

One Night on Agard Street

by *Slantedlight*

Derby is the most haunted place in Britain, with more reported sightings of ghosts, poltergeists and other supernatural ghouls than anywhere else in the UK. There have been 315 reported sightings in Derby over the past 40 years, according to a new study. This averages at 14 sightings per 10,000 people of the city's 233,700 population, making Derby the best UK city to visit if you want to spot a spook or glimpse a ghost.

<http://www.derbygrape.co.uk/felix.htm>

A bloody murder took place in court No 4 Agard Street on 13th February 1862, witnessed by a ten-year-old boy, disturbed from quietly playing by the sounds of two adults, one male, one female, arguing. As the young boy watched he saw the man take out a shiny instrument and lunge for the woman who screamed and staggered back clutching a bloody throat. The man then ran off into Agard Street, leaving his victim bleeding to death with the instrument of her demise, a 'cut throat razor', lying beside her...The woman was Eliza Morrow and her former lover, Richard Thorley, was her killer. The boy was Charles Wibberly, whose testimony was to play a crucial part in securing the conviction of the man who was to suffer Derby's last public execution... Asked if he had anything to say, Thorley replied: "What I have to say will amount to nothing, since three witnesses have spoken falsely against me."... In the early hours of the morning, on the day of his execution, Thorley wrote out a full confession. He told the prison chaplain that he had no regrets and stated that 'she got what she deserved'... Not long after the trial and execution of Richard Thorley, strange stories of ghosts and spectres that rattled chains and bewailed their outcast state emerged from Agard Street, stories which continued into the present century. Workers at a former factory on Agard Street were familiar with the story of Thorley and Eliza. Many claimed to have seen a lady in blue wandering the premises, whilst others swore that they had heard the phantom sounds of rattling chains.

from *Ghosts of Derby*, by Wayne Anthony and Richard Felix, The Breedon Books Publishing Company, Derby, 1995.

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The wind howled around them, this October night, a living shrieking thing that fled from one corner to the next to the next; ahead of them, behind them, restless and beyond playful. Somewhere a loose sheet of iron was slammed intermittently up and down, drawn along some tormented wall like chalk on a blackboard, so that Bodie winced, and Doyle clenched his teeth more firmly against it.

Hewasntscared-hewasntscared-hewasntscared.

The building towered around him, smaller and yet more vast than he remembered and certainly darker. All he had to do was walk through the door behind Bodie, and search it, the same routine they'd followed countless times before, that he could follow in his sleep, that he could do with his eyes closed – if he fancied being shot. But they were certain enough that Miller and his mates had cleared out, halfway to the Spanish sunshine even now, there wouldn't be anyone here.

“Get out of it, Ray – go and play outside where you're not in anyone's way!”

“But it's raining...”

“Give over mithering - do what yer mam says before I cloth yer one!”

Just follow Bodie, and search the building.

He wasn't worried about the storm, but he didn't want to hang about in the pouring rain or be swept off his feet by the blasting wind, so when old Tam that minded the mill at night left the door open while he popped into the Oak, Ray nipped inside, shook his dripping curls, and went to find a window somewhere high, where he could watch the lightning tear the sky apart over the city.

The moon was full, the rags of clouds that scurried across it not thick enough to dim the light it gave, more than enough, combined with the flood of orange streetlights, to shine through the huge factory windows and expose anyone trying to hide in the shadows. It shone on Bodie too, leached his face pale and smooth when he turned to glance at Doyle, bounced from the leather of his jacket and gleamed on the barrel of his gun.

The storm tumbled and crashed its way through the late afternoon, turning February twilight to darkness under its heavy clouds, fork lightning followed by thunder followed by fork lightning – not even time to count one hundred, like Da had taught him, it was there right above them, it was here all around him, the air alive with it, every breath he took electric.

“Waste of time, this,” Bodie hissed at him as they stood either side of the doorway, waiting, listening. “We should be at home, where we belong. Good food, soft beds...”

“It's Derby, Bodie, not outer Mongolia.” But he thought longingly of that soft bed all the same, of letting himself be persuaded. Miller wasn't here, they *knew* Miller wasn't here – all bar the confirmation from Plymouth that he'd boarded the ferry. He clamped down on the thought, pursed his lips and frowned. He wasn't ten years old any more and he had a job to do. “Let's get on with it.”

His breath came slowly, heavily, just the same, as they moved cautiously to the second door, sidled through it, and then separated, one to each side of the long main room, still with its old machinery running in a factory-line from one end to the other, dividing it neatly into two. His heart thudded heavily in his chest, seemed to pause at each beat – *did it want to go on? Should it? Could it?*

Rooms opened off the central hall, doors tilting on hinges, or missing altogether. They were empty of everything but the memories of a once-bustling workplace, of yet another mill sacrificed to Maggie's tough dreams. Ghosts.

There was no such thing as ghosts.

Suddenly Ray froze. Above the wind, above the cracking skies and rolling, roaring winds, another noise, and he was abruptly cold, so cold...

He pushed at yet another door, entered arms outstretched, gun first. *Thatcher's Britain is Hell on Earth* he read, like black blood across one wall. *Women need men like a fish needs a bicycle.* Yeah well, these days I can do without you too, darling...

He thought fleetingly of that soft bed again.

All pigs are scum... Kill the Pigs. That was better, be angry. Better to be angry than scared.

From somewhere behind him came the sound of chains dragging.

Yispoke false, yiliar...

He spun, gun ahead of him, though it was as good as useless.

Nothing. Nothing but his heart pounding blood and his own breath coming in sharp pants. The wind howled around the building still, somewhere in the distance a siren rose above everything else for a moment, but inside nothing moved. He lowered his arms, though he kept his fingers tightly around the grip, lightly by the trigger, moved on to the next room.

It was just the wind.

Shideservet, y'little clackfart...

Bodie was out there somewhere, alone where the chains rattled and the woman...

He saw it then, the slash of the razor, the fall of the woman's body – Lizzy's body, it were Lizzy's body – watched as Thorley stared with maddened eyes at the blade, then looked up suddenly, dropped it, turned

to run... Straight towards him, Thorley was running straight...But it wasn't him, it was her, her skin pale, staring at him, staring straight at him as he stood by the window, storm forgotten outside in his own personal tumult, and chains, chains clanking...

No. There were no such things as...

And then there it was – a flash of blue in the corner of his eye, rushing suddenly towards him and he could see the fierceness of her eyes all over again, could feel the ice and the terror in the air... He shot – once, twice – knowing it would do no good, knowing that...

Through the chill of the air, and the raging of his heart he heard a startled cry then a *thump* as something fell.

He opened his eyes.

Bodie...

Bodie lay on the ground in a streak of moonlight, face a grimace, and one hand clutched across to his right arm, to the arm where Doyle had shot him.

All of time stopped, no breath, no heartbeat for him, he'd shot Bodie...

Takeitback takeitback takeitback...

But the moment stuck hard, stayed, and Doyle found he could move after all, could fall to his knees beside him, could drop his own gun to reach out to him, and drag his own RT from his pocket, switch the frequency to call for help.
“*Priority A3...*”

And then there was nothing to do but wait, wait far away from home, in the cold, in the moonlit clanking night, for the ambulance to come.

“Bodie?” His eyes were hot, stinging sharply so that he could barely keep them open, and he sniffed, refused to give in.

Bodie moaned, scrunched his face a little tighter, managed to open his eyes.
“What hit me?”

Couldn't say it, he couldn't say it... “Me.”

“Christ, Ray...”

He couldn't say sorry, there wasn't enough sorry in the whole world, it meant nothing beside what he'd done.

"Let's have a look, then." He pulled at him to sit him up, lifted Bodie's hand away from the stained hole in his jacket, his good leather jacket, and Bodie let him, Bodie trusted him and he let him.

He'd shot Bodie.

"Hold your noise," he said sharply, as Bodie hissed in a loud breath. "It's just a scratch." *It was better to be angry...*

"Doesn't feel like a scratch..." He sounded unsure, shaken. Bodie never sounded shaken.

Don'tdie, don'tdie, don'tdie...

There was a hole at the back of Bodie's sleeve as well as at the front.

"It's gone right through," he said, tugging Bodie upright for a moment, so that he could tear off his own clothes, rip his t-shirt in two, wad it up to form padding, back and front. It was better that it had gone right through, surely it was better. Less chance of blood poisoning, less chance of... More chance that he'd bleed to death.

Let my sentence be a warning...

Bodie let him do what he wanted, and that wasn't right either, this passive Bodie. "Shift yerself," he said roughly, trying to move them both so that he supported Bodie and could wrap his arms around him. To warm him, to keep him warm.

"Oi, Doyle!"

He grunted a query, listening out for the cavalry to come sweeping around the corner, for that once-distant siren to be louder, closer.

"Not that I don't appreciate it, but wouldn't you be warmer with your clothes back on?"

Fuck.

He grunted a *yes*, ignored his shirt so that he could tie it around Bodie's arm, pulled his own jacket on, and then settled Bodie closely back again. Held him.

They listened, together, to the clanking of metal, the rattling of chains in the night, the howling of the wind, and the creaking and moaning of the old building. Where were those sirens?

He felt, rather than heard, Bodie take a breath, and he stiffened pre-emptively.

He'd shot the man he... He'd shot his partner.

"I saw your blue jacket," he said in a rush, wanting to come clean. You had to trust the bloke who watched your back, had to know that he wasn't going mad, that there were reasons - no matter how bad - for the mistakes he made. "We used to live down the street from here, and everyone said it was haunted. I didn't believe it, was a stroppy bugger even back then, but one night I was here on me own and... well, I was only a kid. Scared myself, didn't I. Supposed to be too old for that these days."

"Doyle..."

"No - look, I don't know why it happened, old memories I suppose, I couldn't wait to get out, and when Cowley sent us up here..."

"Doyle..."

"I know - if you want me to see Ross or whatever, I will. But it's not like we'll be back here again, it's just this place," he lifted his hand, twirled a finger by his ear, "Sent me a bit loopy, I suppose."

"Ray!"

He looked down, surprised at the strength of Bodie's shout, worried about the way his eyes seemed distant, staring over Doyle's shoulder, too wide and shaken to be normal, to be okay. *Don'tdie, don'tdie, don'tdie...* "Bodie..."

"Ray! I'm not wearing my blue jacket."

Doyle stared down for a moment at the rich chocolate brown leather, soft in the moonlight, at Bodie's face, still pale, too pale, and then he looked over his shoulder.

October 2010