

# **Chief Inspector Blood**

## **Mystery at Wentworth Park**

### **Chapter 3**

Six Months Later

On a Monday morning, Blood's commanding officer sent for him.

*This office has enjoyed a lick of paint in the last few years, unlike mine.*

"You called for me sir?" Blood stretched to his full, six foot two.

The commander looked up from the pile of papers on his desk. "Yes, we have a tricky case and I think you are the man for the job."

It had been some time since Blood had caught a case he could really sink his teeth into, and he was more than ready.

The commander lifted his chin. "Lady Monroe-Spencer's dog has been kidnapped."

Blood frowned in cold silence.

His boss tipped his head to the side. "I know you're used to murders, Blood, but this family is extremely high profile. Her husband is on a hush-hush steering committee in the current government and the higher-ups are concerned that this may be a threat. A warning if you like. If someone is targeting Lord Monroe-Spencer, we would like to catch them before they succeed."

Blood rolled his shoulders.

“Your work with the upper classes has not gone unnoticed,” the commander continued. “You were requested for this assignment by the Prime Minister himself.” He raised his brows waiting for Blood’s reaction.

*The Prime Minister!*

The indignity he initially felt rolled off. If he made a name for himself with this case, he would be on the fast track for another promotion.

“And you can take that friend of yours, Lady Dorothea. She has a way with handling her set.”

The balloon of pride that had been filling fizzled into a heap on the floor.

“That will not be possible, sir.” A strange twisting in his chest made it difficult to breathe.

“Oh?” The commanding officer had stopped looking at the paperwork on his desk and was leveling his gaze at Blood.

“I believe she is abroad at the present time.”

He tried not to care, but when he came upon a society magazine, he would flick through the pages hoping for a glimpse. It was his guilty pleasure. Last week he had seen a picture of Dodo headed to the Mediterranean. She was laughing, her whole face alight as she held a glass of champagne. The article said she would be gone for a month.

“Ah, well then. I hope you’ve learned a thing or two about treading lightly.” The false smile on the commander’s face indicated doubt.

“I will do my best, sir.”

The commander handed him the file. “You should leave on the twelve-fifteen train. The locals are waiting and will meet you at the station.” He ran a hand down his uniform. “Keep me in the loop, Blood. There are a lot of people watching this.”

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As a chief inspector, Blood was permitted to travel second class but even those carriages were full today and he had spent an uncomfortable two hours, crushed into a tight compartment with several people including a mother with two young children who had spent the better part of the journey poking their tongues out at him. He had suppressed an urge to poke out his own.

It was raining outside, and the damp coats of the passengers had fogged up the windows making it impossible to see the countryside they were passing on their way to Sussex county.

In the end, he had tipped his trilby over his eyes and tried to nap.

As the train pulled into the station, he jerked awake, slipped his hat back, and gathered his things. Stepping out onto the platform he was pleased to see that the weather here was brighter than in London. He shrugged off his raincoat and hung it over his arm.

A man in the unmistakable uniform of a cheap, wrinkled suit, scuffed shoes and a light coat, moved forward, hand extended.

“Good afternoon, sir.” They shook hands. “Inspector Bridger at your service.” The man was well over forty with salt and pepper hair that grazed his collar. “Welcome to Budleigh-Milton, Chief Inspector.”

Blood nodded. "Thank you, Bridger. Now let's get cracking." They moved to leave the small station that was hung with baskets of bright annuals. "I've read the file but would like to hear your take on things."

"This way then, sir."

An older, black Ford was waiting, with a driver. Inspector Bridger held open the door and Blood slid in.

"The Monroe-Spencer's live in a huge pile three miles into the country. I say *pile* but it is really the pride of the county. It actually comes through Lady Monroe-Spencer's line as Lord Monroe-Spencer lost his estate after the war." Inspector Bridger took out a cigarette case. "Do you mind?"

Blood was not a smoker himself but had no objections to others smoking. He shook his head and the inspector continued.

"Tuesday morning the gardener could not find her Ladyship's dog. This was not altogether unusual, so he did not sound the alarm, expecting the pup to appear at some point. However, after several hours with no sign, the gardener began to worry and sent a note to Lady Monroe-Spencer. She's a short, white, fluffy thing—the dog I mean." The inspector's face cracked wide with a smile and Blood couldn't help but join him. "Anyway, they looked all day and into the night and never found her."

"Lady Monroe-Spencer was inconsolable—she was unable to have any children—but his nibs—" Blood raised an eyebrow at this disrespectful slang term for his Lordship. "—I mean, Lord Monroe-Spencer, immediately worried that they had been targeted. There are a lot of

people who stand to lose or make money depending on the conclusions of the special committee he heads.”

The sun was struggling to come out from behind the clouds and Blood loosened his tie.

“How do they know the dog didn’t just wander off?”

“The dog has never done it before...and is rather partial to food. They are sure she would have some back when she got hungry.”

Inspector Bridger wound down the window and a welcoming breeze hit Blood’s skin.

“Lord Monroe-Spencer, sensing that this might be a tactic to force him to change politics, immediately called the police station and insisted that they involve Scotland Yard.” The inspector pushed his hat back and scratched the top of his head. “Bet you thought you had pulled the short straw when you were assigned to a dognapping.”

“My first reaction was not good,” Blood admitted. “But I held my tongue and I’m glad I did. I think, given the sensitive nature of his Lordship’s position in government, there is every possibility that this *is* a targeted attack.”