Serving the Foreign Office

Tobias Seamon
I am the son of Jack the Ripper. His name is Charles and the rumors are true. He is upper-class, belongs to the Royal Geographic Society, and served with distinction in the Foreign Office. He has joked with Burton, Speke, and Livingstone, and comes home through the stables to shed his blood slicked oil-skin amid the aprons of the butchers.

My mother, an idiot of Anglo-Irish gentility sings his praises through turnip lips, never saying boo about his absences to Afghanistan and the Dark Continent. He has seen the Night of the Long Knives, traveled a plateau of burning stones, and murders whores with surgical abandon in the sawdust gutters of Whitechapel.

He reads the papers assiduously and leans across a plate of fried tomatoes and herring, uttering, how horrible.

My father has ordered sub-alterns towards the Crimean guns, speaks of Nightingale with pride, had a finger amputated after Khartoum, and keeps a Dutch mistress in Paris. He is skilled at espionage and the wives of ambassadors return his glances. He enjoys the company of Americans and ashes his cigars in a mummified monkey’s head, presented to him by the ruler of Lahore, with whom he shared the brains.

He is a cartographer and has mapped the Mountains of the Moon. Among his charts of the Silk Road and the Blue Nile, there is a sketch of the East End, red stars drawn like engagements.
in anonymous alleyways. There has been no change to his behavior, before the deaths or after, and he takes his meals regularly to fulfill the needs of his slight paunch. He tells stories of surviving without water, love, or ammunition, laughing loudly and equally at Punch, Twain, and the Nun’s Priest.

In a box that opens with the smell of musk, I found a broken knife, a pressed orchid, a locket portrait of my mother, a tuft of ebon hair entwined in a cheap green ribbon, and a severed brown finger. I cannot tell the reason or origin of any of these objects. He spies me at the box and smiles, remarking he did the same thing at my age. The deaths have stopped, and the killer is no longer sought. The murders remain a mystery to all the world.