a couple of my nurses so I should be able to find out her name on Monday,' contributed Freddie.

'Jackson will probably have all the facts within a few hours. We do not know if this is a murder; the poor chap might have just fallen in the river,' said Thadeus, downing the last of his coffee and dragging his weary body towards his bedroom, just as Mrs Gardner the newly employed housekeeper arrived in the kitchen.

Freddie briefly informed the woman that Hilton, Thadeus' manservant and general Burke factotum was probably awake and would be down soon and that she should liaise with him about her duties for the day: the Mistress was off to her bed.

It was well past lunchtime when a showered, shaved and relaxed Thadeus drifted into the drawing-room, threw himself into an armchair and perused the Sunday newspapers. Chelsea embankment would again be closed this week for road works; in the absence of his preferred route between Chelsea and the City of London he would avail himself of the Underground trains this week. Interestingly it was reported that the World's Oldest Man, William Smyth aged 125, lived at Dromara, County Down, Northern Ireland and had spent his King's Gift of £3 on some warm bedclothes; he was hearty and still prepared his own meals. Thadeus thought that it was a pity that the King had not arranged for one of the palace flunkies to

arrive at Mr Smyth's house with a banquet, nobody should be asked to cook their own food on their birthday.

Hilton informed him that Freddie had arisen; spent some time scattering garments around the dressing-room; and was now somewhere beneath an oil and bubble surf, playing with her yellow wooden ducks. Hilton did not anticipate her metamorphic reappearance for at least an hour.

Refusing any alcoholic drinks and deflecting any involvement with the activities of Mrs Gardner, or details of newly purchased antiques that were due within days at the sparsely furnished new dwelling, Thadeus settled for a large cup of tea and a telephone call to Inspector Jackson.

'Who was he?' was Thadeus' opening question

'Charles Leslie Edmunds, aged twenty-nine, strangled by his own tie,' responded a smug Jackson.

'What college was the tie?'

'It was a striped blue and white, known, I believe, as a "half-blue".'

'A university man then?'

'A post-graduate biology research student.'

'Why did you not say so?'

'I would have - given half a chance. Your investigation seemed to rest on the colours of the chap's tie!'

'Sorry! What do we know about him?'

'Not a lot, apart from his identification, given by a fellow researcher and to be officially confirmed later today by his father who is travelling down from Chester.'

Thadeus stayed quiet and allowed Jackson to continue.

'He worked in one of those anonymous buildings that are scattered around Cambridge with titles like the Cavendish Laboratory; his one is called the Cambridge University Biology Studies Department but nobody seems to know what goes on in them. My enquiries have all been referred upwards from students to tutors, to fellows, professors and masters. At the present time I am awaiting a call from a

man at the War Office, whose minion thought that it was quite out of order that I should know of his mentor's existence at all.'

'Germ warfare - or gas!' suggested Thadeus, 'They are engaged in lots of frightening games up here in biology - and physics'

'That is what I suspect, but we will probably be told by some War Office minion that he was a lab assistant washing test tubes. What is all this about a girl from Newnham College?'

'Some time during the night, or early morning, I gave my DJ to Freddie, who was feeling cold. Then later she passed it on to a girl, allegedly an undergraduate at Newnham College. We do not know her name, or who she was, but Freddie says that she is a friend of some nurses at the hospital, so we might find out on Monday. And Freddie tells me that at the time when the jacket was handed over the girl had recently had sex!'

'Is that relevant?' questioned Jackson.

'I do not know, perhaps Mr Edmunds was her partner?'

'True. We will talk on Monday,' concluded Jackson.

'Where exactly was the body found?' asked Thadeus quickly before Jackson rang off.

'Up past the Queen Street bridge amongst the punts.'

'Right! I will talk to you on Monday,' and they said goodbye.

Freddie emerged in a flowing silk nightdress holding a long cool drink and slouched onto the only other armchair in the room. Her hair was brushed but she wore no make-up, or underclothes.

'I have ordered a salad for lunch or tea or whatever the next meal is,' she announced, placing a cigarette into her holder but then deciding not to light it.

Thadeus smiled politely, carefully removed a slice of flake tobacco from his converted snuff box, folded the sheet in

the palm of his hand, then rolled the tobacco into a ball and packed his silver topped calabash, then applied a match.

The telephone rang; there had been a motor accident near Bottisham, just up the Cambridge Road; three adults and two children were involved; the medical services of Dr Freddie were required immediately.

Hilton prepared the Morris Cowley in the drive and Freddie dashed upstairs to dress, returning minutes later attired in an odd collection of comfortable clothes, proving that the strength of the Hippocratic Oath held a higher position within the doctor's mental hierarchy than the transient but dominant vagaries of female fashion. She headed off at top speed.

Thadeus continued his pipe smoking, browsing through the week's political action; the Liberal Party were in disarray, the Labour Party boasted more policies than they knew what to do with, and the Prime Minister, Mr Baldwin seemed confident that the mistakes of others would keep him in power.

Freddie 'phoned an hour later; all was well; some cuts and bruises; the little girl would be kept in hospital over night for attention to a nasty gash on her forehead; proceed with the meal she would be back within half of an hour.

Thadeus attired himself in his bucolic garb, green Wellington boots, corduroy trousers, a high-necked cashmere sweater, a tweed jacket and a check cloth cap, acquired from Mr Lock of St James's for the sole purpose of strutting around his estate. He went out into the courtyard, his little black book in his hand, to inspect the loose boxes and make notes of changes that might be required. He had considered an American-style barn for stabling the horses; he had seen these constructions in Kentucky and they seemed to provide splendid accommodation for a group of equine companions, but they were big, might not be pleasing to the eye of his neighbours, not that they were very close. He went out into a nearby paddock and