

Summary: Alice Holmes investigates the murder of three teenage Gypsy girls. The investigation will take her into a feud between families vying for control.

“Who knows what evil lurks in the hearts of man?” That was the introduction to the American radio program, “The Shadow”. I definitely know the evil in the hearts of man, after twenty years on the job for the “Met”, one of the more popular names for Scotland Yard.

My name is Alice Holmes, a Chief Inspector for The Yard. Yes, the name is Holmes and Sherlock was a distant ancestor. He was the younger brother of my 4th Great Grandfather Mycroft Holmes. My father, Jack, was a commander, and my grandfather, Rupert, was an assistant commissioner at the Yard. I work for the Homicide and Serious Crimes Command with one of the investigation teams.

My latest case started when a call was received on 999 at 7 a.m., there were bodies found in Lambeth. Clarke Benson, my Commander, came to my office and told me I was assigned to investigate the apparent murders of three young women whose bodies were found in Norwood Park in the West Norwood residential area of Lambeth, one of the worst boroughs in London, but only sixth worst after Westminster for crime. Actually I feel quite safe living in Westminster at 219 Baker Street, not far from Sherlock’s old place.

We had problems in Norwood Park because a group of immigrant Gypsies camped there after being evicted from Marble Arch in Westminster, where they were causing the residents problems. I was reluctant to handle the case, but Commander Benson insisted.

“Chief Holmes I expect you to carry on with your assigned duties.”

“But sir, you know my parentage and I respectfully decline.” My grandmother was a Gypsy and had a great influence on my life, which I believed could impact decisions I had to make dealing with the Gypsies.”

“Your parentage is precisely why you are being assigned and of course your investigative skills, not to mention you are fluent in their language.”

“The language I know is from the Welsh Kale, there are differences.”

“I am sure your skills will do well, now, let’s get on with it, the bodies are waiting, no more arguments, and take Roberts with you, he needs more experience.”

“Yes Sir.”

I stopped by Heather’s desk, “Heather, when everyone from my team comes in tell them to meet me at Norwood Park on the Salter’s Hill side, we got bodies.”

I went to James Roberts’s desk. “James we got a case, let’s go.”

We got a marked Vauxhall Astra, left the Curtis Green building on Victoria Embankment and headed to West Norwood with siren blaring. On the way I told James about West Norwood.

“West Norwood used to have a gypsy community in the 1700’s around Gypsy Hill. A woman called Margaret Finch was the queen of the Gypsies, used to live there around that time. People used to come there to have their fortunes read. I think these immigrant Gypsies are trying to reestablish a community there.”

We headed over the Westminster Bridge, going toward Kensington Road. The siren helped and the fact we could use the bus lanes. Getting over the bridge was easy till we hit the other side with traffic piled up everywhere. The buses were front to bumper, so I had to try to get around them. I told James, “Turn on the Tannoy, and give me the mike.” I started yelling in it.

“Come on SAAB, get off the phone and move over, Police emergency.” He forced right almost hitting a bike rider. Other cars moved out of the way. I saw the entry to A23, Kensington Road., cut off two cars barely missing their front bumpers. Cars coming the other way hit their breaks hard with tires squealing. Once on A23 we made good time, I moved around the obstacle course of cars. James had the hand-bar on the dash board in a death grip, his face a bit pale.

I turned my head to James, “We’re almost there.”

He sighed, “Thank God. This time you didn’t crash the car.”

“That one wasn’t my fault.”

“Yes, of course.” He rolled his eyes.

We arrived at the park about 8 a.m. It was a sunny clear spring day; many songs of the birds filled the park; the scent of flowers everywhere. You could see Central London, seven miles away, and many of the sights such as the London Eye and the Shard.

Police cars were everywhere blocking off Salter’s Hill, news vans from the Tabloids and TV stations were parked all along Salter’s Hill. One of the reporters yelled at me,

“Hey Holmes how about a statement?” I pushed through the local residents and reporters that were hovering about the roped off crime scene, a number of uniformed officers keeping order. On the campsite side another group of people stood, a man was arguing with one of the officers. We found the medical examiner and a CSI team around the bodies, not far from the Gypsy camp which was in the center of the park.

“What we got Nigel?” I said to our medical examiner, an older man, with white hair and steel gray eyes.

“Three young women, teenagers, their throats have been slashed and their bodies mutilated. Their names are Nuri, Esmeralda, and Drina according to their father. He’s the one

over their arguing with the officer, his name is Fonso and he's the leader of the people here. The poor guy is really distraught. It took two officers to restrain him."

"What's the time of death?"

"Give or take, less than twelve hours. I'll know more once we get them back to the lab."

I looked at the mutilations, there were a symbol carved on the girls stomachs. I knew what symbol meant.

I saw one of the CSU guys I know, "How goes it George?"

"Not easy. This is a heavy used area, too many foot prints to be of use. Lot of runners use the park, actually it was a runner that called it in. A lot of trash from who knows who, but we have to bag it all, you never know what we will find. I would say this is a dump site and the girls were killed elsewhere. There's not enough blood around the bodies and since they have no clothes, we're left with the bodies. Maybe will find something there back in the lab."

I noticed he covered the hands and feet in plastic to preserve any material under the nails.

"Thanks George. Ok, James it's time to talk with the father."

I approached the man who was still being restrained by two officers. He was yelling, "I want to see my daughters." He was a tall man, over 6 foot, with dark skin, and pitch black hair.