

THE UNRELIABLE
HISTORY OF JACK
THE RIPPER

By

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This preview is for reading purposes only and not for performance.

LIGHTS 00:

HOUSE LIGHTS OFF

FILL LIGHTS – DIM

INTRODUCTORY MUSIC: FADE AFTER 27 SECS, OFF BY 30 SECS

LIGHTS 01: On All Cast Members

FILL LIGHTS – OFF

L SPOT FULL C SPOT FULL R SPOT FULL

Narrator: We present ‘The Unreliable History of Jack the Ripper’.
I am Narrator.

Jack: I am Jack. I am legend.

Detective: I am Detective Sergeant. I am clever.

Police Constable: I am Police Constable. I am dense.

Prostitute: I am a prostitute. I am dirty.

Charlotte: I’m a nice girl.

Midwife: I am a midwife; I delivered Jack . . . the bastard.

Mrs. Ripper: I am the mother of Jack the bastard.

Barmaid: I am a barmaid. I can pull ‘em.

LIGHTS 02: On Narrator

L SPOT OFF C SPOT OFF R SPOT FULL

Narrator:

The Prologue: Autumn, 1888, London: the greatest metropolis the world has ever seen. The rich ride in Hansom cabs; the poor can only afford ugly ones. The dreaded London Fog envelops the city in its clammy grasp. It is as thick as a Dickens' novel. It is so thick in the East End that the poor turn it through their mangles to make blankets. Resourceful housewives can make enough nutritious soup out of a bucket of fog and coal dust to feed a family of eight.

But in the back streets and narrow alleys, the fog proves a more deadly weapon than a crowbar or cudgel for the footpad and cut-throat. It is in these murky alleys that Jack the Ripper carved his name forever into the history and geography of Whitechapel.

But first things first.

Scene 1; the Ripper household. Jack is born.

LIGHTS 03: On mid-wife

L SPOT OFF C SPOT FULL R SPOT OFF

Midwife:

You have a bonny, bouncing boy, Mrs. Ripper.

Mother:

Well, stop bouncing him, woman! He's a Ripper not a Rubber.

Jack:

Tragically, the bouncing crushed my hopes of becoming a world famous librarian.

Mother:

Get on with cutting his cord, woman!

Midwife:

Snip, snip, go my sharp silver scissors.

Jack:

Those sharp, silver scissors determined my second career choice.

Midwife:

What will you call him, mother?

Mother:

Not mother, stupid, that's a girl's name. He'll be Jack, after the dog. His father wanted Russell.

LIGHTS 04: On Centre & Narrator

L SPOT OFF C SPOT FULL R SPOT FULL

Narrator:

End of scene 1. Scene 2: the Ripper household; Jack's childhood.

Jack: Where do prostitutes come from, mummy?

Narrator:

End of scene 2: scene 3, the Ripper household ; puberty breaks out for Jack.

Jack:

Can I have a prostitute, mum?

LIGHTS 05 **Narrator****L SPOT OFF** **C SPOT OFF** **R SPOT FULL****Narrator:**

End of scene 3: scene 4; Twilight sheds a romantic glow over the streets of Whitechapel, the perfect setting for a romantic interlude in which Jack flexes his wooing muscles and shows his ardour, which I assure you is quite legal. If you find your emotions easily stirred by this scene, please refrain from fondling yourself or the person next to you unless you have their express permission.

LIGHTS 06: **Jack & Charlotte****L SPOT OFF** **C SPOT FULL** **R SPOT ON****Jack:**

Hello, miss. What are you doing out all alone at night in this part of Whitechapel?

Charlotte:

I live here, next door to you, Jack.

Jack:

Drawing close to her with amorous intent

Are you . . . attached?

Char:

Yeah. Both sides. The whole street's one long terrace, ain't it?.

Jack:

I mean romantically.

Char:

Naturally! I'm madly in love with the slum next door.

Jack:

I didn't mean . . .

Char:

I know what you meant and it's none of your business. You don't even know my name, Jack.

Jack:

You're Enid.

Char:

Enid's the dog. I'm Charlotte.

Jack:

Why don't you and I take Enid for a walk, Charlotte?

Char:

It wouldn't work.

Jack:

It would. I'm good with animals.

Char:

Not this one; he's dead.

Jack:

He?

Char:

Dad bought him off a bloke down the pub. It was dark and they were both drunk.

Jack:

Even so, didn't your dad spot his . . .?

Char:

Enid was wearing pantomime trousers at the time.

Jack:

What did he die of ?

Char:

Fighting. He lost to the Dalston Crusher in the third round.

Jack:

I'm sorry.

Char:

Don't be. Dad bet a month's rent money on the Crusher and we lived a life of Riley for a week. You must have heard the rumpus we kicked up.

Jack:

I thought your mum had opened up the brothel again.

Char:

No, that's down Limehouse. She didn't want to lower the tone up here.

Jack:

Are you on the game, too?

Char:

Me? No. I like to get out of the house and work standing up.

Jack:

You're pretty enough.

Char:

That won't last. I'm a match girl at Bryant and May's. Before long my face'll drop off with phossy jaw.

Jack:

The poisonous fruit of unbridled rumpy-pumpy, eh?

Char:

Unfortunately not. It's working with white phosphorous as rots your mouth and gums.

Jack:

I will take you away from all that if you let me woo you.

Char:

Woo me?

Jack:

Yes. Woo, woo, woo.

Char:

Is that it?

Jack:

Yes and I'm glad it's over but it has to be done ere I ask you to walk out with me.

Char:

'Ere'?

Jack:

It's poetry for 'before'. You have to say it in wooing.

Char:

All right, now the wooing's out of the way, how are you going to take me away from all this?

Jack:

I'm going to better myself and get rich and I will take you with me.

Char:

Got a good job, have you?

Jack:

It's a grind.

Char:

All work is a grind, Jack. What do you actually do?

Jack:

I grind. Knives, scissors, swords.

Char:

At the cutting edge, are you?

She laughs an exaggerated laugh

Jack:

You're a sharp one too, ain't you?

They both laugh uproariously

Narrator:

Steps forward and motions to them to stop: they freeze

Please!

To audience

May I remind you that in Victorian times, the pun was the only source of humour until the joke was invented. Wherever and whenever a pun turned up, a crowd would gather and laugh until their ribs split or in the case of females, their corsets cracked.

To Jack & Charlotte

Please resume.

Jack:

I bet you can't guess what knives and swords and scissors have in common.

Char:

D'you think I'm thick or something?

Jack:

Ah ha! They all have a silent letter.

Char:

Eh?

Jack:

You don't say 'ker-nife' or 'sk-issors' or 'ser-word', do you?

Char:

And you don't say interesting things to a girl, do you, Jack?

She turns to go

Jack:

What would you like me to say to you, Charlotte?

She stops and turns to speak to him

Char:

That's easy. Say, 'Night, night, Charlotte.'

Starts to leave: pauses to say over her shoulder

By the way, the 'g' and 'h' are both silent. Ta-ta!

Jack:

Ker-nickers!