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day 1  
monday  
scotland yard  
the car park  
euston common

Patrick Edwards sat contemplating the thick drear fog now nearly obscuring the Thames. From his office window at Scotland Yard, Victoria Street, Westminster the Chief Inspector, C I D usually had an excellent view. This evening the thick damp mist seemed to be nearly alive as it swirled and wafted heavily past the pane. That the General was out there somewhere again prowling along The Embankment, Commander Edwards was quite certain.

"What do you make of this, Tuck?"

"I'm not completely positive Patrick. Superintendent Mayhew tells me the body has just been recovered and has been delivered for autopsy. Scenes of crime are fully engaged. A full report will be ready by morning, I expect."

"Right. Nothing else for us to do just yet. We'll go over it first thing in the morning then."

The Commander turned away from the telephone to once again peer thoughtfully into the ever thickening dank grey haze eddying past.

Not so very long ago, he recollected, coal was the chief fuel source for winter heat. Houses from the center of London and right on out into the suburbs had all made use of the dark oily product of Scotch and Welsh mines. Floating ash, soot and stifling fumes resulting from the flames seemed to permeate every crevice and cranny of the city. Cinder dust, minute particles, rose up chimneys to combine with the mists winter generated. The vapor produced, choking on a clear day, became absolutely suffocating during thick fog.

Today, the Chief Inspector ruminated thankfully, the whole of London is now a Smokeless Zone.

Since inception of the rule, accompanied by greater use of electricity for heating, chimneys no longer belch poisonous fumes upward. Neither fog, nor cloudy days hold the danger that once was present. Chimney pots of clay or metal atop fireplace outlets add a picturesque touch to the city skyline.

Patrick Edwards still remembered vividly the anxious fear mirrored in his mother's eyes when the death producing effluvium appeared during those winters of his boyhood. He was thankful there had not been any of those particular choking formidable fogs since the smokeless rules had been in place. Dense soupy fog continued to present danger for motorists, of course. Motorists soon gave up the roads during really pea soupers.

"Sorry to bother you sir," Sgt. John Michaels, posted to Reception, front desk first floor, stood in the open doorway. "I knew you would want to know. The General has been just spotted then. I've sent a car round for him."

"Good work, Michaels. When he arrives, you finish up with him then, if you don't mind."

Reaching again for the telephone, The Commander of the Criminal Investigation Department of London's Metropolitan Police rang up his wife. Smiling now, he alerted Maggie that he was just leaving and would soon be home.

Chief Inspector Edwards was dead cert, this was to be another of those damp, heavy, send-'em indoors pea soup foggy nights for which London was so famous. Turning his collar upward, Edwards burrowed a little deeper into his heavy blue woolen Anorak before leaving the warmth and comfort of the Victoria Embankment Police Station. November did produce more than its share of such damp frigid nights. He pulled the ties on his hood snugly against his chin. The jacket felt extra comfy against the cold.

Traffic had already been slowed considerably by the dank, worsening fog. The Chief Inspector edged his battered old Ford Popular past The Foreign Office, No. 10 Downing Street, and the Old War Office before curving right onto St Martin's Lane north.

Commander Edwards felt more than a little affection for the ancient green car he invariably drove. That he could well afford to buy a newer vehicle was sure. The little Ford was the very first motorcar Edwards had been able to afford purchasing all those years before after he first began his first term of duty as a London police officer. The small automobile had given good service for years, Edwards had no plans at all to make any changes.

Driving carefully in the heavy gloom, it seemed to Edwards, London parks were the city's very heart and soul. In summer bright beds of flowers provided a welcome breath of color and happiness for lives too often spent in the very drabest of surroundings. Trees and bushes scrubbed the air, filling it with needed life assuring oxygen.

Laughing tumbling children played happily on verdant grassy slopes while infants in their carry cots napped peacefully. Parents lolled about keeping an eye on the kiddies, their own and those of others too. Sweethearts hidden in shadows stole a kiss, or at times a bit more, each participant willing to sacrifice the complete privacy of their cramped raw living quarters for the clear clean openness of grass and sky and space. Without the parks, the 10 or so million men, women and children living in the greater London metropolis would slowly wither and die.

As every 'copper' knew, bad weather of any kind was a mixed blessing. When the fog was present but not yet heavy as it was just now, foot pads, pick pockets, smash and grab artists came out in droves. During such times there was just enough haze to mask their activities and allow getaway. Edwards knew heavy duty, thick pea soupy fog, such as the one enveloping London at the present time, drove indoors honest folk and brigands alike.

Patrick Edwards was actually quite a large man. Sitting, The Chief Inspector created an impression of bulk, standing he appeared simply massive. The sight of so large a man crowded, hunched over the steering wheel, in the tiny, aging Ford he habitually drove, caused no end of merriment to most who knew him well and to many who did not as well.

Creeping cautiously along St. Bloomsbury Street, Chief Inspector Edwards carefully negotiated a turn onto Euston Road close to Euston Square Common and nearby Euston Station. Nothing appeared to have changed in the decades since Edwards had lived there as a boy. Still standing along the left side of the road were the two and three storey, mostly brick, buildings he remembered so well. True, most of them presently no longer housed families. The structures were now used mostly as offices, with the occasional butchery or specializing retail shop to be found housed on the sidewalk level. Many of the very same youngsters Edwards had grown up with, now traveled in by bus or train from their homes in the suburbs to work in the buildings each day.

There to the left was the Common. Leafless, skeletal trees footed by flower beds empty of anything that could not stand up to the killing frosts of winter appeared dimly, obscured as they were through the thickening gloom. Chief Inspector grinned a close, tight lipped smile: The fog as predicted was indeed worsening, policemen all over the city would soon be facing a much quieter community.

Ghostly figures, some carrying flashlights, moved hesitantly along Melton or Eversholt streets toward what they hoped was the stop for the London City bus line. Office workers from the converted homes along the Common were anxious to be home and out of the dense wet mist enveloping themselves and the environs of Euston. Other ghostly figures, evidently residents of this area came from the direction of the Rail Station, could just be seen through the murk. These were picking their way slowly along the Common toward their own homes laying hidden somewhere beyond the office buildings.

Chief Inspector Edwards brought his small auto to a halt. Frowning he searched the fog unsuccessfully. Whatever was holding up progress was at least three cars ahead, and was completely hidden in the surging, thickening wet grey cloud. Reaching for the winding mechanism, the Chief Inspector rolled his window nearly completely down. He was hoping he might be able to hear something to indicate the cause of the delay.

"Grand dad, wait."

Suddenly Edwards chuckled. The weary Chief Inspector could not resist pulling his car to the kerb to watch for a moment or two. A small, wraithlike figure bearing a light had suddenly appeared from out of the gloom. A larger, slow moving figure, carefully picking a path along the misty walkway hove into view. Edwards watched the small figure approach the second.

Laughter accompanied a vague gesture toward the houses at the end of the Common. The two slowly went on together.

How many times had Patrick, and Maggie's brother Charles, waited just in that same spot, or even on down to the Euston Station? Bearing a torch, and often steaming mugs of hot coffee or tea, the boys had waited for their respective fathers coming home on the train. "Hallo there, Dad. I'll walk along home with you then Dad. Here's the torch and some good hot coffee."

'Enough reminiscing it is now, Patrick. You called Maggie before leaving the Station house, didn't you then? And it is that you know full well how that lass frets when you are late on these foggy nights. Right. Back on the road with you it is then.'

The middleaged police officer put his Ford into bottom gear. He grasped the Driving Wheel firmly. Preparing to move back into the roadway, Edwards again spotted the small, light bearing

figure.

'Peculiar,' Patrick mused aloud, 'That laddie had apparently met someone else's grandpa and helped him out in the fog. The old codger must have nearly been home, though. Good of the youngster to be so thoughtful. Hullo, hmm.' Frowning, Chief Inspector Edwards watched as the light suddenly disappeared behind a bush. 'Extraordinary. Perhaps the boy is afraid he will use up his torch battery then.'

Several vehicles moved slowly past the spot where Edwards waited patiently. More office workers from the office/houses appeared on the walkway, some were alone. Others in small groups of two or three become visible then disappeared again. Clinging closely to the railings and fences they made their way carefully in the swirling mist. Men and women moved attentive to every sound, some carrying lights, others helping their fellows along.

Another slower, hesitant figure again came into view. The small light appeared again. The small figure approached.

"Grand dad wait."

'Ah, so the laddie has found his own grand dad then. Well done. Good on him.' After a short interchange the two moved on together into the thick gloominess.

A few buses and motorcars passed, rumbling, nearly unseen in the worsening fog. Patrick heard quick steps and snatches of anxious conversation from people hurrying past his car toward the bus stop. The obstacle on the roadway seemed to have been cleared away. Commander Edwards noticed vehicles were once again steadily creeping slowly forward.

Edwards flicked on his radio and caught the end of a news bulletin, '...worst fog of the winter to date. It is particularly dense in the Greater London region and outlying areas. Traffic is moving very slowly, with visibility almost nil. If you do not have to be out, the Police ask that you stay at home ...'

Ghostlike figures appeared, moving even more slowly and again disappeared. Once again the Chief Inspector put his Ford in gear and began moving the auto into the closest lane. Edwards noted the small guide and his light were no where to be seen. 'Wait, there they are.'

No longer baffled, the Chief Inspector now felt certain he knew what was happening. He cautiously moved out into the lane and peered into the thick moist darkness.

The blurred yellow and blue neon glow of the car park sign provided a pale guide post for Edwards to aim for. Slowly pulling into the gate, he was met by a slender, somewhat harried fellow. "Hallo there Inspector, awful night ain't it then? You ain't needing to leave the car all night then are you, we are sure full up. Not to worry though. We can find a place to leave it in an aisle if needs be for it."

"Right. No problem, Will, I'll not be gone long, I shouldn't expect then, should I? No, not long. Believe I saw something that needs looking into on by the Common. Michael says to tell you hello next time I see you. So Hello to you. I'll be back as soon as I can."

William Blackwell, a tall, well built dark eyed fellow, twenty three years old shook a lock of sandy hair away from his eyes. Will had known Inspector Edwards since himself, and the officer's son Michael, were pals in school together. The boys had been great chums back then. They had spent a good bit of time in each other's homes and all. Will recently learned Michael was almost finished with his own Police Training Academy. Will remembered he had not seen Michael for several months now. Peering speculatively at the quickly disappearing broad back of the Chief Inspector, Will turned to hurry into the beckoning warmth of the crowded office of the parking

garage. Frowning, the younger man reached for the telephone setting on the scarred and battered dark wooden table serving as desk in his small office room.

Leaving the scant brightness afforded by the parking garage, Chief Inspector Edwards quickly found himself in another, far more hazardous world. Forty years ago he would not have hesitated, today he did. Picking his way carefully, the police officer began cautiously wending his way toward the Common. Snatches of conversation from fellow travellers, nearby, but mostly completely obscured from his vision, convinced The Chief Inspector that he was on the right route.

A low hum of engines passing unseen nearby indicated there was some traffic continuing to move to his left.

"John. I can't see a thing."

"Stand just there, don't move, I'm coming. Keep talking so I can find you dear, won't you then? Right. Do you feel as though you are standing on grass, sidewalk or roadway?"

"I can't tell, wait ... its grass ..."

This particular fog shrouding the city tonight was definitely as bad as any Edwards had ever seen.

Reaching a kerb at last, Edwards was now faced with an even bigger predicament. How in the world was he to cross the street, avoid traffic and reach the walkway on the other side without being run down? 'What am I doing? I must be completely mad. Nothing else for it.'

Peering uneasily into the dense mist, Edwards took a cautious, preliminary, step forward. 'Come on fool, you simply cannot stand here all night then, can you? Of course not. You can't.'

A city bus slid to a hissing stop. The conductor glanced quizzically at Edwards. "Are you boarding, sir?"

"Thanks, no."

"John, thank goodness, here's the bus."

Waiting until the bus again disappeared into the night, Edwards continued his expedition. He moved slowly in the opposite direction, toward the Common and away from the bus. Picking his way carefully, peering intently into the fog, the officer continued his hesitant, fearful journey. He was dismayed to discover there were no visible lights at all along here, nothing helped to indicate where he was. Whether he was presently near the Common, on the walkway or even out in the middle of the road Edwards really did not know.

Shuffling his feet a bit so that he might feel any incline, Edwards was quite gratified to find the opposite curb. He stood for a moment, breathing heavily, thankful to at last be safely off the roadway.

Edwards was gratified to find he could actually see a little more. The fog seemed to be not quite so dense here.

There, somewhere just out of sight, a man suddenly chuckled. Chief Inspector Edwards stiffened; he heard a small gasp, then a girl's voice rang tartly, "Barry, you stop that immediately." The sound of a quiet kiss and both giggling indicated Edwards need not investigate. The young sweethearts moved on in the night.

Commander Edwards could just dimly make out a few ghostly trees nearby standing stark,

dripping quietly, there in the common. And he saw a railing or a fence or two bordering along the walkway. As yet the small guide and his light were no where to be seen.

Holding onto a railing Edwards thought wryly, 'Without a doubt then Patrick, you won't have to do much play acting, will you? No, not hardly. I really am that worried about finding my way in this murk.' He was quite exhausted, the stress of even so short a walk had left him drained. Tottering forward hesitantly, the officer was quite pleased to spy a small figure and a light abruptly come into view.

"Grand dad wait."

A small chuckle and then, "Sorry mate, I'm lookin' for me own old Grand dad and all, ain't I then? Can't none of us seem to make out much in this proper bleeding fog can we then?" the soft, high pitched voice belied the face Edwards saw peering quizzically at him from under a heavy brown woolen knit cap.

This was certainly no laddie of eight or ten. The fellow at Edwards' elbow was an older fellow.

"True enough said lad. I'm quite that turned round meself and all." Edwards sputtered, trembling. "I live there on West Lime Kiln Road, I do. But no, I can't find a thing in this bleeding fog. I'm ever so turned around I fear. I just don't know what I shall do." Playing his part to perfection, Edwards babbled on fearfully.

"I can guide you and all then, guv. You're just on the wrong side of the Common, ain't you then? Right. Nuffing to proper worry about, is there? Nah. The fog is a right pea souper for sure. Would you like me to walk along with you and show you the way? Won't be a bother at all then it won't. Me Granddad ain't come along just yet, he ain't."

"Would you then? How kind. I would be ever so grateful. How is it that are you able to get about in this murk? My wife must think me lost..."

"I live here, mate, I know this whole area like me own yard and all, I do. Just walk along here then, sir. We'll cut right across the Common, we will. Have you home to the missus and your supper in no time."

Turning, the two began inching along the pathway extending from Eversholt Street through The Common and onto Melton Street. Lime Kiln lay just beyond where Netherby and Prince Edward meet.

Shining his light on the pathway so Edwards might see his way better, the guide led his prey deeper into the murky darkness enveloping the Common.

Appearing to be a lost old cove completely cowed by his surroundings and the fog, Edwards tottered on, missing a step now and then, and all the while gabbling fearfully. He was completely alert to the boy and his surroundings.

Flashlights appeared from behind a tree, two shadowy figure approached suddenly. Edwards knew with a certainty that they were coming to attack him. The small guide flicked off his own light before darting quickly away. The other two closed in menacingly on the Chief Inspector.

It was at the precise moment the small guide leading Commander Edwards through Euston Common doused his light and shot away into the nearby trees, Vickie smiled gladly. Some distance away across The Thames, Victoria Armstrong was happy the shop would close early. There had hardly been a patron come into The Hen and Thistle Buttery all evening. The ever worsening wet grey fog kept most people away. Two coppers had come in for a quick cup of coffee.

They were full of talk about problems happening here and there in the city because of the fog. Vickie had seen the two before. They were pleasant fellows and always left a nice little bit of change on the table for her.

She really didn't pay too much attention to what they were saying. 'Something about a copper and some light fingers,' she thought. 'And of course, traffic problems all over the place, that was to be expected. I expect I'll hear all about it on the news report later on television.' If they closed up in the next fifteen or so minutes, Victoria would be able to make the 6:20.

Even in this heavy soup of fog the glow of lights from The Waterloo Station were clearly visible. Trains were continuing to run. Victoria realized she was able to hear whistles and rumbling along tracks every now and then. She hurried to get the clean up finished.

Victoria polished the last glass absently using a fresh drying up cloth. She was thinking of the handsome customer she had met earlier this week. He had been so attentive, she remembered with a smile. He had really seemed interested in her too. The pretty twenty year old wondered how old he was. He was older than his appearance she thought. But, she was a bit tired of the younger boys she had been dating. An older fellow might be a nice change.

'Now what in the world WAS his name?' Vickie stood motionless for a moment. 'Douglas, Donald, no that's not it. Dunc, Duncan something. Yes, that it is. Duncan.' Duncan said he would be out of town for at least two or maybe even three weeks, but he smilingly had promised to come by just as soon as he returned. 'Did he tell me his last name? I think he did, but I can't remember. I'm sure he must have told me. Oh well, there will be plenty of time to really get to know him when Duncan does return.'

Happily smiling, Victoria donned her thick lavender edge to edge coat and slouch brim hat before thrusting her feet into the brightly colored gum boots she wore protectively over her leather shoes. She wrapped the long lacey comforter Mum knitted for her birthday round and round her head and shoulders, said her goodbyes and set out quickly for Waterloo Station. How glad Vickie was that Mum had insisted she take the scarf along with her coat and hat. She felt snug and warm. The young woman realized she would just make the 6:20. 'Mum's steak pie with dripping toast and Eccles cakes for pudding is going to taste ever so good and all,' a broadly smiling Vickie thought to herself.

On dreary cold nights such as this, when Mum thought her daughter might be getting home a bit earlier than usual, well, then Mum thoughtfully held up tea for an hour or so. Vickie would surely be home to Willesden before her parents had finished their evening meal. She would not have to eat alone on this day afterall Vickie mused happily.

Very nearly at the time Victoria Armstrong was preparing to board the train for her journey home out to the London suburb of Willesden, Chief Inspector Edwards found himself becoming altogether busy there in the cheerless, dampish gloom of fog shrouded Euston Common.

Moments before The Commander's bantam guide had flicked off the torch he was carrying and had darted so suddenly into the darkness of nearby shadows, the wary officer saw a brief glint of steel in the hand of one of the men approaching him. What appeared to be a cudgel was dimly apparent in the hand of the other. Their arms were drawn back ready to strike.

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