

Doctor Harvey

Macabre Collection

by David Haynes,

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**Bethlem Lunatic Asylum.
London 1868**

Allow me to introduce myself. I am Doctor Harvey. The name would suggest an affiliation with all matters medical and whilst this is correct, I have to point out that I am neither a Doctor, nor qualified in any medical field whatsoever. My name is Doctor Harvey.

My father named me thus in honour of his uncle; Doctor William Harvey. He was both a qualified and practising man of medicine. Such was my father's

admiration for this man that I became a demonstration of that respect. The record of my birth shows that on the 8th of March 1823 Doctor Harvey Lightfoot was born into this world. The son of Louisa Lightfoot (nee Meeks) and Henry Lightfoot (Clerk).

Early in my life the name gave rise to much confusion amongst my peers. They could not fathom, especially on first introduction, that I was in fact not a man of medicine. Understandably, for a short period I began to introduce myself not as Doctor Harvey but as Harvey Lightfoot; a simple name, unlikely to cause confusion.

However, I found quite quickly that this name, although less confusing, garnered a good measure less respect from those I met.

Not being blessed with the brains or connections to pursue a career in medicine was an unfortunate genetic comedy of sorts. However I found I had something infinitely superior to the wit and affiliates required. I discovered I was a confident actor of superior but deceitful quality.

I had long been a customer of the dollymops and common prostitutes in the east end, something I kept from my father's accounts. But one evening as I hurried along the Ratcliffe Highway, and hurry I did, for that district is rife with extreme violence and murder; I happened across a prone woman lying injured on the street.

It was not unheard of for men to fall foul of this subterfuge, to stop and offer assistance only to be waylaid and beaten in one of the alleyways, their belongings stolen. There was something of this woman though, something which told me she was not merely acting. Flashily dressed with dirty feathers hanging from her bonnet she lay on the wet cobbles with not a care for her attire. It was not in my nature to be so callous a man as to leave her in this state, so I knelt and felt her neck.

„Will she live, Doctor?“ A feminine voice asked from over my shoulder.

I turned, about to utter the words I'd been saying since I was a child. *I'm not a Doctor.*“ But I checked my response. I may not have held the surgeon's bag or knife but to this lady I was such a man.

„Lizzie's been felled!“ She called out and like rats from a lair, the unclean vagabonds spilled out from their seedy holes and gathered about.

Lizzie displayed a red mark to her forehead. Through drink or otherwise, she had clearly fallen. „She needs to lie flat in the warm and be given a tincture. Her health will return.“

A brute of a man gathered her in his arms and carried her back to the shadows from where she had come. I felt a touch on my arm.

„Thank you Doctor; will you step inside and allow the girls to show you their thanks?“ I looked at the gathered faces of the crowd. They were all women; gaudily dressed in their frilly fineries and ready for work. I had, as luck may have it, found one of their own.

„I should be happy to be recompensed in such a way.“

And there in the rapture of sex was my medical career conceived.

For many years I treated the denizens of that foul district as their one and only Doctor. They could not well afford the expensive remedies prescribed by others but I provided a service both efficient and in the main, effective.

I was happy for a while and in payment for my service to the ladies I was provided lodgings, a pint of brandy and food each day. There were some unfortunate slips when a surgical hand was required, but by and by, I was well liked and well used.

It was perhaps with some inevitability that one of my peers, Staniforth, came to use the brothel where I kept my lodgings. His surprise at seeing me after so long was only rivalled by the look of surprise when he learned of my role.

„A Doctor? You are no more a physician than I a prince.“ He laughed loud. „I shall enjoy telling the others of this. Everyone shall know of Doctor Harvey the fool.“

It wasn't the others I was afraid of or their derision; it was the fury of the vicious cats who worked in the brothel and their brutal protectors.

I had only felt another man's windpipe when observing a pulse; feeling the steady, strong flow of blood beneath his skin. Yet, Staniforth soon had my hands on his throat for the opposite means. The crushing of his windpipe brought with it the wrath of the middle classes. In the blink of an eye, a purge began, and the unfortunate creatures they sought to protect were driven out of the brothels and onto the street.

I do not recall what became of me during my months of exile. I wandered as a festering creature, devoid of hope, for a murderer's soul cannot be saved. My false medical career was all I had left, my one way to offer atonement for my sin. For a deeper and darker sin cannot be committed.

The medicine of the mind had never been of much interest to me. However with the situation as it was and my desperate need to atone, I found myself at Bethlem. It was here that I met a curious individual named Jonathan Lovett.

It was by some miracle that neither Lovett nor I had been hanged for our crimes but instead both incarcerated in the asylum; one as Doctor, one as patient. During his spree of the most foul and degrading murder I had been, at large, in a blithe torpor. The fact remained he had almost certainly slaughtered ten men. What magic or rather, expense had kept him from the gallows was of little concern but in the correct place, he most certainly was. We both were.

He was of course, kept in a cell on the second floor, and chained to the wall like so many others. And like so many others he screamed and wailed at the cause of his downfall. In Lovett's case it was the name Fettiplace he muttered, uttered and cursed throughout his waking and dreaming hours.

The hopeless entreaties to the unseen figures who sat in their minds echoed along the dim galleries of the hospital. A dark and mournful dirge sung by a lunatic cast.

Lovett was not treated for his condition, for what treatment could possibly bring him back to the realms of supposed normality? He was however given an almost unprecedented amount of attention by London society. The gentlemen, and surprisingly ladies, paid two pennies to come and observe him, and of course, the other miserable wretches in our care. It was, for them at least, a demented melodrama performed by a grotesque troupe; but amuse them it did. As utterly abhorrent as this was, the financial rewards could not be underestimated so the matinees continued.

Lovett's case provoked a curiosity in me which I was unable to shake. Whether it was the macabre nature of his actions or the eloquence of his voice, I cannot say; but I took to standing outside his cell, heeding his rants.

Masks, hundreds of them hung on the wall. Hundreds I tell you, hundreds!"

"Where is Fettiplace? Bring him to me and I shall rip his mask and show you his true face!"

"Bring me my mask so I may show you!"

My enquiries told me, this mask of which Lovett spoke, was discovered at his home when he was arrested. He wore it as the officers took hold of him and fought to keep it in place. At his trial it was found to contain the flesh of at least six men, perhaps more. What dire mind had this creature been afflicted with? Delusions and manias were in the very spirit of these men and no man can see his own delusion particularly if he is at the root of it.

I took to delivering his molasses sweetened gruel personally and watching him for a while. Chained at the neck and utterly filthy he clung to the wall of his putrid cell like a frightened animal. His eyes never left mine, not once.

"You, Doctor Harvey are wearing a mask, are you not?" Lovett's face bore the signs of scratches and scars where his fingers had clawed at his flesh.

"A mask Lovett? No, not I." I took hold of my flabby cheeks to illustrate the point.

"But you are, Doctor Harvey, I can see it under your skin; just below the surface." He smiled; a grim and soulless leer which left me cold.

Lovett was a lunatic, of that there was no question, but his manner, so calm and measured in conversation left me uneasy.

Back in my room I wrote up my notes, for even an acting physician must have papers. I simply substituted the names of the patients on the older reports from my predecessor, for were they not all the same?

The doctor's room was scarce any larger than Lovett's cell, and although there was a desk and comfortable bed, the room was a cheerless and desperate place. I was thankful it was beside the quieter patients on the first floor. The miserable screams of Lovett and the others on the floor above was but a distant and ghostly echo.

For the next few days, Lovett and I conversed daily, and I began to spend more and more time in his company. For all his eloquence and intelligence, his obsession with Fettiplace and his macabre masks was never far from his thoughts. They were both literal and figurative but real to him in equal measure. I could not remove the chains from his neck but I could at least try and remove them from his soul.

That is not to say, all was well with Lovett, for the longer we spoke about the horrifying masks the more agitated he became.

"I'll show you what lies beneath!" He shrieked and dug down into his hollowed cheeks and opened a trench. Such was his desire to mutilate himself that it took four men to restrain him. What lay beneath his skin was nothing more than what lay beneath all our flesh; blood and bones. But Lovett was convinced something more than that lay beneath and try as I might I could not convince him otherwise.

"What mask do you wear, Doctor Harvey?" Lovett asked.

"I wear no mask, I am simply Doctor Harvey and that is all." I replied.

„But is not Doctor Harvey a faceted man? Are you unflawed, without blame or fault? I do not believe such a man exists.“ Lovett peered at me, diverting his eyes to my cheek. „You have an injury, Doctor Harvey, your cheek is bleeding.“

I touched my face and gazed at my finger. A smudge of blood adorned its tip. „A shaving cut no doubt, Lovett.“

„Yes quite.“

I took my leave and made my way down to the first floor, past the never ending cries of tormented souls and the stench of their waste. A single spot of blood had dried on my cheek leaving a scarlet mole where none had been before. I dabbed it away and fell on my bed. Lovett and his damn masks were infuriating. The echo of his madness swept along the gallery and fell on my room. I began to wonder if he would not benefit from a visit to the filthy tiles of the treatment table.

I awoke early the next morning. In Bethlem, the morning chorus is not the sweet song of a lark. It is the screaming howl of a waking nightmare from a resident. The refrain was as familiar and unremarkable to me as the cries of the hawkers at Covent Garden are to the common man. My thoughts returned, as was often the case these mornings, to Lovett. There were no treatments for a man such as he, save for the collar and chain. His days of disfiguring and torturing innocent people had finished. Yet, he possessed a peculiar charm which made me consider my own position.

The skin on my face itched with the night's growth, but as I rubbed my face, I felt the stinging sensation of an open wound. The nerve endings twitched through my skin and jolted me from my Lovett reverie; shocking me from my bed. I looked to my hands and saw the creases lined with blood. There was no great amount, but enough to paint a crimson disguise. I must have scratched myself in the night with a loose and jagged fingernail.

I washed, dressed and left my room. I was determined to speak with Lovett again and to convince him of his need to remove this Fettiplace from his mind; to accept that whatever masks he had seen were those of a theatrical nature and nothing more.

I arrived on the upper floor and walked the distance along the gallery to Lovett's cell. A thin and despairing light fell from the windows, perfectly matched with my mood. I had all but stemmed the drops of blood from the mark to my face, but as I reached for the door, a solitary drop landed on my hand. It congealed in an instant and I wiped it away.

In the half-light of his grim lodgings I spied a great pool of black liquid beside his cot. I need not enter to see it was blood, Lovett's blood. But what had become of this poor tormented soul?

I took the gallery stairs at pace for there were only two places Lovett could be. The infirmary or the mortuary and I prayed it was the former. A great scream of despair rose from one of the cells as I passed but I dared not stop to observe the source.

I had scarce been in the infirmary, but in contrast to the rest of the hospital, the walls were clean and brightly tiled in the most vivid white imaginable. Imprisoned, like the rest of the souls in Bethlem, a single golden canary sat lonely in his cage by the door. His cheerful little song was unable to change my disposition.

Were it not for the board above his bed, I would not have recognised him, such were his injuries. He lay in the only occupied berth, at the far end of the room, beneath a small window overlooking the inner courtyard.

„Lovett, who has done this to you?“ I asked although I knew the answer. He did not reply. His face, if that is what was left, was nothing more than a gruesome vista of meat. The wound wept slowly onto the already soiled sheets. He had finally done what he so badly wanted. He had shown me a monster existed beneath his flesh.

He opened his lips to speak, the flash of pain evident through his eyes, but no sound came.

„What is it Lovett? What do you want to tell me?“

I fought back the revulsion and put my head close to his mouth.

„The monster is not here, he has flown.“ His voice croaked.

„There was never one there Lovett, only in your mind you poor demented soul.“ I spoke softly.

„I never killed those men. It was Fettiplace.“

My flesh crawled as I stared into those weeping eyes. „Be still.“ It was all I could say. „Be still Lovett.“

Before I could pull away he reached out a hand and took my arm. „You have given much of your time making me see the monster for what he really is. Now let me aid you. Look to your own mask. Look to your room and see what is real and what is not.“ He fell back; the effort clearly too great to continue.

The utterances of a lunatic in his death throes would not normally trouble me so; but Lovett had invaded my mind and something resonated inside. *Look to your own mask.*

It was the mask of a fabricated Doctor in an asylum for lunatics; that is what it was. I wandered back to my room, pausing at Lovett's obscene den, and peered inside. Unseen in my earlier haste, pieces of flesh littered the grimy floor, like birdseed for doves in the park. „Poor Lovett,“ I whispered into the void. I could stand the sight no longer for I felt suddenly nauseous and hurried to my room.

Look to your own mask. Look to your room and see what is real. A drop of fresh blood fell to the floor beside my desk. It was true my room was little more than a cell, a small square cell. But a warm rug lay across the cold floor beside my bed. Look, there it... Where was the rug?

Drip, drop.

And where are my desk and patient reports? This infernal scratch on my cheek is unrelenting. I cannot soothe it away.

Drip, drip, drop.

My hands around Staniforth's scrawny neck and the last of his breath on my cheek. A billy club cracked on my skull.

Drip, drip, drop drop.

So much blood on the floor. A chain beside the bed, a neck collar. Am I the patient? No, it cannot be, I am Doctor Harvey.

„Fetch a nurse!“ A voice in the gallery. „Fetch the nurse!“

Hands on my arms, grabbing my hands but I must free them. I am no patient. They must see that. I must show them. Beneath this mask is my true face; beneath the mask is Doctor Harvey.

„I am beneath the mask! Look beneath the mask!“ I can feel my fingers beneath the skin; brushing against the bone and muscle then ripping it off. Rip it all off.

„I am Doctor Harvey!“

„Be still Doctor Harvey.“ A soft voice in my ear. „Be still, or you will find your lodgings on the second floor, once again.“

