

# London Fog

*by* C.W. Stewart

I stumbled out of the Ten Bells pub, still a bit tipsy from the absinthe, but had a clear vision of what I wanted to have happen this night. The air was cold on my rosy cheeks, so I shielded my face from the wind. Looking around, my eye caught the old, but magnificent, Christ Church. Upon seeing the towering steeple, a wave of guilt swept through me due to my past and future plans of indulging in the activities of the night. I turned my head rather facing the cold than the church. The church escaped my mind after I walked by the lamp lights surrounded by their fairy trails. I must have been caught up in the sights because another patron bumped into me on our way down Commercial Street.

“Oh! Sar' y Gav'nor,” the stumbling man said nervously and I just laughed it off.

Normally, people would *not* have addressed me as governor; however, I was all dressed up in this fancy get-up with the cloak, top hat and umbrella. I stopped to gaze at my reflection in the store front window that I happened to just pass and even I did not recognize myself looking so dashing. After brushing myself off from the unfortunate mishap and taking another look at myself, I went down with the other gentlemen and their ladies to await a coach to take me away from *this* side of town.

Walking up to the platform, the cool early morning air met the warm damp ground and the cobble stoned streets were enveloped in an eerie thick fog. I leaned my umbrella against the lamp post in order to continue my charade by pretending to rub warmth into my already sweaty hands. A black coach pulled by a dapple grey, pulled away from the platform leaving me and another drunken gentleman waiting for the next coach to arrive. He was dressed in garb too rich for this side of town, though it wasn't totally uncommon to see lonely older gentleman visiting pubs late at night.

In a thick fog, silence can drown a person out from the rest of the world. The other gentleman must have been caught in his own thoughts.

“Oh, good gracious man you startled me!” He looked eyes with me. “Don't I know you?”

My eyes gave me away, so I knew that I couldn't deny that we were acquaintances.

“Yes, I was standing down the bar from you and your companions. I heard you trying to scare them into coming home with you? I guess you didn't have much luck.” I looked around noting that he was by himself.

“Well, my good man, you cannot blame me for trying. They were such a lovely lot, were they not? And we do have that killer on the loose.” He tried to hide the agitation in voice from my goading.

“Too true, that is. It is ghastly what he has been doing to those ladies.” At my last word he made a sound somewhere between a laugh and a cough.

During our exchange, the fog had set in so that only the platform could be seen. Noises echoed through the fog if they were heard at all and with it came a damp, musty smell like being down in a root cellar.

“I did get one of those bang-tails into a side alley off of Fournier Street before the night was through. How about you, did you get to enjoy the company of a one of those ‘fancy ladies’ tonight?” He had a mocking tone about his question.

“No! I didn't,” I said curtly.

“No, I suppose not. Not with that kind of attitude . . . or maybe you just couldn't perform for them. I noticed all those shots you were tossing down the back of your throat.” He had an air of superiority yet at a glance he didn't appear to be any better dressed than I was.

I decided that our conversation had become dry and hoped that a carriage would come along soon to pick him up. Also, I let his last words hang in the air in an uncomfortable silence which was only

intensified by the claustrophobic haze. One thing that people cannot stand is an unnatural silence between two strangers forced to be in the same enclosed area.

He began to cough after a while trying to get me to ask him about his health or some other dull form of conversation. The other little oddity he started with was to glance at me occasionally and each time he would stare at me a bit longer. The carriages weren't running fast enough and I was the one who was actually becoming uncomfortable. The more he glanced at me the more I found myself losing my nerve. Finally, I did something I did not expect to do.

I left.

At first, I just thought that I would walk around Brushfield Street, cut down a side alley and circle back around to the platform. In doing this, I hoped that he would think that I had gone off to another place to pick up a carriage. Unfortunately this thought would never come to fruition because I heard his footsteps walk to the end of the platform and then he started to cough. It sounded like he was trying to get my attention or the fog had settled in chest. Either way I kept walking away from him. After a pause and a coughing fit he started to run after me, so I picked up my pace too.

I started off on the smooth sidewalk, but then I heard him catching up to me. I cut across the cobblestone street hoping that his shiny black dress shoes would slip or get caught in between the stones. No such luck. From there I cut through a side alley, it was dark and I saw two figures moving sultry against one another using a brick wall to support each other. They were too busy with each other to take notice of two people running past their secluded spot.

I made one more turn. It was a dead end. I was becoming winded anyway and I thought that this was as good a place as any to make my stand against my pursuer. I did a full turn to take in my surroundings before he joined me down the alley. I couldn't stand the heat any more and threw off my cloak just as he turned the corner. It was then that I realized that I had made a fatal mistake because I had left my umbrella under the lamp post.

“My good man I was just trying to return to your umbrella that you forgot” he sounded honest enough. He held out my umbrella in his left hand and I reached for the handle with right. As soon as I touched the cold smooth handle my confidence returned to my body and threw off my hat revealing my true identity. His eyes widen as recognition set in over his face. “You, I knew that I knew you.” Shock from my identity had frozen his mind and body and I took the opportunity to act against him.

Quickly and smoothly though it make a slight click, I released the sword within. With the agility of a master fencer, I ran the smooth metal swiftly through his neck sliding in between his Adam's apple and his carotid artery, but not doing any damage to either. I did sever his nerves to the rest of his body running down his spinal column.

He crumpled to the damp stone knees first and with his head up so he could look into my eyes. At the same time a rather peculiar shaped knife fell from his right hand. The clang of the heavy weapon echoed through the ally but, the blood pumping through my ears was louder still. I wondered if he could hear it too.

This part happened just the way I planned even if it wasn't where I wanted to do it. I had been perfecting my sword play for weeks ever since his third murder of my best friend Annabelle.

My breathing was even now and when I spoke to him, it was in the tone of a mother correcting her child.

“This is punishment for all your killings.”

At this his eyes widen.

“Yes, I know what you have done.” I circled him, avoiding the sharp object sticking out of the back of his neck, to make sure that I had thought of all possible scenarios and to reinforce my triumphant victory over my prey.

I steepled my fingers together; relishing the moment. “I knew you would not be able to resist the exquisite ladies that I arranged for you at the pub.” Blood started dripping down the handle of the blade.

I changed my tone letting the ease I now felt pass through to my voice as if I had not just stuck him like the pig he is. "You killed many of my friends brutally, mutilating their bodies and stealing their organs. I have no doubt that you would have tried to do the same to me tonight, but luckily for you I don't need such satisfaction . . ." I got close to his ear and whispered, "I just want to see the light leave your eyes."

There was one more thing I had to tell him. I continued to circle him as a vulture waits for the lame wolf to give up and lay down for death.

"You would have been in prison if the Bobbies could have believed that someone of your status could be responsible for all those horrible murders . . . So you have *them* to thank for your imminent demise."

With my last syllable I moved in a flash.

I grabbed the handle and I could feel the tissue holding tight to my blade. I had to use a bit more force to get it out than I did putting it in. In a satisfying twist the blade cut an exit hole to make its escape. As an added bonus, this allowed blood to fill his lungs and stomach. I watched the devil die choking on his blood.

His blood gargled in his throat as he tried to draw air into his lungs. His body twitched trying to hold on to the last piece of his so called life. As the last bubble of blood popped out of his mouth, his dark eyes became fixed and what seemed like an eternity I watched his soul exit his body.

I looked down upon my garments and was pleasantly surprised that I had very little blood on me for such a neck wound, but I had prepared for the worst, just in case. I unbuttoned my waist coat and released my dress to cover the slacks and loafers. The top hat I left to confuse the Bobbies and because I would never need to wear it again. Lastly, I picked up the cloak off the ground and threw it over my bare shoulders.

Back in my normal attire, I walked confidently down the foggy street making sure that any witnesses would be confused hearing the well practiced long even strides of a man and seeing the frail

form of a woman. Of course I highly doubted that anyone could see me under the cover of our London fog.

No one will ever know that he was the monster in all the papers, but I will know that I was the one to send him back to where he came from . . . *Hell*.

