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Presents

# Getting Away With Murder

A Young Woman's Tale of Sadness



A Penny Dreadful By Mary-Ann Verkuyl

Edited by Missus Eugenia Mooney for  
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## Getting away with Murder

by Mary-Ann Verkuyl

Sitting in a chair pulled up to her bedroom window, Miss Isadora Thorley sat weeping as she gazed out into the graveyard beyond. Occasionally dabbing her tears she could not help but be continuously reminded of her mother's demise. Eighteen years ago Miss Thorley's mother had passed only moments after giving birth to her daughter. Miss Isadora was a sad young woman who spent her days hiding away in a cottage she shared with her father.

Mr. Thorley had no time for his daughter and held little love for the child. Her face bore such a resemblance to that of her mother that it was a constant painful reminder of her loss. Isadora from the moment of her birth was doomed to a life of misery. Like a small caged bird she longed to be free but her father allowed her no happiness or freedom. The only respite from his cruel words was when he was away from the cottage working in the graveyard or visiting the vicar of the local parish church to which the graveyard belonged.

Miss Thorley often spent her time thinking of ways she might be free from her torment. There was little escape from the misery short of staring out her window into the lonely world of the graveyard beyond.

From her window Isadora was free to watch the comings and goings of mourners and the internment of the next poor soul who had since parted the earth.

She hoped to catch a glimpse of the young man who assisted her father at the graveyard. He was tall, taller than most, with a handsome face and tousled reddish hair. What made him even more endearing to Isadora was that he walked with a funny limp that made him a bit of a misfit amongst the young men in town.

Having met him only a few times Miss Isadora thought him to be a kind person. Of course her interaction with the outside world was quite limited and she had no real experience in judging someone's character. She, however, believed the young lad named Mr. Lucian Wright to be of good morals with a kind heart.

With her head propped up on her hands leaning into the window she continued to dab the occasional tear as she watched Mr. Wright labor under her father's fastidious instructions.

No one seemed to notice her there as she gazed out across the graveyard, her hopes and dreams dashed against the headstones like waves on rocks.

She continued to watch her father and Mr. Wright for what may have been hours. Lucian was digging a grave while her father stood over him doing nothing to help. When Lucian finally finished, he wiped his brow and with shovel in hand the two walked toward the cottage in the fading afternoon pale of the fall sky.

When the two approached the cottage Isadora finally stood up and drew the curtain back so her father and Mr. Wright could see her. Her face brightened into a smile when she saw the man of her heart's desire, give a wave in her direction. He had acknowledged her and that made her so very happy, or as happy as Isadora could possibly feel.

After dinner Isadora finished her household chores and left her father reading in his bed. She excused herself and headed to her room once again lost in thought and daydreaming about the attention she received from Mr. Wright earlier that afternoon.

As she readied herself for bed, several flashes of light outside in the distance caught her eye. She grabbed her dressing gown from the chair, wrapped it around herself in haste and headed to the window.

Pushing the curtain back she peered out into the darkness. Near the perimeter wall of the graveyard she could see what appeared to be a lantern glimmering. Squinting in the dim light of the night sky she could just make out a vague silhouette of a tall figure moving about. Her curiosity peaked, she decided to sneak out past her father and investigate the shadowy figure further.

Isadora had always been a risk taker, despite her father's constant control and much to his chagrin she loved nothing more than to jump out of trees when she was younger. In the last few years she had also come to enjoy taking midnight strolls through the graveyard. She imagined the old trees waving in the moonlight were the spirits of souls past. Isadora had always felt more love from the names on the headstones than she had from the living. A maudlin creature since early childhood Miss Isadora had always had a fascination with death.

Isadora's mother was buried in the cemetery, and the young lady spent many hours visiting her headstone and speaking to her as if she were right there to listen. To Isadora her mother was the picture of perfection. Of course the poor girl had nothing to base her perception on outside of a dusty old painting and her father's endless ramblings, but in her mind that was all she needed.

Slipping on her boots as quiet as a church mouse she headed out into the night without the aid of a lantern. Isadora knew the graveyard well and quietly descended upon the tall figure with the stealth of a black cat on a moonless night. As she stepped up behind the man she soon realized it was Lucian. He, unaware of her presence until she cleared her throat with a gentle "em hem", was startled to see her and stammered " My dear MissThorley...what are you doing out so late?"

She smiled shyly and asked Mr. Wright, what he was doing under the cover of night, in the middle of the graveyard. She knew exactly what he was doing and Mr. Wright was well aware of this. She knew he was not digging out a new grave as no one was slated to be buried that whole week. He had been caught out by Miss Thorley digging up a recent burial from the week before. Isadora unafraid offered her assistance in the misdeed.

The next afternoon Isadora sat in the parlour knitting to soothe her worries. Her father would soon be home and she was fretting about his daily rants and discouragements. If only she could be free of his austerity towards her. She tried so hard over the years to gain his affection but to no avail he still continued to blame her for the death of his beloved wife.

Despite her fear of being caught by her father Isadora continued to sneak out at night to help Lucian anytime -a body became available. Miss Thorley enjoyed the exhilaration she felt whenever partaking in this deceitful behavior and because she was with Mr. Wright and doing something other than sitting inside she felt useful. Isadora believed that she and Mr. Wright were actually helping mankind by providing disinterred corpses for medical discovery.

The bodies they were snatching were being delivered to a Dr. Manning in the city. Having graduated with all the honours a paid education and title procured, the doctor was now performing dissections on-said bodies for further learning and illustrating a medical journal he hoped to publish.

The greatest thrill for Isadora was spending time with Mr. Wright although they hardly spoke to each other. In her head and her heart she was growing quite fond of him.

One rainy afternoon, Isadora sensed her father's anger. He had been pacing the floor of the cottage for the last hour awaiting Mr. Wright's arrival to work. The very moment Lucian appeared heading up the walkway toward the cottage Isadora's father swung open the cottage door and bellowed "Do you know that bodies are being taken from the graveyard...MY GRAVEYARD?"

Mr. Wright, being a bricky lad, feigned at being aghast. " My good lord, Sir! Surely you are not suggesting that I would be a part of or know anything of this appalling matter?"

Mr. Thorley behaved in such a way as to abase himself in front of both Isadora and Mr. Wright by suggesting-such a thing of his trusted employee.

To carry the charade of innocence further Mr. Wright decided that it would be best to remove himself from the employment of Mr. Thorley and thus quit then and there. Isadora let out a small shriek in response. Lucian winked at Isadora and walked away knowing if he didn't do something she would be fret about him not returning and perhaps let the cat out of the bag so to speak.

That night at dinner Isadora fixed her father his usual whiskey, then she retired for the evening.

The next morning Isadora made a hasty exit and headed to the market before the local vicar was to arrive at the cottage. She left knowing full well her father would be found dead in his bed by the vicar upon his visit. Isadora returned home to the seemingly devastating news of her father's death and with the help of the vicar several days later Mr. Thorley was buried beside his beloved wife.

Upon her father's death Miss Thorley received an adequate inheritance, however, because the home was property of the church the cottage would go to the next groundskeeper of the graveyard.

With nowhere to go, Dr. Manning took pity on her, and took Miss Isadora into his residence offering her room and board until she could make arrangements to live with an aunt in New York. Knowing this would take months or even a year to arrange, Isadora settled into Dr. Manning's home

For the very first time she truly loved her new life. Dr. Manning treated her well, and in her eyes her relationship with Mr. Wright was perfect.

Several weeks after Miss Thorley had moved in, she, Dr. Manning, Mr. Wright sat in the drawing room discussing the next body they could. Dr. Manning wanted Mr. Thorley's remains.

Horrified, Isadora protested " Please sir, leave him in his grave, I have suffered enough because of him."

Dr. Manning insisted and Lucian buckled under his pressure. Isadora's pleas went unheard.

Mr. Thorley's body was exhumed and Dr. Manning went to work on his remains. Dissecting the body the doctor discovered a small dose of \*laudanum, but not enough to cause his death.

The doctor continued to examine Mr. Thorley's body. While the cause of death remained a mystery he continued a further examination of the head and cranium area of the cadaver.

Upon removing the top of the skull and extracting the brain, Dr. Manning found the bone between the nasal and brain had been shattered and he believed this to be the direct cause of death. Clearly

Mr. Thorley did not die of natural causes or a simple overdose of the medicinal he took.

Dr. Manning was in a conundrum, should he alert the police? By doing so he would clearly implicate himself and Mr. Wright as he understood their implications on the matter of body snatching. After much thought he sent for Mr. Wright and also had a note sent to Isadora requesting her presence at Dr. Manning's makeshift operating theatre.

It seems that Miss Thorley was smarter than anyone suspected. Dr. Manning and Mr. Wright confronted Isadora on how she murdered her father.

Feeling safe, she told the story" It was quite simple actually, after putting the laudanum in his whiskey, I waited for him to fall asleep. I then snuck into his room, smothered him with his pillow until he was unconscious. I then proceeded to push a rather long coffin spike I found in the workshed into his nasal cavity. When it appeared it may not be long enough to do the deed I used a hammer to finish the job. To stop any fluid, I placed a small piece of cloth into his nose. I then checked back several hours later to see if the leaking had stopped.

I then washed his face and went back to bed.

You must understand, I suffered greatly being his daughter and I would have continued to do so with no hesitation, but when Mr. Wright said he was going to leave that was more than I could bear."

Shocked at how a young woman could think of such a savage thing. Dr. Manning asked her to explain how she had come up with the deranged idea of using a coffin spike to kill someone.



Miss.Thorley replied candidly, “ Father always had the sniffles and was forever using his handkerchief to wipe his nose. That in and of itself drove me mad, but the incessant never ending blowing and wiping his nose I just despised. I had to act quickly to end his life and the only thing I could find that wasn’t obvious was the giant coffin spike in the workshed. It took me days to work out how I would do the deed but when I finally realized my plan I took the coffin nail and the hammer to my room and hid them both under my bedding. My plan was to hit him in the head with the hammer or stab him with the spike, but when I went into his room I heard that awful sniffing I just wanted to scream. Jamming the coffin spike into his nostril was one of the most thrilling things I have ever done and worked out better than bashing him in the head with a hammer, which would have been very messy.”

The two men looked at each other in astonishment. They were finding it hard to believe Isadora had brutally murdered her father, although she had and then explained it to them in such a matter a fact way they had no idea what to say.

After several minutes of shrugging their shoulders and talking amongst themselves both Dr. Manning and Mr. Wright agreed MissThorley had suffered enough.

Contacting the police had really never been an option without implicating themselves in the whole sordid ordeal and with that conclusion Dr. Manning and Mr. Wright decided to do nothing.

Several months passed and Dr. Manning decided to step away from Miss Thorley and Mr. Wright. The pair had become strangely attracted to grave robbing and the doctor wished to distance himself from any part in the illegal practice. Moving himself to a new city the doctor opened the doors to opening his own successful consulting practice.

Isadora found her new freedom exhilarating and with each day her risk taking increasingly more daring. Her dark quirks and personality had certainly caught the attention of Mr. Wright. He found Miss Thorley truly engaging. They were married in a small ceremony at the local church without any family in attendance.

The pair became increasingly troublesome causing chaos in their small town. It appeared the similarities that bound the two were nothing short of mischief and mayhem.

In a matter of months Mr & Mrs. Wright's actions caught the attention of the local authorities and the pair were apprehended.

Mr. Wright was hanged for his crimes and Mrs. Wright was committed to an insane asylum where she died of an "accidental" overdose.

Thus ends the story of getting away with murder.

Story written by Mary-Ann Verkuyl  
Edited by Missus Eugenia Mooney of Halfpenny Dreadfuls  
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