

A MURDEROUS MALADY BLOG TOUR

Excerpt

My anger at Sidney evaporated in a mist of curiosity. "What do you mean?" I asked.

He paused as if carefully gathering his thoughts. "Everyone has at least one event in his past that he wishes he could erase, as a schoolboy might eradicate a bad work on his sums on a chalkboard, right?"

"Yes." Why did I have the sudden feeling I wouldn't like what I was about to hear?

"And so did Fenton appear to have a past with gambling, a past about which I did not know. No doubt if he were alive, he would like to wipe that part of his life clean."

"Yes," I said again, waiting for a salient point to be made.

"I imagine even you would like to erase something from your past, Flo," Sidney suggested, loosening his grip on the chair's arms and templing his fingers again, a sign that he was relaxing.

Naturally I would have erased many things. The memory of Richard, for starters. Which reminded me that I still needed to decide what to do with the letter he had written me. I mentally brushed that cobweb out of the way. Time spent thinking of him could ensnare me like no organ-grinder ever could.

"Are you accusing *me* of something, Sidney?" I asked.

"No, no, of course not. I'm just making a point. None too well, it would seem. What I am trying to say is that I think there are secrets of the past in my own household. And although I sent Fenton into the streets in an attempt to call out whatever miscreant actually fired the shots, he would have had no capacity for calling out whoever was *behind* the trigger-puller."

Sidney gazed at me steadily, and I sensed that he was trying to communicate something he could not say aloud.

For my part, I was stunned by what I believed him to be transmitting to me.

"Sidney, are you suggesting that either Liz or the General has a past so horrendous that someone paid our killer to attack the carriage?"

The moments ticked by. Finally, Sidney repeated adamantly, "Everyone has a past, Flo."

But Liz had had no past to speak of before marrying Sidney eight years ago at the age of twenty-four. General à Court undoubtedly had a murderous past in the Army, but he wouldn't be the instigator of a plot against his daughter. As gruff and unlikable as he was, he clearly adored his daughter.

"Sidney, can you cease being vague and mysterious for just a few moments and tell me whom you suspect to have this dangerous and illicit past?" Dealing with ailing women each day who perpetually lied to me about what they ate and drank while being transparently coy was bad enough. I had no patience for this same conduct with someone I called a friend.

He heaved another sigh. "I'm worried that it is me."