

The Stockton Insane Asylum Murder



A Portia of the Pacific Historical Mystery

Volume 3

JAMES MUSGRAVE

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ISBN: 978-1-943457-34-2

Published at EMRE Publishing, San Diego, CA

"Madness can be seen as an intuitive probing into true reality."--R. D. Laing

The Stockton Insane Asylum Murder

By

James Musgrave

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English Majors, Reviewers and Editors Publishers is a publishing house based in San Diego, California.

Website: emrepublishing.com

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DEDICATION

We have come full circle. In the Nineteenth Century, insane asylums, for the most part, were prisons. Today, prisons, for the most part, are insane asylums. This book is for all those who have become victims of the continuing business of mental illness.

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Chapter 1: Undercover



The Women's Section, Stockton State Insane Asylum, April 22, 1887.

There she was. Polly Bedford, age twelve, stooped-over in the shadows behind a row of bunk beds. Seated at a scarred wooden school desk, Polly was concentrating on her pencil drawing. She wore the patient's navy-blue frock pull-over with her initials "P.B." stitched on the left arm sleeve. Polly appeared to be drawing her residence inside the Women's Ward at the State Insane Asylum at Stockton. Her tongue tip was protruding from the corner of her mouth, and she kept pushing a strand of black hair back from her forehead, as she looked up from her tablet to view the interior of the ward.

As seventeen-year-old Bertha May Foltz walked up behind her, she could clearly see the bunk beds in the girl's drawing, the wash room, the dining room, and the windows, through which patients could observe their rural surroundings. Except, instead of creating people shapes--patients, doctors, nurses and visitors--Polly had colonised her mental ward with walking and talking medicine capsules. Each capsule, whether it was a patient or not, had stick arms and legs, and every face was drawn onto the top half of its pill torso.

Bertha May realized that Polly Bedford's art was a probable reflection of the drugs she was being given to alleviate her high anxiety, such as potassium bromide, and to get her moving when she was in the valley of her melancholic despair, Strychnine. Of course, there was some wisdom

in the girl's portrayal of drawn characters, as many of the staff could be seen, every night, slipping into the private suites on the top floor to sell cocaine, opioids, and even morphine to the wealthy female patients.

These rich patients never worked in the garden or on the farm. Instead, they stayed on the top floor, playing the piano, babbling incoherently about their paranoid suspicions, and grazing like lowing cattle at the ever-present collection of hors devours placed all around on tables inside their main dining room. They didn't have to sit at the main table downstairs with the poor patients.

In their drugged state, Bertha saw them to be the privileged insane, and every poor patient below, who was required to be shackled when not working outside, gave them envious looks when they spotted these women dancing, like ghosts, back and forth along the carpeted stairwells. They wore fashionable dresses with full bustles and ornate embroidery, and yet they acted like lunatics.

"I have a new game we can play," Bertha spoke to Polly, sitting beside her chair, down on the lower bed of a nearby bunk ensemble.

Bertha watched the girl place her pencil down on the desk's top. She turned in her school chair and faced her older inquisitor. "Can we play Mental Metamorphosis again?"

It was as if an invisible force had sucked all the air out of the room. After the name of this game was released, the priority was now to breathe and to survive. Nothing else mattered. Bertha also understood what she must do. Using the girl's superior imagination and sensitivities to access her mind was a stroke of genius.

"Of course, we can," said Bertha, reaching out to capture the girl's hands in her own. "Instruction happens so much faster when the message can be implanted directly inside the brain. When you think, you are thinking for the collective good. Unless you control the actors, anything could happen, and that is the path toward chaos."

Polly moved out of her school chair and walked over to where Bertha was seated on the lower bed. Bertha knew this might be the only chance she got to obtain the information she needed. The staff was out supervising the farm and garden work of the others. Only kind old Mrs. Betterman, the baker, was left to mind the asylum, and she was almost deaf. Bertha set the stage immediately.

“What is the kernel of fear? We all have it, do we not?”

Polly stared straight ahead. “Not all. Some have no fear. They get trampled saving children and the elderly. Burnt to a cinder fighting Hell itself. Lost on the battlefields of the wars. I know one person who is the incarnation of Lucifer, the Fallen Star. I saw him murder an innocent. All the murderers are rejoicing. They at last have a hero on Earth to guide them.”

Bertha spread out her dress with her palms, smoothing the material against her thin body. She was proud to be thin, and she thought her mother’s weighty torso was unbecoming an active Suffragette for international women’s rights. Back to her immediate concern, Bertha knew she needed more specific details about this Lucifer. “What did this demon look like? Certainly, he wasn’t an apparition. You can’t believe in ghosts.”

A breathtakingly chilly vacuum devoured the space around them. Polly shivered, the first human reflex exhibited by her.

“You would pray there were ghosts, because no human could stop him. When he turned toward me, I saw his face was a continually changing compendium of different people’s faces. I fantasized under stress about the possible reasons for this to occur. I may have eaten something horrid or poisonous. Or, supernaturally, I may have been put under a curse of some kind. Could I be an enemy of the government, who needed to be disposed of?” Polly’s face became a bit animated, as she spoke, but her body remained rigid.

“What were you forced to do?” Bertha strained forward to take the girl’s hands. “It’s time to use your mental metamorphosis. If you become his mind, as he is in the act of killing a girl, tell me what you would be thinking and how you could change the reality of murder into something worthwhile and even redeeming.”

The four times previously, when Bertha attempted to access Polly’s mind, events kept occurring to interrupt the proceedings. Once it was an earthquake, once a fire alarm, and twice other patients had gone off the deep end and caused a ruckus. This was the moment Bertha had been long awaiting.

The eager smile on the girl’s face demonstrated to Bertha that there were conflicting psychological forces at work. Polly, by all academic and social standards, was a genius child, a prodigy, but this turn of events had thrown the social welfare officials and newspaper journalists into an increasingly pessimistic state of conjecture. The idea that a girl’s mind, especially a mind that came from such noble breeding, could be declared broken, was inconceivable.

Polly whispered, “I must stop the energy in this poor damsel. If she is allowed to grow older and breed, then the entire society is endangered. One small incision ...”

Bertha watched Polly’s right hand. It was in the posture of holding a pen or perhaps a cutting utensil. She held it over something, her eyes focused upon the cutting motion being made by her empty but purposeful fingers.

“Polly, dearest. You may now metamorphose your brain and take control of his. What can you do to prevent this immoral act from occurring?”

As a result of public conjecture, Polly’s existential reality was the daily emotional fodder for the masses. This or that doctor or nurse (whose efficacy was open to bidding) would secretly tell the press how the girl’s

parents were to blame and that no child can become insane without a direct influence from the parent figures. Other journalists would speculate that the government was behind a huge cover-up, and so many citizens were being adjudicated insane to keep them quiet. According to conspiracy fanatics, these inmates knew something, and they had to be kept silent.

Bertha, after reading the biography of Civil War Superintendent of Union Nurses, Dorothea Dix, became very interested in medicine. She would beg to go with her mother, Attorney and Detective Clara Foltz, every time one of her cases required that she visit the hospital or the coroner's office. When the homicide of ten-year-old Winnifred Cotton took place, just three doors down from where Bertha and her family lived in the mansion at One Nob Hill, Bertha decided she wanted to help her mother with the case. Not only was Polly Bedford a friend of Bertha's, she was also a member of the same choir that sang at Bertha's grandfather, Reverend Elias Shortridge's tent revivals at the sand lots on the Market Street side of San Francisco City Hall.

However, the secret reason Bertha wanted to help her mother was because her older sister, Trella Evelyn, and older brother, Samuel Cortland, had played important parts in the mystery the year before concerning the spiritualist murders. Bertha had watched them both as they pranced around the bedroom, claiming to have discovered this or that clue to contribute in the search for the killer. Samuel eventually broke the case wide open and was able to rescue their mother, Trella, and Samuel's future girlfriend, Adeline Quantrill, at the strange Sarah Winchester House in San Jose.

Bertha May was being supervised from San Francisco by her mother, Clara Shortridge Foltz, Private Detective and Attorney-at-Law. Bertha was there to infiltrate the Stockton Asylum, while pretending to be insane, with the sole purpose of questioning Miss Polly Bedford. Bertha was told

by Clara that Miss Bedford had been committed by her parents because she had witnessed a murder which had taken place inside their residence, a stately mansion in the Nob Hill section of San Francisco. Clara also told Bertha that the Bedfords did not want Polly involved, and so they were willing to declare their daughter insane to keep her safe and legally out of the way. It was going to be Bertha's important job to discover who or what Polly saw on that night and to report back to her mother.

However, this case was much more complicated than the spiritualist murders. First of all, Bertha knew the murder witness, Polly Bedford. Bertha had played dolls and done homework with Polly, and Bertha had never found the younger girl to be belligerent or mentally strange. Therefore, Bertha was chosen by Clara to find out the identity of the person Miss Bedford allegedly saw commit this murder of Miss Winnifred Cotton, age ten, on January 3, 1887. If she discovered that Polly was not really insane, then she was going to explore how the institution was able to get so many people committed. However, Clara had explained to Bertha, at some length, she was not to steal or commit any crimes during her snooping adventure.

Bertha was going to see if she could determine what made this entire state asylum business run, and even though she knew her mother was looking out for her safety, Bertha was going to take all the risks she needed to accomplish her goal. If her brother, Samuel, could join the Tong Gang and spy on a spiritualist, then Bertha could be just as adventurous—perhaps even more so.

Her mother and the Cottons believed that mental illness was being sold as an easy way to get rid of troublesome wives and children and to secretly formulate a scheme whereby immigrants could be tricked out of their property and wealth by being committed. No money could come from the State of California to the State asylums at Stockton and Napa, unless the patients were ruled indigent.

Therefore, the same panel of doctors and state clerks was employed each year to do this nefarious business of separating the profitable wheat from the insane chaff, resulting in an incredible government statistic that said, “in 1886, alone, one out of every 435 Californians had been declared insane by the State.” As this was an important women’s and human rights issue, Clara and her team were motivated to uncover any illegal activities that might surface during their murder investigation. Bertha was overjoyed at being part of her mother’s team at long last.

All Bertha knew before she was committed by her mother to the asylum was that Mr. Charles Cotton, President and Owner of the Cotton Gin Liquor Imports on Market Street, had deposited five hundred dollars into Bertha’s personal bank account. Bertha was going to help her mother do what the City of San Francisco’s Police Department was not permitted to do: find the killer of Charles Cotton’s daughter.

One must always make it profitable for the state-run institution, even if it means a little discomfort during enforcement. A recent statistical survey Bertha read had uncovered the fact that more patient accidents occurred because of there being no restraints, and the screaming dashes made by manic lunatics were not to be allowed. It was Bertha’s goal, however, to lift the rock of outside speculation in order to explore the stark reality of the asylum’s daily life, which was squirming from the mental disease called fear.

Bertha could hear the commotion at the asylum’s front entrance. The girls had returned from their labors in the garden and on the farm. She took hold of her chain and dragged the ten-pound steel cube across the room to her bunk. Bertha knew that the moment the workers came into the ward they, too, would have these shackles affixed to their legs.

CHAPTER 2: THE HOME FIRES



The Hopkins Mansion, One Nob Hill, San Francisco, April 23, 1887.

When the woman from the Stockton Insane Asylum came to the door, Samuel Cortland Foltz, nineteen, was playing cribbage with the butler, Hannigan. Samuel heard the voice of the woman, and he knew she was the attractive messenger paid for by his mother's suffragist friends. Samuel waved off the butler when he started to answer the door. The written epistle from his sister, Bertha May, would be handed to his mother, Clara Shortridge Foltz, Esq., and then the formal "Walk to the Library" would ensue. As Clara made her journey, inevitably, family members would begin to trail in after her until the chairs around the Library reference table were occupied, waiting for the grand reading by the attorney and leader of the investigative team.

Samuel was without his girlfriend, Adeline Quantrill. The eighteen-year-old psychic orphan, with whom he fell in love during the spiritualist murders case, was interviewing for a research post with Sir Francis Galton, the famous British scientist, who worked directly for railroad millionaire, Leland Stanford. Samuel also knew Adeline was being used by his mother to investigate more closely into what their team was now referring to as the "Mad Money Exposé."

Five of the usual investigative members were there, and they were seated to Clara's right and left. On the right sat Clara's beaux, Captain of Detectives, Isaiah Lees, his usually serious demeanor being attacked by

the jubilant woman next to him, Ah Toy, Clara's long-time friend and former Chinatown Madame. On Clara's left were her son, Samuel, her daughter, Trella Evelyn, and, down on the end, the owner and benefactress to them all, Mrs. Mary Hopkins, who seemed to be amusing herself by speaking for an improvised napkin puppet, which the old woman was bouncing against Trella's back. The young woman, used to the magical world of Mary's dementia, was not perturbed.

"Please, may we have some decorum? Or, I may be initiating immediate insanity hearings against Ah Toy and Trella Evelyn for having maniacal and fluctuating changes in their menstrual and uterine habits!"

All the women, except Mrs. Hopkins, began to guffaw loudly and strike the table with their fists or purses. Menstruation and uterine disease were listed reasons for women to be declared insane by California officials, as the group knew.

Clara pounded her fist louder. "Enough! I must now impart the reading." She turned to look down at Captain Lees. He was staring up at her like an Irish Setter at the feet of his mistress. "Go ahead. I know that pleading face. You have more information about our case from the city officials. We usually don't aspire to such lofty heights around here, but, go ahead, Isaiah. Tell us what you know."

Clara sat down and kept her eyes on Lees as he stood to address the gathering. He was wearing the outfit he wore on cases: a brown frock coat and vest with checkered pants and spit-shined Oxfords. Clara wished he paid as much attention to her as he did to his Oxfords, his guns, and the Bowie knife that he kept under his vest.

"Thank you, Madame Investigator. I am certain you are all familiar with our current Governor, Mr. Washington Bartlett. In the first case Attorney Foltz took on, we had Washington, then our mayor, on our prime murder suspect list up until the last moment. He did, in fact, impede the investigation into the murders of eight women, for which he was never

prosecuted.” Lees nodded to Clara, who was waving at him.

“I want to get back to our present murder case. How is Governor Bartlett a factor?” Clara said.

Captain Lees was ready for that question. “I understand. Governor Bartlett *is* connected to our present investigation. I just found out from his office, in fact, that the City of San Francisco will not be seeking any criminal grand jury indictment in the homicide of Winnifred Cotton, even though there is reason to believe the victim was pushed down the stairs and did not fall of her own accord. He signed the executive order to make this possible.”

“Winnie Cotton was a tomboy. She could out-wrestle and out-climb any boy her age. She would never trip.” Trella Evelyn pointed out.

Lees continued, “It has also been resolved by the mayor’s office that the commitment of Polly Bedford by her parents was legal and proper. Therefore, unless we can discover some evidence that gives us a witness at the scene of the girl’s fall, or we get a sane confession from Miss Bedford as to this killer’s identity, then Bertha May and Polly will have served their time in the asylum for nought.”

Samuel decided to stand and deliver as well. “We began this inquiry when Polly’s aunt, Mrs. Jeanne Forester, told mother that she overheard her sister, Louise, and her husband, Ronald Bedford, discussing the commitment of their daughter, Polly. The words Mrs. Forester heard were ‘she can’t be questioned by the police.’ Now we have Bertha inside this asylum risking her life, and Adeline is away to infiltrate the halls of academe, while all we seem to be doing is laughing at suffragette humor.”

Clara arose from her chair like an invigorated spirit of human rights. “Enough! We must focus on our present activities.” She looked down at the report from her daughter at the Stockton hospital. It was the third such report since Clara had her strategically committed.

Samuel realized that his mother knew that her family and friends

looked to her for guidance. They knew that Clara, along with fellow lawyer Laura de Force Gordon, had worked to get the law passed which accepted women into California law schools and gave women the right to enter any profession for which they were qualified. They also knew that Clara and her best friend, Ah Toy, were working to address the injustices of the sexist and racist culture that surrounded them. This case involved women and children being used as chattel in order to incarcerate them for free into mental asylums. These commitments were being done so the husbands or other relatives could profit, either directly or indirectly, from such confinement.

“Bertha May sends her love, and here is her report for this week. ‘I was able to converse with Polly yesterday, but I believe the drugs they give her are dulling her senses and her intellect.’ I shall now paraphrase.” Clara looked up from the paper at her audience. “Polly describes the murderer of Winnie Cotton as being none other than Satan himself. No horns or other beastly persona for Miss Polly, however. Bertha says that, according to Polly, this devil murderer’s face was a constantly moving display of different human faces. Polly also was certain this visitor was slicing into something just before the murder.”

“The Great Liar lives amongst us!” Mrs. Hopkins shouted from the end of the table.

“From what my daughter says about the administration at Stockton, we can at least be assured of getting possible witnesses who will testify that they saw asylum staff selling narcotics to the wealthy female residents in the top floor suites.” Clara, always looking for pathways of greed, had been taught well as to the motivation of corrupt persons, especially those who work for the government.

Both her father Elias Shortridge, and her lover, Captain Lees, had in the past been arrested for disobeying arbitrary laws meant to protect the corrupt overseers. And, as the Women’s Suffrage Movement also knew,

females were seen as the weaker sex for a reason. Without the ability to get out of the home in order to pursue her calling, a woman was also an institutionalized citizen, ripened for the plunder.

Ah Toy raised her hand, and Clara nodded at her. She seemed very poised in her red silk *cheongsam*. Her English was eloquent and well pronounced. “Back in China, the Manchu would have workers join committees that were supposed to root out favoritism and corruption, but the rulers used that information to arrest those who would blame others. In China, if you were committed, it usually meant you would die. In this country, it seems, the institutionalization of humans can mean a profitable enterprise for those who can play the game well.”

It was eldest daughter Trella Evelyn’s turn to raise a hand. She was wearing the newest female liberation attire, a black gabardine suit, with a crimson tie hanging down belligerently between the breasts, and no preposterous bustle or python girdle to impede the free movement of a woman with a purpose. “I believe Ah Toy has a brilliant idea, even though she has not voiced it. Mother, you have always remarked that ideas are there for anybody to seize, but it is the enlightened person who steals these ideas and puts them into motion.”

“Please, Trella dear. Get to the point,” Clara said.

“We should form a citizens’ committee to investigate the goings-on at Stockton,” Trella said, rising slowly to her feet, as her voice gained volume and confidence. “Mrs. Hopkins and her friends certainly have the wealth and political influence to coordinate such a bi-partisan effort. We should keep it away from our suffrage connections, lest the men see through us to our ultimate goal.”

Clara wanted to give her daughter a bit more rope so she could hang herself properly and lady-like. “And what, pray tell, is our ultimate goal?”

“Why, to arrest every member of that corrupt male system in California that makes us the laughingstock of the nation. More Californians are

being committed to mental hospitals than in any other state of the union. People are committed for being drunk in public, having hysterical menstrual cramps, and being insane for not speaking English.” Trella’s neck was red with emotion.

Clara was waiting for her daughter’s voice to register near the soprano pitch sung in a Wagnerian opera. There it was. “All right. That’s enough! I appreciate your fervent devotion to justice, Trella, and the idea is good, but the elaboration is not. For us to initiate such a committee, we will need an extremely decorous and judicial approach. Uncontrolled emotions, as you should all be aware, are the Achilles’s heel of our movement. Many other women are against the female right to vote because women are important to the home fires. Without a woman’s intelligent touch, so goes the logic, a home can quickly degenerate into chaos and fear.”

Samuel watched his mother gather steam. He had witnessed this often. The unfathomable power of eloquent argument.

“Don’t look at me that way, Ah Toy. You know as well as I that without your sexual allure, you would have never made it out of Chinatown alive. Therefore, we shall form a very prudent, sober, and unbiased committee to investigate Stockton State Insane Asylum. We shall base our inquiry on very specific allegations, and our members will represent a cross-section of the community—both male and female—and our purpose will be to protect the best interests of all California taxpayers and citizens.”

Captain Lees stood up. “You need a member of the legal establishment to sit on this committee. I know a retired judge who would agree to such an appointment.”

Clara turned toward him. “Yes, and father can give us an esteemed reverend from the Christian community. Do we have anybody from academia and labor?”

“I have a professor at Berkeley who can serve. He teaches History and is well respected by his fellow researchers.” Trella Evelyn was in college, and Samuel expected she would recommend that professor. She also thought he was dreamy and handsome.

Ah Toy raised her hand and waited until Clara nodded at her. “Chinatown is constantly working to gain advantage in our competitive economy. I believe it would be proper to include a labor official of Chinese descent on our committee. I know of one such respected official, and she is willing, I am certain.”

“Thank you, Ah Toy. We now have a framework for our new investigative committee. Obviously, we will need to interview these new appointees, and each of you who spoke will coordinate together to schedule our interview. Be reminded. We are not out to save the world. As of this moment, our task is to prove a little girl has been murdered. Whatever crimes may branch outward from this central search are not of our immediate concern. With God’s help, we have members in our international movement who will step in when needed to bridge the gaps.”

Samuel knew they would end the meeting with applause. As he joined in, he thought about Adeline. Would she become more motivated by the pull of academic research so that she soon forgot about him? He really had no immediate plans. He still gambled in Chinatown, somewhat successfully. His mother’s practice and “The Law” were on his distant horizon perhaps.

Samuel also thought about his sister, Bertha May. He knew that part of Bertha’s motivation was to prove she was equal to he and Trella. He and Trella knew the real danger Bertha was in, and the excitement of her adventure exceeded the risk by microcosmic proportions.

He, along with their entire investigative team, knew they would now proceed carefully. The motivation to serve the common good was to always be at the forefront of any investigation they pursued. There was

something about that last statement that always made Samuel's chest swell with pride.

The Cotton Mansion, Six Nob Hill, San Francisco, California, April 23, 1887.

Clara was in relatively good spirits when she walked through the garden leading up to the Cotton home, five doors down from Mary Hopkins' mansion. She had given direct instructions to her team about how they would collect information in the coming days. Of course, her daughter Bertha was in danger, but unless the murderer were inside the asylum, the risk could be kept to a minimum. Clara believed, of course, in the higher good. Humans needed something to look forward to as well as something to appreciate immediately. Without hope, humanity was doomed.

A tall butler took her shawl and parasol, and Clara adjusted her auburn hair and straightened her new teal hat. The silk teal dress and moderate bustle served as assisting decorations in this important tête-à-tête. The most important task to Clara was how to decorate the questions she was about to ask this special person. She knew just how important it was to have an audience with Mrs. Elizabeth Packard, a woman who, in the 1860s, had been committed to an insane asylum for three years. Like Clara, she was a single mother with six children. Mrs. Packard won her case against the patriarchal authorities, and she turned to the law, in order to enact changes to reform state policies on housing and caring for its mentally ill population. Clara was meeting a woman who had established a national association of experts to address the changes needed at mental asylums in all the states.

As she followed the maid through the mansion, Clara noted how her senses were being distracted away from the usual garish antique

furnishings, pungent exotic incense, and even the artwork collections. When one lived inside the beast of capitalism, the opulence quickly became commonplace, especially if one was engaged in legal conundrums that had to do with civil rights for women, the lesser races, foreign cultures, and other lower classes.

Winona Cotton was, of course, still wearing mourning black for her daughter, Winnifred, whose death was the proximate cause of this arranged meeting between Clara and Mrs. Packard. Her eyes were bright, and her hands were warm as she grasped Clara's. "Come. Let me introduce you to her right away. My friends and I, quite naturally, will be leaving the room the moment you give the word. I must tell you. She does have one affectation at age seventy-one. She won't use a hearing apparatus, so she will often not hear you well. You must speak louder than you would normally speak for her to hear you."

Clara nodded and followed her hostess into the study off to the side of the main dining room. Ever the good detective, Clara was making mental notes about the identities of the persons she knew who were inside that study. There was only one personage she did not recognize, a slender man with fashionable mutton-chop sideburns warming his cheeks and framing his blue-eyed gaze. The others were Charles Cotton, Winona's husband, and Clara's close attorney friend, Laura de Force Gordon. Clara assumed Laura was there representing the Cotton family, as she had also represented them during the formal inquest into the cause of Winnifred's death. Laura had been of great assistance in Clara's second case, last year, helping to capture the spiritualist who was responsible for women killing their husbands.

Then, there was the woman Clara really wanted to meet. Mrs. Elizabeth Ware Packard wore a plain, rural dress of dark blue with a white lace apron tied around her middle. The plaid shawl encircled her rather wide shoulders, and the cameo brooch under the white blouse at her neck

complemented her calm and inquisitive gray eyes. Her wispy white hair was loose and about her shoulders, and there was something about the way Mrs. Packard leaned forward as Clara approached, and smiled beneath her white bonnet, which caused Clara to say the following to the older woman in a loud voice.

“I trust you are not wearing a corset, Mrs. Packard, lest your father and ex-husband commit you again for purposely cutting off the proper flow of blood to your weak, female brain.” Clara took the woman’s spotted hands into her own and peered deeply into her intelligent eyes. She at once saw the elder’s eyes light up with good humor as she squinted, smiled, and nodded at Clara.

“Ah, Mrs. Foltz. At last, someone who understands the role that simply being of a different sex can mean to one’s ability to work and to even breathe comfortably. I keep telling my so-called followers that they need only begin a revolt in the bedroom to get things changed the way they should be. That would most certainly include our women who do their wifely duties in the bordello. Certainly, you’ll agree, Aristophanes was onto something when he wrote *Lysistrata*. Women of today simply do not have the gumption to follow the Greek women’s plan through. If the corset were on the men’s bodies, these galivanting troubadours of ours would become celibate monks. Just to win a drunken wager at a tavern house, they thought they could escape this mighty garment-python’s grip. It is we women who need to gird our loins and, if you’ll pardon the expression, herd our collective and closed loins, to put a stop to male sexist behaviors.”

“Oh yes, Mrs. Packard . . .” Clara began, chuckling and sitting down next to her on the davenport. She motioned to her friend Laura to sit down at the end as well, and she did.

“Please, do call me Elizabeth, or even Liz, if you’re of the modern set. You must be, as you’re so young and flirtatiously attractive.” Mrs.

Packard adjusted a curl that was sticking down too far on Clara's wide forehead. At thirty-eight, with five children and a robust figure, Clara believed Liz may also need spectacles.

"I'm sorry to be in such a rush. I must be off to another round of questioning in this matter. May we begin? I understand attorney Gordon will be staying to represent the Cotton family's interest in these proceedings. That will be fine, but we need to clear the room of everyone else." Clara glanced around, first at Mr. and Mrs. Cotton and then at the strange gentleman. She made a mental note to later ask Laura who he was. After she watched them exit the study and close the double-doors behind them, Clara turned once again to yell at Mrs. Packard.

"Let me attempt to summarize my predicament at this juncture, Liz," she said, deciding on incorporating the familiar name for this great woman, as it would assuage Clara's own fears of sitting right next to this noble champion of human rights.

"By all means, Attorney Foltz. And, welcome, Mrs. Gordon. I am aware of your courtroom battles to defend the rights of women, some of whom, I might add, were railroaded into mental institutions for the profit of their husbands or other family members." Mrs. Packard folded her hands into her lap. "Certainly, in my own case, back in the 1860s, there were no means of protection to stop the abuses, but now we at least have some protection and even overseers, although law and enforcement are two very different realities, as I'm certain you're both aware."

Clara noted that Laura again wore her plain, dark blue work attire, which reflected her affinity for the masses. No bustle, no frills, and certainly no feminine allure. Whereas Clara used her own grace and feminine stylishness to catch the male opposition off-guard, it had been Laura's strategy all along to come at her opponents with rhetorical guns blasting away, with no regard for a fashionably attractive personal appearance.

Laura Gordon was an efficient and practical San Francisco lawyer, whereas Clara had always tried to look at the big picture, even at a state and federal level, and to plan accordingly. All three of them, Clara knew, had one thing in common. They had all been jilted by husbands who believed women were there to serve them and not there to rebel against their ironclad power.

“Liz, we don’t have the membership or far reach that you and your fine organization have. This does not mean our present case warrants your attention out of hand. It does not. Instead, I propose an affiliation based on the understanding that we wish to change the entire mental health care system and not the patients or the people working within. The system must always accommodate the best interests of the individual, whenever possible, with the understanding that organizations must have discipline and order in order to function.”

Mrs. Packard was mumbling some words to herself and nodding.

Clara gasped. “Liz?” she said, at a greater volume, remembering about the elder’s hearing impairment. “Did you hear anything I just said?”

“I’m sorry, my dear. No, I really did not hear one word. I am fortunate to have you here today. I must remember to tell friends to speak louder when in my company. This is what they called in the asylum a breakthrough, Mrs. Foltz.” Mrs. Packard leaned back and sighed. “Sadly, our society often supports isolation and eccentricity, when it comes to research and intelligent scientific and even religious speculation. However, you must always do this under society’s auspices, because we all know there is supposedly no such thing as an isolated genius. Without the kiss of approval from society, a genius may as well be a mad person raving, within an asylum, squatting in the corner, excrement in his hands, nude, and with no hope or belief in God or for the future.”

“We need your understanding of how things actually function inside these asylums,” Clara was almost shouting, and she noticed that Laura

was wincing from the sound. In their courtroom debates, Laura was always the loud one, who could make a jury sit up and listen. Clara, on the other hand, would always come near. Nearer to the judge, to the jury, to the witness. Her speaking method was to fabricate intimate secrets, whereas Laura's technique was to compete directly with the men.

"You have achieved a life about which most women merely dream, Mrs. Foltz. Other women do not realize, of course, that the reality of being given some access to the patriarchal authorities is no guarantee that they will listen. That is when we females use our hidden talents of the supernatural variety, is it not?"

Clara nodded and smiled. She was thinking about the young psychic, Adeline Quantrill, whom she employed to ferret out the identity of a murderer, and who was now being courted by Samuel, Clara's son. The girl was presently applying to assist one of the most prominent and influential families in America, the Stanfords. This bastion of academic exclusivity would be quite surprised to discover that Clara and her investigative team had planted Adeline there to spy on them.

"Some might call madness the isolated genius of a Jesus, a Mohammed, or a Buddha," Mrs. Packer continued. "Or, others might call it the madness of a mind gone off its trolley. I thought I would use that metaphor, as those monstrosities you have going up these Sisyphus hills may as well be circumnavigating between heaven and hell, or mania and melancholy."

"What is your biggest fear about what can happen when society allows the subjugation of human beings for the purposes of isolation away from more respectable members of the community?" Clara hoped her open-ended question would allow Mrs. Packard the freedom to explore her innermost beliefs based on her horrendous personal experience and battle to survive.

"Make no mistake. There are those mental patients who are quite a

danger to themselves and to others. They should be the focus of attention at these facilities. Why? They need proper care aimed at preventing physical harm. Whereas, much of the political shenanigans we face have to do with the manipulation of innocent minds for profit, I am quite pleased to be part of your investigation, Mrs. Foltz. My organization and I often become too distracted from the daily realities of our entire society. We become so riveted upon the noble quest to release innocent minds from captivity that we ignore the one true way we can actually cause change. We cannot uncover conspiracies within the organization which point to an evil trend in the very process of caring for the mentally ill. I am proud to serve you in this regard because this is what you will be doing.”

A young red-haired woman wearing a nurse’s dress rushed into the room, and Clara was at first angry at the interruption, as she had just begun to appreciate Mrs. Packard’s acceptance and what it meant to her plans. Luckily, the visiting nurse was talking to Laura Gordon, as she was seated as the closest of the trio to the entrance. After a few moments of intense whispering, back and forth, Laura got up and walked over to Clara.

“She’s the messenger from Stockton. She says Polly was confined to isolation. It seems when a fellow patient shared in open discussion about how she knew Miss Bedford to be a secret spy for the government, Polly rushed at the woman and attempted to gouge her eyes from their sockets, or so the written report reads.”

Clara felt her heart clutch in her breast. Could someone in that state-employed community have discovered that Polly was connected to Bertha May? And, upon further inside investigation, perhaps they found out that Clara and her group were behind Bertha being committed. It was one of Clara’s worst nightmares as a sleuth. That moment when you have discovered that your adversary was one step ahead of you, as you were about to pull the magician’s screen back to reveal the real culprits behind

the sorcery.

“I have worked to pass thirty-four state bills which directly address these problems. Most often, the guilty party has been discovered by using common sense and an application of human and Christian values. However, in some circumstances, there was a malfeasance committed against a patient that demonstrated evil and even murderous intent. At those moments, I am very happy to turn the authority to investigate over to an honest and caring legal professional, such as yourself.” Mrs. Packer nodded at Clara.

Clara smiled over at Laura, who nodded back at her. “We completely agree with you, Mrs. Packer. Even though my own daughter could be in jeopardy, I will not jump to any conclusions before we can hear all of the witnesses to this event. Are you at liberty to travel with us to the Stockton Asylum? On the way, I can tell you about the citizens’ committee we are in the process of forming in order to thoroughly investigate the entire administration and its staff. We believe this will lead directly to discovering the person or persons responsible for the death of Miss Winnifred Cotton.”

“Even during my darkest times inside the Illinois asylum, I was never treated as badly as when I was placed under the roof of my own husband. He locked me up and would not allow me to socialize with anyone. This is what drives one authentically insane. The reality that you are not allowed the privilege of being with fellow humans.”

Laura added to the conversation. “Indeed. Isolation recently killed one of my clients. She could not stand her seclusion and committed suicide with purchased drugs she procured on the prison’s black market.”

Mrs. Packard continued with her memoir, and Clara noted that her complexion became flushed as she spoke more vehemently than before. “When I was in the asylum, at least I could talk to other women, and we understood how we were being treated, because our every waking

moment was monitored by our caretakers. This was not a democracy, but my asylum treatment did not come close to the way the government had bequeathed my husband with the power to imprison me. According to my Christian religion, my Calvinist caretaker should have obeyed the obligation to protect his wife and not to imprison her. We must get that Bedford girl out of isolation!” Mrs. Packard concluded, and she stood up.

CHAPTER 3: THE INTENT OF THE INSANE



The Women's Section, Stockton State Insane Asylum, April 23, 1887.

Clara wanted to use this inquiry into Polly Bedford's alleged assault upon another resident as a way to insinuate their investigation into the life's blood of the state asylum's daily activities. Mrs. Packard had already wired the superintendent at the Stockton Asylum with instructions to take Polly out of isolation until they arrived.

It was as if this change in circumstance had opened up a new method to eavesdrop, with careful planning, into the heart of murderous intent itself. As an attorney-at-law, Clara understood that most crimes of passion, of which murder was the most heinous, had to be proved in front of a jury, beyond any reasonable doubt, that the Defendant's action was intentional and deliberated upon before he or she made a move.

Along the Central Pacific route toward Stockton, inside their cabin, Clara was able to discuss, albeit at an increased volume, with Elizabeth Packard and Laura Gordon, about why their investigation centered around the murder of Winnifred Cotton. Also, how they needed to prove an intent that went far beyond that of a single murderer's state of mind. Clara was relaxed as she spoke, and she would often turn in her private first-class seat, to gaze out at the passing farm land as they journeyed, the coach swaying, the rails clickety-clacking like the castanets of a Spanish dancer.

"You see, that's why I wanted my daughter, Bertha May, committed to

the asylum. She believes her friend, Polly Bedford, is not insane at all. It's her idea that the administration has been instructed, by whom we know not, to give Polly drugs to keep her in a confused state of mind. I propose we inquire into that area. When an actor is under duress or has been drugged, either voluntarily or involuntarily, his or her actions are not to be considered intentional." When she saw Laura's eyebrow raise, Clara nodded for her to speak.

"Yes, and intent works both ways, my dear. If you believe there is some nefarious conspiracy of a group, then you have the burden of proving intent on their part, as well as showing that each member of that conspiracy took an advanced step toward completing the illegal action, even a murder." Laura shook her dark-brown hair, and Clara remembered that same glint of satisfaction in Laura's eyes that she saw so often during their trials opposing each other in a court of criminal law.

Clara smiled, choosing to circumvent her friend's challenge for the moment. "Naturally, under the present legal circumstances, Miss Bedford has been ruled insane. Thus, her civil rights are completely obliterated. If she is insane, then her intent is nullified, but the same goes for her actions if she were not insane. Why? Because if she is not insane, then the drugs being administered to her for her diagnosed insanity are not warranted. Therefore, the intent of her actions while under the influence of illegally prescribed drugs, is also negated, because she was not lucid."

It was Mrs. Packard's turn to smile, and Clara was so expectant that she reached out and took the older woman's hand.

"What you say is clear," Mrs. Packer said. "It also suggests that you need another expert to add. You need a physician who works daily with committed patients and who can speak with the utmost authority about how drugs affect a patient's mind and body. Most importantly, he must know if their dosage can mitigate intent in the human mind."

"Thank you, Liz. Do you really have a doctor in mind who would do

this?” Clara asked.

“I certainly do. He played an important role in my own investigations, when we were attempting to impose pharmaceutical regulations upon several state mental asylums across the country. He traveled with me to seventeen hearings in eight different states. His name is Dr. Andrew McFarland, and he was the superintendent in charge of the Illinois State Asylum for the Insane, in Jacksonville, where I was when I challenged the authorities about my own illegal internment by my husband.” Mrs. Packard straightened her collar.

“Is he sympathetic to your cause?” Laura shouted.

“Sympathetic? Well, he quit his employment as the superintendent, due to what we proved was going on under his nose, and he established a private hospital, Oak Lawn Retreat, where he now works as the Superintendent and Assistant Physician. However, I must point out, he will not come to us without the accompaniment of his constant companion, and apple of his eye, his granddaughter, Anne.”

“Still another member to join the fray?” Clara raised her eyebrows but smiled. “I suppose having an extra woman will also help us.”

“Indeed, it will. I don’t know how many times Andrew has informed me he plans to base his entire mental health program for women around his mentally and physically fit granddaughter, as he believes she will make a superb doctor. She will be entering medical school beginning in the new term.”

“She is getting quite a special education with her grandfather serving as mentor,” Laura shouted.

“Indeed. Anne becomes quite vehement when we discuss the current practice of blaming female mania and nervousness on the patient’s menstrual and gynecological disorders. She will instruct you, in the minutest details, about how this policy was instituted in order to reap thousands of dollars from the coffers of every pharmaceutical, gadget, and

uterine gimmickry manufacturer known to Man.” Mrs. Packard took a deep, resigned breath.

“I can’t speak for my entire team, but I believe these two experts will be excellent additions. I want to thank you, Liz, for your assistance. When can they be in California to help us?” Clara’s voice was still loud, and she squinted as she spoke.

“Good. Then I shall wire them through Western Union when we arrive in Stockton. They should make it out here in three days, if all goes well. We certainly won’t be able to secure a date for our first committee investigation for at least three days, don’t you think? That’s been my experience in other states. This is the first time I’ve taken on the system in California. Do you believe it will be difficult?” Mrs. Packard’s eyes were glowing with enthusiasm.

Both Clara and Laura were smiling roguishly at that question. Clara spoke first. “California began Stockton’s existence in controversy. The first superintendent, a Dr. Reid, was accused in court of using patients as slave labor to add furnishings and a new garden to his personal home. He was also accused of underreporting deaths and using single graves for multiple burials. His trial, begun by the governor, ended in Reid being discharged.”

Laura shouted, with her hands circled around her mouth. “Yes, and two doctors—one sympathetic to Reid and the other to the governor—fought a duel over the testimony given against Reid by another doctor who later, coincidentally, became the new superintendent. Luckily, the wounded man, Dr. Langdon, received only a fractured leg when the bullet struck him. As you can see, Mrs. Packard, stories in the penny press about our life in the Wild West are not always exaggerated.”

“And, since you speak of aboriginal thinking, what is the overall philosophy at this asylum? Does it accede to the current trend in blaming the body for the condition of the mind? Misogynism, as I have

discovered, time and again, often lies at the heart of the way the women are treated inside these state facilities.” Mrs. Packard struck her breast with her fist.

“From what we’ve studied, California mental health authorities subscribe to the theory that social stressors cause mental illness. Allegedly, our Gold Rush and our increasingly complicated industrial society affect our population—many of them from foreign lands—in very negative ways.” Clara held her arms out wide. “The cure, so to speak, is for the asylum to be a grand place where the patient can relax, in rural splendor, in order to be treated for mental problems caused mostly by social stress and physical ailments. Thus, we have the water method of keeping a patient’s body invigorated by warmth and liquid, thus clearing the mind for more logical thinking.”

“Go ahead, Clara, I know you’re going to say it,” Laura remarked, frowning.

Clara nodded at her friend and smiled. “Yes, and I was especially enthused when you mentioned Miss Anne, the granddaughter of Dr. McFarland. We have reason to believe these conspirators—perhaps even the murderer him or her self—are profiting from misogynistic practices as well as from the old-fashioned crimes of embezzlement of government funds and outright torture.”

Laura snapped back, “The State of California does, in fact, have a very mixed population, and as we know, it is also a very difficult society in which to succeed. Our citizens are under constant threats from labor unrest, we treat our immigrants with disdain, and we move the mentally ill away from these stressors so they can be cured of the mostly attitudinal problems they develop. Attorney Foltz here seems to forget that many upstanding citizens, such as my clients, the Bedfords, need a safe place to commit their obviously insane children. And, the drugs and daily physical regimen are here to assist in medical treatment and not here to aggravate

the problem of the patient.”

“Oh, it can get quite aggravated when profit becomes a cure, and drugs become the snake oil for the State’s coffers,” Clara said, and her eyes became livid. She met her fellow attorney’s stare with equal resistance.

“As we always say, Counselor, that will be determined in court.” Laura adjusted the black comb in her hair. Because Clara was a personal friend, Laura was obviously holding back on her usually antagonistic rhetoric. If they were inside a courtroom, Clara knew, Laura’s talons would be showing.

This was the third visit for Clara to the Stockton State Insane Asylum. But it was the first involving her daughter, Bertha May, and her companion, Polly Bedford. As they rode out to the institution by rented horse and buggy, Clara reflected upon how different she and Laura Gordon were in one key area of the law. The insanity defense. Clara believed not being able to determine right from wrong was solid proof that the perpetrator did not have the requisite intent. Laura, in opposition, believed only the perpetrator could know about state of mind at the time of the act, so because there was no objective viewpoint from which to judge, there could be no mitigating circumstance of insanity. Judges could not be mind readers and neither could alienists.

Clara enjoyed the sensory panorama riding on the train. The rivers of the California Delta swirled around them. Waves of different odors wafted into the coach: onion, fertilizer, flowers, fruits and many more indescribable and pungent smells. As both Mrs. Packard and Laura were eating fresh peaches, sold from a cart during their trip, Clara reached over and grabbed one from the bag between them.

As she smelled the unique odor of the peach, Clara realized how nonsensical it was to determine the guilt or innocence of a human being upon subjective and often sexist human reason. According to the

patriarchal authorities, one cannot be conscious of one's actions unless one can reason. The animals, even the primates, do not write down their histories and memories. These creatures do not explore the universe nor do they understand the laws of a society created for their own interests.

Ironically, the so-called "insane" person could reason. True, their reasoned world was usually an inner society based completely upon personal and not societal tastes, and on subjective, idiosyncratic status symbols rather than on social whims. Who could truthfully say which reason was superior? If the insane person were kept in the attic, inside an elite mansion, sleeping in satin, prattling to servants, getting featured at Christmas like the other poor oddities in life, then the intent and actions of the insane person were producing a positive result. The insane person's inner society was not part of the outside, and yet it still existed. It was only the social communications environment that was missing in this equation.

If the insane person were protected by outside society, then could he or she live another day, without harm, and with a possible hope for the future? For example, in the case of Mrs. Mark Hopkins, Mary, Clara's wealthy benefactress, the old woman's dementia was being protected by Clara's legal knowledge and by Ah Toy's administrative abilities. Without their protection, the old woman could easily be committed to an asylum by unscrupulous types, who had no other concern other than reaping profits from the railroad heiress's formidable estate.

Clara knew that each day was perhaps her last chance to find the connections between that inner, sometimes insane world, and that outer, perhaps eternally insane world. In those moments of breakthrough, when the sick, insane mind sees it is being heard and is being accepted as a legitimate reality, will insanity become open to criticism and possible cure?

Clara also knew this honorable treatment of humans, such as what Mrs.

Packard advocated, was at the heart of her own goals as an attorney. Many societal labels were meant to categorize and isolate you from the elite, mostly prosperous, citizens. Status and sexist labels, in contrast, were created for both the elite rulers and the poor workers. However, the elite controlled the message propaganda and the enforcement of the rules. The “rub,” as Shakespeare would call it, was that the ruling class in 1887 saw most of existence as an extension of themselves: a business.

The name of the gentleman with the lambchop side-whiskers, present at the Cotton Mansion inquiry, was Dr. Alfred Rooney, the present Superintendent of the Stockton Insane Asylum. Laura passed that information on, when Clara asked her in the middle of a discussion of the men Laura was seeing romantically. It was a tactic that Clara often used whenever she wanted information from her friend. Laura’s mind became so fixated upon making whatever she was explaining correct that she would often answer almost any inquiry with complete honesty.

“My clients want him to be present whenever there is any questioning by any authorities. The Bedfords are on the California State Board of Advisors to the Health and Education Committee. Obviously, they cannot risk any misinterpretation of facts when it concerns the policies at Stockton Asylum.” Laura’s brown eyes were hooded by what Clara called her “focus frown.”

“My, that is quite resourceful of you, Mrs. Gordon,” Clara said. She knew her good friend did not enjoy being called by her married title. Clara used her own marriage title to protect her and her five children and their social reputations. Clara told society she was a widow when, in fact, she was divorced because of her husband’s desertion.

Laura, on the other hand, never had children, and her previous husband was a philanderer. Even though they were both deserted by their husbands, as was Mrs. Packard, it was Laura who came out of the experience angrier. In Clara’s opinion, Laura now used men as a soothing

balm for her Free Love tendencies, whereas Clara had chosen to remain monogamous and single with the Captain of Detectives, Isaiah Lees, as her lover.

As they neared the steps leading up through the archway into the main admittance room, Clara looked up. The sun was now descending behind the top steeple, shining its weakened rays through the bell tower. Hundreds of fluttering bats were streaming out, like a burst of dark thoughts, and Clara shivered, reaching up to hold onto her hat in the breeze.

There was an ominous foreboding all around her, and even the cooking odors of potatoes and lamb could not assuage the fear the attorney felt deep inside. It was as if a curse had already been placed on this residence, and what they were actually doing was going through a strange ritual meant for all of those who would dare question the human motives behind this portentous cathedral of darkness.

As they walked up to the entrance, on the shadowy grounds of the women's side of the rather eerie Gothic structure, Clara decided to probe a bit more deeply into Laura's legal preparations. Perhaps she knew how the politicians on this advisory board addressed official explorations into conduct that may have led to an assault by one of its residents. Upstairs, a woman screamed, just as Clara and her group entered.

"Thank you, Superintendent," Clara said, sitting directly across from Dr. Rooney inside the asylum's staff conference room. They were adjacent to his personal office on the ground floor's admission area. Alfred Rooney was alone, as his staff was stretched thin, caring for the over five-hundred female residents. "I have with me Mrs. Elizabeth Ware Packard. I would expect you are aware of her special expertise. She has agreed to assist me in this committee investigation of the event concerning Polly Bedford."

The young superintendent shuffled some papers in front of him, cleared his throat, and stared directly at Mrs. Packard. “Of course, I know about this fine citizen. I read the mental health journals, you know, and I have followed her political activities closely. I also know her personal history, and I want to say that she is, most probably, the finest example of what we attempt to create here in our women’s facility. As Mrs. Packard advocates, we want our patients to learn to think in terms of improving society and not negating it. The dark land of Hades is not evil, but it does contain only the secrets of dead minds and isolated spirits. Nothing of value can come from retreating deep within oneself, ignoring the society around one, communicating only with the phantoms of illusion and dread.”

Clara noticed that Mrs. Packer had brought out her full armaments. She held a rather ornate and collapsible ear trumpet against her right ear as Rooney spoke. It bothered Clara slightly that Liz hadn’t used it when she was conversing with them earlier, but this was, obviously, a more important event.

“I am afraid I cannot accept your assessment of what the so-called lunatic community aspires toward, one way or another. I do know your classical analogy is a bit out of context. Hades raped and kidnapped Persephone, his mistress, as she was distracted by a symbol of her selfish, outer beauty, the Narcissus flower. Allow me to explain the myth contextually, just the way I explain it to asylum residents who are confused by their retreat from reality.”

“By all means. Please do so,” Dr. Rooney said. Clara noted a tone of slight sarcasm.

“Have you, by any chance, Dr. Rooney, ever attempted to go inside a patient’s delusion, so to speak? In this method of conversation, you adhere to your patient’s mental rules, not to your own nor society’s rules.”

Dr. Rooney was signing an admittance form, probably the same way

he approved Bertha May's commitment, and he was distracted. When he finally looked up, he cocked his head to the side like a bulldog. "What was that? I am sorry, but this is the busiest time of year for us."

"That's fine. Your behavior answers my question. The way I approach mental health therapy is to attempt to be on an equal psychic footing with the ill person. You see, although Hades and his underworld can represent a retreat from reality, I prefer to tell my fellow voyager that she has been swept under because she must learn to accept death and the spirit world as a way to learn how to balance her inner world with the outer world. Both worlds are needed for health, but none is more important than the other. Persephone, in fact, is able to convince Hades that a heavenly place was necessary in his dark world, so he created the Elysium paradise for her, which later became the basis for the Bible's Garden of Eden." Mrs. Packer smiled.

"Liz, would you happen to be playing Demeter, Persephone's mother, and the Goddess of Nature, in this story?" Clara asked, also smiling. The attorney believed she knew where Mrs. Packer was going, so she wanted to assist her.

"I play whomever seems to fit with the individual's inner world. Sometimes, I will have a woman who has retreated because she was raped by her father or by some other close family member. This woman will often abuse herself physically, until she realizes it was not her role as a sexual temptress which caused her guardian to molest her. No, it was a social problem that made this woman feel guilty about her own sexual urges. Daughters were taught to love their parents, and when that trust was violated, such as in the case of an incestuous rape, then the violated woman must escape the only way she knows how, inside her own mind."

"I completely understand. However, I must say, we really don't have the time nor staff to explore such deeply disturbing areas. We believe if the body is exercised, cleansed, and kept fit, then the mind will soon

follow. There is no need for such a dangerous and peculiar methodology. Sexuality is for the family and the clergy to investigate.” Rooney clicked his teeth. “Can we get to the gist of your visit? I have to see to my responsibilities. Dinner is being served, and I must make my rounds.”

Clara realized it was time for her to draw the line in the sand. She took out the papers from her purse that officially notified the State of California about their petition to investigate the asylum for reasons of possible improper treatment of patients, unsuitable handling and distribution of drugs, and how residents are wrongly admitted and for what reasons they are admitted. Mrs. Packer had already signed on to be an official on Clara’s committee, and Clara was going to explain to the superintendent what they were planning to do in the coming days.

“Mr. Rooney, we are here to not only address the recent handling of Polly Bedford and her confinement, we are also planning to convene a citizens’ investigation committee, to evaluate your overall services and health care of all those admitted to these confines.” Clara leaned over and handed the copy of the application to Rooney.

She knew the State had its own yearly quality control inspection, but those were usually held on the asylum’s schedule, and no process of examination was conducted with any specific purpose in mind. It was strictly a sheet with a check-off list of possible violations. Also, various merchants and wealthy California investors would be paraded past the asylum residents, during what Clara believed to be a pre-arranged dog and pony show, in order to demonstrate to these possible donors just how efficient their system was. However, Clara and her team would be the first truly independent, nationally recognized group to visit these premises.

“I see. And what do you expect to find during your inquest, pray tell? We have been lauded by many different groups for our dynamic and kind treatment of the mentally ill. In fact, we have a medical group from

Germany who will soon be studying our research into the hereditary aspects of *dementia praecox* and *mania a potu*.” Rooney leaned back in his chair and waved his hand backward toward a row of plaques and awards decorating the redwood walls.

“We want to live here while we work. In addition to Mrs. Packer, we will have five or perhaps six committee members. Do you have accommodations for us?” Clara stood up.

“Yes, we can put you in the upstairs guest wing. I’m afraid you will have to live as our residents do. We have a large room with bunkbeds. Will that be sufficient to your needs?” Mr. Rooney also rose.

Mrs. Packard stood up and took the ear trumpet from her ear. “I shall need a larger bed, young man. At seventy-one, I am not as flexible as I used to be. Even my three years in an asylum did not prepare me for old age. If women can escape death during childbirth, they still must face the arthritis, rheumatism, hip dislocations and missing teeth of old age.”

Clara and Laura got on either side of Mrs. Packard and escorted her out into the main admissions hall. Superintendent Rooney followed them.

“After dinner, I think I shall roam the wards to meet some of my neighbors,” Mrs. Packard said, hitching up her dress. “It is at night when the restless manias come out to play, is not that the case, Doctor Rooney?”

“Why, yes. We have nurses on duty, however, so if anybody gets lost, we can get her safely back into bed. There are also the ghosts, however.” Clara looked at the superintendent’s face to see if he were smiling. He was not.

“Did you say ghosts?” Laura, the spiritual skeptic, thrust her forefinger into Clara’s ribs.

“I did. You may think me an inflexibly scientific sort, but I am actually a great believer in the spirit world. Whenever one of my women dies, if she has not been cured, then I believe her spirit stays around our home until she can be released. Release comes when a new patient is cured. It

is the great circle of mental health, is it not?" Dr. Rooney stepped out in front of them to lead them into the dining room.

Clara could smell the lamb and potatoes, and she was suddenly quite famished. Dinner and then bed sounded very comforting. She knew the relief would be short lived, as the curse may still be out there, and now there were these ghosts. At the very least, she would probably have to follow after Mrs. Packer just to keep her out of trouble. Clara might also be accosted by her daughter, Bertha May, but this was to be prevented, at all costs. It may be a long night after all.

CHAPTER 4: ADELINE THE SPY



Leland Stanford Mansion, California and Powell Streets, San Francisco, April 24, 1887.

As Adeline Quantrill walked up to the mansion, which was just a stone's throw from her friends' Queen Anne Victorian abode at One Nob Hill, she was thinking about having been chosen by Mrs. Foltz. It was Adeline's firmest belief that if she were to stand any chance at marrying the attorney's son, Samuel, she would have to show that she could perform well on her first solo mission.

The young psychic was especially concerned, in that her ability to navigate on her own was probably her weakest trait. She had no sense of direction. True. It was her intellectual ability to read minds and telepathically communicate that made her so important to Mrs. Foltz solving the spiritualist murders the year before. In addition, Adeline's autobiographic memory allowed her to access every waking moment of her entire life to remember everything that occurred. This case was giving her all the authority to make her own mistakes, completely alone.

The mansion's structure was more of a Greco-Italian version of an imaginary home somebody so wealthy would build. Whereas the Hopkins' mansion was painted gray, Mr. Stanford chose white. Instead of the Hopkins' tall, cylindrical columns that had the religious appearance of a cathedral, this home had the squat, non-sectarian, and rectangular shape of the Greek Parthenon.

As one of the “Big Four” railroad tycoons, Leland Stanford was not enamored of helping to showcase new artists the way Mary Hopkins was. He was concerned with business and the appearance of grandeur. As Adeline entered through the twenty-foot tall granite and marble Corinthian columns, supporting the front porch entrance, she was not surprised by the type of decorative memorabilia inside. When Adeline, in a low whisper, gave her name to the butler, an older gentleman dressed in formal tails, he nodded, and he escorted her across the redwood floor beneath the house’s mammoth circular rotunda.

She asked the butler who had created the statues and paintings, and she was informed it was one man, a Mr. G. G. Garibaldi, who had *carte blanche* when he furnished the mansion. The ceiling of the grand dome was divided into eight large panels. As she looked up, following the butler’s pointed index finger, she was informed that each panel had a picture, four of which, were figured with noble allegorical groups of female figures representing the four quarters of the globe. The other four panels were finished with emblematic figures personifying “Fine Arts,” “Mechanics,” “Agriculture” and “Literature.”

As the butler led Adeline into the Library on the ground floor, she recognized the grand figure of Mr. Stanford almost immediately. He was standing in his black suit, vest and cravat tie, and he was looking down at a book opened on the long mahogany table. Hundreds of other volumes looked down upon its sibling from their cases along all four walls. Stanford was leaning on a black cane with an ivory handle, amongst the green and gold chairs, and Adeline noted with interest that Mr. Stanford’s legs trembled uncontrollably, beneath his wide girth, as he leaned over to read the text. At sixty-three, his beard hair was almost all white under the gas chandeliers, although he still had streaks of black on top, and in his thick, furrowed eyebrows.

Leland Stanford, Adeline’s prospective employer, was speaking to

another man, also in a business suit, who was seated. This man, however, was clean shaven, and he wore a bowed tie. The hair around his mostly bald head was gray, and his white, mutton chop sideburns extended below his ears. His upper lip, Adeline noticed, came to a point, giving him a pouty expression. She also noted, with some amount of pleasure, that she could receive his thoughts.

Although she could not read the minds of many people, there were those rare individuals who seemed to have a supernatural affinity for her telepathic reception. One such person was Osiris Buddha Randolph, the twelve-year-old son of the spiritualist, Dr. Paschal Beverly Randolph. The year before, her communication with the boy led to saving Mrs. Foltz and her daughter, Trella Evelyn, from the villain at the Sarah Winchester house in San Jose.

This man was thinking, *I hope he finishes soon. I must make my appointment at Berkeley before noon.* However, when Adeline attempted to transmit her own thoughts to this gentleman, he would not answer. She had experienced this before with others, but not very often. She had known only two people who were only transmitters and not both transmitters and receivers. Either this man was refusing to allow her to know he was also a telepath, or he was afraid to send because Mr. Stanford was in the room.

“After I read your book, I knew you should be the person to formulate my science and psychology departments,” Mr. Stanford was saying. “Shortly after we buried my son, I had an apparition of his countenance appear to me during sleep. I was afraid that I would not be able to bequeath anything now that I was bereft of an heir. I was even wondering if I should live anymore. My son spoke to me that night, Mr. Galton, and he said, ‘Father, you can give to all of humanity in remembrance of me.’ And, that’s why you’re here, good sir. You can assist me in building the largest university in the world devoted to the betterment of mankind.”

If I had known you were a Spiritualist, I would not have come. Adeline heard Mr. Galton's thoughts. When he turned toward her and stared, she believed he might have finally recognized she was listening in to what he was thinking. She then realized that Mr. Galton was actually thinking about Mr. Stanford.

Mr. Galton was moved to reply, "My wife, Louisa, and I were never able to conceive. This is an important part of the over-population problem we face. While the inferior races and the degraded poor are having millions of offspring, we, who have been evolving and producing the superior offspring, are not generating our children fast enough to compensate for the inevitable onrush of the barbarian stock."

"Excuse me, sir. May I intrude? This is Miss Adeline Quantrill. She has come to audition for the laboratory assistant position you need for Mr. Galton."

Both men turned toward Adeline, and she thought she smiled at them. However, when she saw her reflection on the wall mirror behind Mr. Stanford, the disfiguration of lips beneath her nose resembled that of a gorilla or chimpanzee attempting to mimic the grin of her betters.

"Thank you, Frederick. You may go." Leland Stanford chose that moment to swivel his rather portly back side down into one of the library chairs. The expiration of breath, as he fell into a seated position, was then followed by an expiration of stomach gas. The latter sound was so loud as to frighten a lounging Persian cat from the table.

Adeline, at nineteen, could not resist chuckling, as the feline scurried, slipping and sliding, from the library's confines, away from this creature with such great sounds erupting from it. Adeline thought momentarily of following the cat to safety.

Without any embarrassment, Mr. Stanford reached for a file on the table, took out its contents, and began his inquisition into her life.

"Young lady, Miss Quantrill, thank you for coming. This gentleman

has come all the way from England, at my request, in order to work on a particular task of monumental importance. It is our immediate aim to take your experience and character into consideration, but please be aware that our questions are not meant to be an imposition upon your value to society. It's simply that we have a private agenda in mind. Is that clear?" Mr. Stanford looked over at her, and she was reminded of the way the judge and social welfare experts had looked at her after her parents were murdered on the train to San Francisco. Adeline wondered how much he already knew about her.

"I am honored to be here," she replied. "Your grand purpose must be important, and I can't help but wonder why you chose me as a candidate. After all, I have just begun my studies at Berkeley, and I have yet to declare my major study discipline." Adeline hoped her answer would be enough to extract the hidden reason behind their request to meet her.

"Very well. Since I am not the person who will be working with you, I am going to give Mr. Galton the opportunity to question you for his needs. Is that permissible, Miss Quantrill?" Mr. Stanford leaned forward and squinted at her.

"Of course. If I shall have the honored gentleman as my supervisor, I am eager to hear what he requires from an assistant." Adeline turned toward the Englishman, and she heard him thinking about her.

She is the only candidate with no parents. Good. That means she will not have any direct familial bonds to distract her from being objective. "Miss Quantrill, are you familiar with the two most important science books in the world, written by my cousin, Charles Darwin? *On the Origin of Species*, published in 1859, and *Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*, published in 1871?"

Not only had Adeline read these books, she had also committed them to her prolific memory. Her autobiographic recall was pulling their images up on her inner brain screen as he was speaking the titles. She and

Samuel had discussed the most controversial applications of what Mr. Darwin posited in their many arguments concerning the importance of biological inheritance in modern society.

“Yes, sir. I know those books quite well.” Adeline replied.

“In point of fact, I was honored by having my own studies cited eleven times in his second book. Do you believe that breeding and natural selection form the building blocks for the evolution phenomenon, including the development of humankind and its resulting civilizations?” *This should open up her thought processes sufficiently for me to evaluate her abilities to reason on a higher level.*

“Although I respect Mr. Darwin’s work, and I can completely agree with him as to his ideas concerning the methods of adaptation and survival that our natural world contains, when he extrapolates his theories into our own society, I am afraid I must begin to disagree.” Adeline watched the face of the distinguished researcher and explorer. His manner was relaxed, and he smiled back at her. He was even keeping his thoughts private.

“Since you would be a close assistant, I am going to tell you a fact about myself that will allow you to understand how important Darwin’s theories are to my own. When I was a bit older than you, and I was about to take my honors exams at Cambridge, the very thought of spending eight days and five and one-half hours of each day, writing about mathematics and statistical analysis, in order to prove my worth to my professors, was too much for my mind to process. As a result, I did not earn my doctorate, I withdrew from college, and so my credentials may not appear on paper to be sufficient.” Mr. Galton looked over at Mr. Stanford and smiled.

Mr. Stanford struck the table with his clenched fist, and Adeline winced from the noise. “Balderdash! Give me a man who works with his hands and sets sail to travel the world to prove his theories correct. That is why your cousin chose your work over others.”

“Please. I want you to look at a letter I wrote to my dear sister, Adèle.” Mr. Galton took a letter from his vest pocket and handed it to Adeline. She read it to herself slowly:

“My Dear Adèle, I am 4 years old and I can read any English book. I can say all the Latin Substantives and Adjectives and active verbs besides 52 lines of Latin poetry. I can cast up any sum in addition and can multiply by 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11. I can also say the pence table. I read French a little and I know the clock.

FRANCIS GALTON,
February 15, 1827”

Adeline returned the letter. “I am astounded, sir. You were obviously a child prodigy. Excepting the misspelling of the month, your epistle is perfect.”

Mr. Galton folded the letter carefully and slid it back into his pocket. *Now I will ask her the question which will prove her worth.* “My sister was an excellent and patient teacher. However, do you believe it was her skill as a teacher that allowed me to learn so quickly? Or, was my ability innate, a product of my family’s excellent ancestry and long line of successful athletes, gun merchants, bankers, and academics?”

Adeline realized she had to respond in the way Mr. Galton required. She decided she would risk it all with her attempt. “My differences are not with your esteemed cousin’s research and logic. His scientific examples of natural selection and species adaptation are impeccable. And, I do accept the fact that it was your excellent breeding and family’s evolution that gave you your mental ability and strong character.”

Her inquisitor nodded. “Yes, but what about your difference? I am curious. I believe your intelligence is superb, and you can show me how well you think from what you tell me now.” *You had better not make a mistake at this point, or your chance at becoming my assistant will disappear.*

“My difference was voiced in the argument made by Mrs. Antoinette Blackwell in her book, *The Sexes Throughout Nature*. Mr. Darwin’s theory of natural selection by females, in her opinion, was defrauding the advancement of womanhood.” Adeline inhaled, believing it was best to quote a source who had credibility, even as a woman, in the dispute. She noted that the faces of these men were not irritated. Their expressions remained attentive and interested.

Therefore, she continued, “Darwin said that merely by choosing tools and weapons of superior quality, man had become superior to woman. I say, however, that choices first must be permitted by a society, and our society does not allow us women to make those same choices and learn those same trades that make men superior.”

Mr. Stanford frowned for the first time. “Those choices, my dear lady, are often fraught with danger and possible death. What about inevitable war and conflict? Women are the keepers of the home and hearth, are they not?”

“Saint Joan of Arc, who was burned for heresy for her bravery, helped the French win the battle of Orleans during the Hundred Years War. Most recently, my dear sir, there were, by conservative estimates, over five hundred women who clandestinely took up arms during our Civil War.”

Adeline was almost going to read off her photographic memory’s list of the exact names of the women she knew who had fought in battles, but she refrained from doing so. Because of the reddened face of Leland Stanford, she believed it was time for her to soften her rhetoric.

She continued, using a technique she saw Mrs. Foltz use when arguing. She smiled, and then she made her voice into a lilting, sing-song refrain. “In effect, are not many women, in the best families, being kept as household pets? We cannot vote; we cannot make contracts; we cannot own property; we are children with adult bodies. We are a species Mr. Darwin ignores. Are we being given the same chances as men to prove

our innate qualities? Perhaps, with the same educational and political opportunities for both males and females, our society would evolve twice as quickly as it is doing today.”

Mr. Galton stared at her for several minutes, placing his right forefinger to his chin and holding onto his elbow with his other hand. His gaze was pecuniary but not malicious. Adeline did not hear him thinking negative thoughts about her. He finally sighed deeply and walked over to where Mr. Stanford was seated. He bent over and whispered into his ear for another two minutes, after which Mr. Stanford briefly replied, also in a whisper.

At long last, Mr. Galton turned back toward her, and Adeline held her breath. This could mean her future. She needed to impress Mrs. Foltz, so as to win the heart of Samuel, and perhaps even be accepted into the hallowed world of male influence.

“One last question, Miss Quantrill,” Mr. Galton said. “Do you enjoy working with identical twins?”

Adeline was dumbfounded. To what on earth could that question be in reference? “I must admit. I have never had the pleasure of seeing identical twins. However, I would most certainly find it intellectually stimulating and amusing to study or investigate such miracles of birth.”

You will most certainly have your time filled with these twins. Mr. Galton puffed out his chest and looked over at Mr. Stanford, who returned Galton’s stern gaze and nodded. “When can you begin? I cannot promise to be with you more than one or two hours per day, but I can certainly get you started on your new work.”

Adeline coughed into her fist. “I don’t want to appear presumptuous, Mr. Galton, but what wage will I be earning for this work? Will it require the nursing care of children or babies? I would expect a bit higher wage if that were the case.”

Indeed. You are most certainly an American capitalist. “I am prepared

to pay you the sum of fifteen dollars per day, which will also include room and board. Also, my twins are actually identical triplets, three each, of both genders, and they are eighteen and twenty years of age. The ladies are eighteen, the lads twenty.” Galton’s walk to the library entrance doors was, to Adeline, quite resolute. His stride, in fact, was almost a march cadence. He turned the gold handle, opened one of the doors wide, and shouted into the hallway.

“Roberts! I say, can you bring in the twins? We’re ready.”

What occurred next was to live in Adeline’s dreams, in the form of vivid nightmares, for weeks following. There were six adults who entered the library, but it was their physical composition that sent a shiver down Adeline’s spine. Two sets of the twins were conjoined. The males at the hip, the females at the chest and thorax. The other two identical siblings were normal. Adeline believed, however, that the term “normal” could hardly be accurate. Even if each three did not live together, the psychological pressures of being identical, combined with the physiological limitations of being fused together, must have been tremendously bothersome to all of them.

Even with their dragging feet, slumped-over torsos, and crab-like ambulation, these future laboratory subjects were quite handsome and alluring, in a uniquely macabre way. Each set of conjoined men and women had exactly the same bodies and clothing, and their faces were so exactly identical that Adeline kept scanning from one face to the other to see if there were even the slightest idiosyncrasies. No more exact replicas could have been created, even if they had been brought to life in some kind of successful Dr. Frankenstein laboratory experiment.

“These are the Falcone Triplets and the Johansen Triplets. Luther, Jerimiah and Claiborne were born in Edinburgh, Scotland in 1867, to Sir Robert and Emily Falcone. The Falcons come from a long line of nobility, extending back to the First Scottish War for Independence in the

Thirteenth Century. The Falcone males fought with William Wallace in their attempt to seize power from King Edward the first. Each generation, the Falcones improved their status and wealth, with men who worked in Civil Engineering, fought for the King's military, explored scientific research at Cambridge, and managed four tobacco plantations in the New World, until the War for Independence by the United States, after which they sold their interests at a very good profit." Mr. Galton nodded to the lone Falcone, Claiborne, who stepped forward.

"Thank you, Mr. Galton. My name is Claiborne, and I am the eldest, at ten minutes. My brothers, I like to say, were so obnoxious in the birth canal about who should go next that they became fused together at the hip from the heat of their combined exchanges of invective and fisticuffs. However, we have all since graduated from Cambridge, with honors, and we hope to begin teaching there following our present work under our esteemed polymath and professor." Both Roger and Jerimiah applauded. Claiborne stepped back to stand beside them.

Claiborne, Adeline noted, like his two conjoined brothers, was tall and muscular, about five feet and ten inches of full manhood, with a pomaded, wavy black pompadour that glistened under the chandelier lamps. They had no facial hair, which was very appealing to Adeline, as her love, Samuel, also twenty, preferred shaving his face as well. Each young man had a most adorable curl, which snuck down at the upper-left corner of the forehead, like an added comma, as if to connect the grammatically perfect physiology of their hawk-like, amber eyes, with the matching facial accent of one coiling dimple in each triplet's cheek. They all wore light-brown cashmere frock coats, matching trousers, and vests that dangled gold watch fobs with chains.

These young women, on the other hand, were no suffragettes. They had no sense of seriousness or purpose. Flittering about in their city finery, these three beauties knew they were attractive, and they knew how

to use that temptation to its fullest extent. The satin frock with the large bustle was made uniquely to fit both bodies of the sisters who were fused together. Blonde, silky-smooth tresses curled over strong shoulders and down between six passionate globes of bounty.

Mr. Galton was not about to do the same introductory courtesy, and so he merely waved at the girls the way a child would wave at the tigers in a passing circus parade. "Trust me," he said, his pointy upper lip thrust forward. "these ladies are from the finest families and the noblest stock."

One of the sisters decided she would step forward to introduce them to the officious gathering. "We are honored to be part of this noble experiment for the betterment of civilization. My name is Deandra, and Susanne is one of the Thoracopagus duo, residing happily on the left, and Matilda is the artistic genius on the right. Her paintings are selling internationally. Susanne and I perform in a chamber ensemble in Stockholm. I play the piano; she, the violin. Matilda really pays no attention to us, as she paints while we play."

"All right now, pay attention please. This is Miss Quantrill. She has been awarded the pleasant task of being appointed your ward, tutor, and ombudsman. I expect that you will give her the utmost respect, as she is my direct representative when I am not present." Mr. Galton's voice rose at the end of the sentence in expectation.

"Yes, Mr. Galton!" The six answered in rehearsed union.

Mr. Stanford got up and addressed them. "I am afraid I must leave you all now. Congratulations on your new endeavor and best of fortunes building the roots of our new, progressive society!"

Not until Stanford had gone did Mr. Galton again begin to speak to them.

"We are not going to hide what we are doing from you. The instruction I shall give to Miss Quantrill tomorrow will also be given to you. I am of the belief that a society moves that much faster when it knows the ultimate

purpose behind its labors. I must remark at the outset that I am very proud to have you all as important parts of this monumental study. I have been told by our benefactor, the great philanthropist, scholar, and world traveler, Leland Stanford, that we must move to the state asylum in Stockton to do this work. We shall have complete privacy, but I hope it's not an inconvenience to the newest member of our research group.

Adeline's pulse quickened. She had some previous experience with mental wards. When you are a girl who tells adults she can hear their thoughts, and then they realize that you do indeed know what they are thinking, the tables, as Jesus would say, begin to turn. They put you into a white room, with padded walls, and with one small hole in the giant door in front of you. Snakes and vermin also use that hole.

"No, sir. It would be no imposition. I am proud to be a part of your research, and I am very happy to meet all of these fine ladies and gentlemen. I will do my utmost to teach you all that I know about what it takes to advance in this society, and I will follow Mr. Galton's directions exactly, in the best interests of science." Adeline turned to face Mr. Galton, who was busy taking the thumb prints of the triplets. He took each one by his or her thumb and pressed it firmly down on individual cards laid out on the table in the center of the room. Adeline knew he had recently written a paper about his study concerning finger print marks. Mr. Galton believed that each print was completely unique and that it could conceivably be used as a means of identification for the police or other proper authorities.

You have the misconception that I cannot hear you. Say something. I will respond.

Adeline heard these words and her blood turned icy. She reacted immediately rather than ponder the consequences. *Thank you for being honest, Mr. Galton. However, I might never have believed you were a telepath in addition to being a polymath. Could you perhaps be a*

telepolymath?

He laughed. His voice was high-pitched and effeminate. Adeline wondered vaguely if he might even be capable of humor. She believed the home of Swift and Pope should have nobility, even noble scientists, who could appreciate a satirical jab or two, or three, or four.

Oh, Miss Quantrill. You shall enjoy your new appointment. I chose you exactly because you are a telepath. I also know you are far more talented than your lowly academic status would bely. Your mind is a literal box of history as it was lived. Yours is the most historically accurate mind of all. To me, your value is inestimable.

Mr. Galton turned to the six youths. “Off to bed with you! We must move tomorrow, and I want you all rested.”

All six queued up to give Mr. Galton and Adeline a personal hug before retiring. When Claiborne came up to her, Adeline became a bit nervous. Again, her pulse quickened, but this time it was because she imagined her brain to be shrinking to the size of a pea, and the resultant pressure was driving her arteries insane.

“Good meeting with you, Miss Quantrill,” Claiborne bent forward and whispered in her ear. “We are really Jews. Surname is Feldman. This man is insane. Get out while you can. I am staying here only to protect the others.” Claiborne’s gray eyes were glistening with emotion, and Adeline felt his chest heave, with a deep inhale, as he turned on his heels and left the room.