

# Silent Witness

30th September 1888.

Louis-Anne, off Southampton.

As I sit alone, gazing out at the dark murderous night I am at my most vulnerable. I ramble, allowing the nib of my pen to scratch unchecked across the parchment, the wet ink glistening under the flickering light of the candle. My stomach churns, the endless pitching and rolling of the ship throwing its contents into my throat as we begin to leave England behind us; it's bleak coastline harrowing under the stark moonlight.

My mouth, afire and bloodied feels no more pain, it cannot. I am beyond pain. The empty space in my mouth were once my tongue had kissed and curled cries out to me in silence, a silence tempered by the sharp gleaming blade of a sword.

The only communication left to me is through the little black leather bound book I keep safely hidden in the lining of my coat. It speaks to no-one, only myself when I have had my fill of wine to remind me of my crime. Crime? Is it the fault of the blade that it should slice so sweetly the soft skin of the child or the man that so brutally wields it? So it is with me. Innocent, yet accused because my words threatened to destroy even the highest ranks of the country in which I was born.

Should I commit my secret to these pages, paint his name upon the thin sheets and seek revenge for my silence? Could I survive with the knowledge that I had single-handedly brought England to its knees? Live on after Victoria has tumbled? For mark my words precious diary, my keeper of secrets; this knowledge is powerful!

There, it is done, I have inscribed his name within your sleeve. I had to write it small, not for fear of its discovery, but its length. His name is both long and exotic, strange that it could be replaced with another so short. I can feel the blood rush to my head as I repeatedly roll the three unspoken words about my mind. His name brings terror, causes the sweat to break out on my brow as surely it must on those poor women as they stood before his knife. I know you Jack, you murderer. You were foolish, careless. If only I had stayed silent for a moment longer, thought with my head and not my heart. It would have been obvious under the steady, calming light of day that I would find no Judas within the

law. They would protect you to the last, lay down their lives before seeing you accused. And yet I have already heard the whispers, even now your name is upon the lips of our great city. It will not be long, I sail away with one sweet notion, that soon others will know you. I pray that you will be recognized by those with wise heads, not stupid innocent romantics like myself who will run breathless to the authorities singing and shouting your name before them.

Time is running out Jack as you lay safely in the warmth and comfort of your home. I picture you asleep, sedate with a Crown for your pillow and a kingdom for your sheets with Britain's breast for comfort.

I can feel the sea beneath us rising. A storm is brewing, I can hear the throaty rumbling of thunder above the sound of the water striking the sides of our vessel. I am afraid of the sea. Occasionally the sounds of the crew drifts down to my guarded cabin. These sailors, men of the sea, inhabitants of mother water are also afraid.

I fear we shall not last the night. I fear that my secret will die with me and you, Jack, will inherit your throne and empire.

I pray to God. I pray that he will stop your bloody hand and save mother England from evil.

Amen.



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