



SENSITIVE CONTENT TRIGGER WARNINGS:

Suicide
Hallucinations
Unreality
Hanging
Dismemberment
Poisoning
Murder



VIEWER DISCRETION IS ADVISED. ENJOY!

PHYSICIAN TO THE QUEEN

anita

Constance, a noble galleon kidnapped and renamed The Dismal Consort by pirates in 1720, suffered the cruel fate of a maiden dragged away from the virtuous path. However, so much she did that she seemed to have grown fond of this new life of freedom and anarchy, until she was subdued — read sunk — by the authorities in 1725.

The entire crew of the nefarious Captain Mortimer was hanged in a commendable act of divine justice on Earth. They met their downfall mocking and cursing God, the Queen, and the only living soul who could be saved from their villainy.



Personal Records of Physician Charles Atkins

The corpse of the pirate Percy Dickson revealed an ingenious surprise during the autopsy.

The dead man's tattoos formed a map that could only be deciphered after his death. I say this because one of the necessary shreds was inside a tiny bottle inside of his stomach.

The characteristic X of the treasure was conveniently placed inside his glass eye, which was the part that took me the longest to discover.

Despite the hurdles, I cracked the puzzle in less than twenty-four hours and was once again surprised: the final destination is right in the city outskirts. I wonder if it is the hiding place where he accumulated his fortune of loots and crimes, longing for a luxurious retirement.

I hope to confirm this possibility, since the concerns about livelihood in old age are a matter of the living only.

London, August 13, 1728.

Charles opened his eyes suddenly, feeling his back aching from the awkward position he had slept in. His diary was open under his arms, with his chin awkwardly resting on them. He threw himself back in the chair with a muffled groan, lamenting the age beginning to take its toll on his limbs. The dead of the night loomed outside of the window.

He reviewed in detail the map he had just replicated on paper. Percy's dismembered corpse spread its odor of carrion and fluids throughout the room, banalities that had not bothered the physician for decades. The skin where the map was tattooed was now only ashes in the incinerator and the rest of the body would be dispatched soon, having fulfilled its inestimable role.

“God save the merciful Queen.” The physician murmured with a dull smile, shoving the map in his pocket and wearing his top hat and cloak.

The cold and motionless city at night was like an embalmed corpse in the mist. Amidst the thick and peculiar fog, Charles moved through the streets like a worm moving through carrion. His tall, thin silhouette blended into the long shadows of the streetlamps, barely threatened by the weak lantern in his hand illuminating only a few meters in front of his eyes.

Similar to the flickering light of a ship on a stormy night, when the ropes tore the sailors' hands, the falls caused concussions and fractures and the cold water brought fatal flu in the morning.

Ointments solved the milder cases and occasionally an amputation was necessary, usually after looting and battles. However, sometimes a quick death was more wanted and efficient than a half-baked cure.

Thus, surgeons on pirate ships ended up as murderous or more so than their companions.

A mouse ran by Charles' feet as he entered the docks and he blinked, returning from tedious daydreams and checking the map again. He took a deep breath, ignoring the docked ships that seemed to be watching his steps. He would not listen to the irrational part of his brain that ordered him to keep his eyes away from the walls, where the ghosts waited for a chance to drag him to the Other Side.

Not him, a legitimate son of England, devoted to the Queen and the Holy Church, a respectable physician who had become known among the nobility in such a short time and who already saw in the horizon a chance to practice his craft in the palace...

Tap. Tap. Tap. Tap.

A boring tapping on the wood started as soon as he turned to the decaying old docks.

Tap.

Tap.

Tap.

Closer.

In a fast move, Charles covered the lantern with his cloak and reached for the pistol hidden in his clothes. As soon as he did it though, a strong smell of wet dead cat impregnated the characteristic odor of the docks.

So strong that it hit a man who had endured the worst of storms and the most putrid corpse with uncontrollable dizziness.

“Hey, surgeon!”

The Luck is a fickle and unpredictable lady. When summoning her, one must show due respect to not upset her and suffer unfortunate consequences. Since her nature is so similar to the sea, it is no surprise that pirates are masters of such courtship, true gentlemen of luck.

Phill was one of those who claimed to be personally blessed by Lady Luck, and indeed his comparatively long life was reflected in his wrinkles and scars. Blind in his left eye and having a loose hip, he had added an amputation to his collection of after-matches. But he never let the smile fade from his yellow, gaped teeth, for he would never make light of his Lady's grace.

He scratched his dirty beard and praised the successful operation, letting out a hoarse laugh and slapping his right thigh, just above the wooden prosthesis that replaced half of his leg. The stench of his worn out clothes did justice to his nickname of “Drowned Cat.”

The scene repeats in a dark corner of the London docks, three years after his hanging. But his morbid pallor implicates a different outcome.

You know, old Surgeon, I do not curse my luck. I do not complain about how everything ended. I knew what you would do. It was no surprise.

One shot, two, three.

Right in the chest, but Phill did not fall.

But Surgeon ...

“it was no
surprise” is very
different from “I
did not hold a
grudge.”

Three more shots followed three steps back, jaded eyes focused on the one-legged sailor. Suddenly, the wood cracked under his feet and Charles felt himself sinking like a ship crashing down. In a corner of his mind, he wondered how deep the bottom would be – and why he had chose to wear his heaviest cloak.

**And the others are even angrier than me,
since they blame you for their luck.**

Echoing the doomed sentence, Charles's world went pitch black.

One day that Silver will show up here too, and then I...

Old John had a gallant ship, and all the hookers on the docks...

Until a quick rope made John drop the knots...

With eyes closed, Charles could hear the pirates' blabbering, the bad music and the smell of the sea mixed with the cheap perfume of prostitutes. On land, their bunch was nothing more than troublemakers of the worst kind, causing all sorts of problems and reminding him he lived among society's outcasts, regardless of his higher education.

But thanks to this, I can do my work free from unnecessary moralisms. It's the price to pay for scientific progress... But... What's wrong with this bed, worse than usual....

He moved his shoulders, slightly grimacing and opening one eye. The blurs seemed to deceive his senses, but when he found himself fully alert, he still doubted the scene in front of him.

Groups of pirates were gambling, drinking, courting and arguing, what would be completely expected – except for the fact some were rotting, others were skeletons with torn clothes, the floor and objects were made of old bones and the bottles were filled with sand, not booze. The atmosphere stale like a cloud of rotting meat did not bother the creatures, who continued to sing without paying attention to the terrified newcomer kneeling on the edge of a sea with no waves.

Charles stood up stunned at the bizarre environment swirling around him. His cloak and top hat had disappeared, changed to a plain white shirt and black pants. Leather boots had replaced his polished shoes and his long ponytail was falling on his shoulder; he recognized with disgust that everything was too similar to his time working on the open sea.

“What... is this...? Where... am... I...?”

“Where else could you be?”

Despite having buried it deep in his mind along with everything he considered unworthy, Charles would recognize that voice in any circumstances.

To his own dismay, he looked to the side and met a pirate taller and stronger than him with arms open in excessive cordiality. His pompous captain's figure did not have anything abnormal about him... however, a hangman noose was casually placed around his neck.

**“Welcome to London, old friend!
Our London!”**

“I know! I was there!”

BWAHUA BWAHUA BWAHUA!

“It’s been a while, huh, Atkins... But I haven’t forgotten... It’s stupid turnin’ your back on the past, ain’t it? It’s like...”

He approached the physician, now too shocked to process so many absurdities at once. But when the captain's face was too close and transfigured into a hideous skull, his sense of danger seemed to reawaken.

“... it's like turning your back on a pirate,
don't you agree, pest surgeon???”

Unable to hold back a horrified scream, Charles started running through the unknown landscape under the loud vengeful laughter.

[illegible]

So hoarse and loud that it could be compared to the laughter of a insane tuberculosis patient. Countless victims of Captain G. Mortimer had it as their funeral march before thrown into the sea, cut down by swords, pierced by bullets... or meeting an even more sinister fate in the depths of his ship.

I don't care what kind of heresy you do in your basement, Atkins, as long as my subordinates don't die from any dumb cough. And you know what? I actually like the idea of threatening pests with a pat from your scalpel. Very effective... and fun!

BWAHUABWAHUABWAHU
BWAHUABWAHUABWAHU
BWAHUABWAHUABWAHU
BWAHUABWAHUABWAHU!

So characteristic of Mortimer was his sadistic laugh that his own funeral march could not be anything else. It had left with him at the moment of his hanging, like a legacy. Or a curse.

Feeling the power of this curse crushing his mind, the physician ran with no aim.

The presence of skeletons and corpses moving in a sordid turmoil was nothing compared to the whispers of his own conscience: the words of the unlucky one-legged man, the laughter of the sadistic captain and the curses left by the damned of the past mixed in a whirlwind of hatred and mockery.

Run to your heart's content.

The turmoil in his ears faded out until only Mortimer's cynical whisper remained, capable of shrinking the pride of the most snobbish physician.

The smell of salt and blood we exhale
leads us to the same inescapable dock.

Indeed. There is no way out.

Of course. After so many sins
committed by your scalpel...

Speaking of the devil, it's still
there, ain't it?

Charles suddenly felt the weight of the small blade in his pocket. The tool for his technical skill, which he handled with grace and precision like a part of his own body.

That's all you have left.

The friendly voice was right. Why insist on the ordeal?

He smiled.

The cold touch of silver between his fingers, he realized, was the only affection he knew. From a lonely childhood designed to fulfill expectations to a brilliant youth committing his whole self to a single objective.

Against the kindest assumptions, there had been no key moment, no trigger, no gotcha or trauma to blame for the enthusiasm turned into obsession; only a slow and continuous process that had completely impregnated his mind and soul.

Now that the cold blade was touching his neck and fragments of memory were calmly dissipating, he was sure of it. Not that it made any difference, because soon everything would disappear, from the first dissected puppy in the attic to the last entry in his diary.

“The corpse of the pirate Percy Dickson revealed an ingenious surprise during the autopsy.”

Indeed... he had digged Percy's body more than necessary.

But why again?

Anxiety eerily similar to a lucid dream filled the void, doubts coming back along with a terrible fear. He needed to overcome that. All of that. He needed to focus on the reason.

There was something in his pocket besides the scalpel.

The echoes of words written somewhere in the past guided his hand until he touched the roughness of old paper.

The hand at his neck relaxed, dropping the silver blade sprinkled with blood. So far he had barely felt the pressure on his own throat, but now the small cut throbbed enough to shake his instinct of self-preservation.

“...worrying about livelihood in old age is a matter of the living only.”

and I am still alive.

He took a deep breath and unfolded the map he had reproduced earlier – many years ago or yesterday? It didn't matter at all.

The treasure of Percy Dickson hidden on the depths of the docks. It is my goal, and it doesn't matter if it is beyond hell; for hell is nothing new to me. I have come too far to cower now.

Yes, he had betrayed Mortimer's crew. He had lied to them and to the government about his true intentions and lived when he should have died, getting an illegitimate position based on shrewd lies.

... so what?

A pleased sneer slowly came to his face. Shielded by the obsession that had guided his entire life, Charles Atkins could walk with his chest full among equally lost souls.

**You
deserved it,
dumbasses.**

“A place? You said you remember a place? A specific point, marked on a map and all? A map that came with you?”

“I see you memorized my words well, given how precisely you repeated each one.” Charles replied with a touch of irony to the sailor laying on a rotting cider barrel. He held his dusty mug in the air, staring at the physician with a sprinkle of curiosity.

“Well, it’s the first time I’ve seen someone with such a strong memory around here. If it’s so important, you better hurry before it disappears, savvy?” He downed the mug in one gulp, sipping the sand that soon slid down his exposed ribs. “Something like this can only be solved by the Queen.”

“And do you have a Queen?” Charles raised an eyebrow, more intrigued with a pirate respecting the Queen than with the chances of her actually existing in such a place.

“This is London, my friend! Of course there’s the Queen!” He spread his arms and let out a hoarse, mocking laugh, as if that was way too obvious to say.

“Whatever. I’m in a hurry anyway, and if that’s what I need... where can I find her?”

“Easy. Look for the bowing heads.” He pointed in a direction with his rotten finger. “You’ll recognize it the moment you see it.”

Seeing the decomposing pirate had given all of his useful information, Charles turned away to walk towards the enigmatic lead. He could feel his own skin peeling off and his pulse slowing down, increasing his sense of urgency.

He needed to get out of this London before it was too late for his body.

Impossible to know how far he had walked or where he was exactly when an unexpected silence fell on the place. Little by little, the shapeless figures around stopped their chaotic activities and turned in one direction, falling to their knees with unbelievable synchrony.



GOD SAVE THE QUEEN

"OH, BUT I DO NOT KNOW THIS ONE!"

Still focused on the strange phenomenon, the physician did not notice the shrill female voice addressing him, the only one still standing. When he looked up, he saw a large, pregnant female figure, wearing a tattered nobility attire and a tangled black wig. She stared at him with empty eyes swirling with madness, carrying a baby in rags in her arms and having nine cadaverous children of different ages clinging to her skirts.

“And ain’t it really the Queen?”

Finding himself somewhere between astonishment, fascination and insanity, Charles couldn't help but smile and bow deeply, as tradition and good manners dictated. After all, he was still a physician to the Queen.

“What’s wrong with that impertinent worm? Actin’ like a wet dog before the Queen!”

A hoarse voice suddenly thundered across the air and a slap hit Charles's neck, making him fall to his knees on the gritty ground. In an instant, a rough hand was grabbing him by the collar and he could take a look at the sudden attacker. Although rotten like the others, his eyes still had a wild spark in the bearded face, and his smell of sea and blood was so strong that it stood out even in the atmosphere impregnated with cursed odors.

“EDWARD, MY DEAR, ITS JUST A BEWILDERED YOUNG MAN, YES? LET IT GO, LET IT GO.”

The Queen's calm comment made the violent pirate let go of the physician, shoving him back on the ground and standing beside her. Charles then could see six more children following him and joining the others at the monarch's skirts.

“NOW, NOW, YOUNG MAN, WHY ARE YOU IN SUCH A HURRY IN THIS LONDON WHERE TIME DOES NOT MATTER?”

Noticing that only the extreme paleness betrayed the Queen's real condition, Charles clenched his fists and gauged all his determination. Perhaps the long stay in that purgatory was disturbing his mind, but his intuition screamed that, if there was a way out, the woman in front of him held that answer and no one else.

“If this is London and Her Majesty is the glorious Queen Anne of Great Britain, the old docks will be somewhere, and finding them is what I need more than anything in the world!”

The Queen gasped, raising a ragged fan to her face.

"OH, WELL! IF THERE IS STILL A PLACE FOR YOU TO GO, THIS IS NOT YOUR LAST STOP, CHILD."

As the fan closed, the children and Edward moved away, the noises ceased and everything seemed to disappear around the physician, except for the madame's empty eyes. His sight blurred as she raised her arm and puffed her chest with authority.

**"YOU HAVE MY PERMISSION TO LEAVE
LONDON, SURGEON AND CON ARTIST
CHARLES ATKINS!"**

The order hit Charles like an explosion, and once again he felt the ground disappear beneath his feet in an endless descend. The Queen's smile and words were lost in a fleeting mist, as was the notion that he had not mentioned any names or motivations in the quick conversation.

**"IF THE WEIGHT YOU CARRY DOES NOT BRING YOU BACK, THE MERIT IS ALL
YOURS."**

A light and rhythmic rocking movement like one of a mother's arms gradually took over his senses. However, instead of the characteristic gentle warmth, a stinging cold shiver forced his body to move abruptly. In addition, the smell of iron was bothersome enough to revive unpleasant echoes.

The smell of sea and blood we exhale...

The damned words were the impulse Charles needed to jolt forward in the next moment. His blurred vision gradually cleared, and the sharp pain in the back of his head finally brought him back to reality.

Everything seemed to make sense now. His soaked clothes were a cheap price to pay for the logical explanation he found: he had tripped in the dark and hit his head, falling unconscious in the gutter for a few minutes and smearing the water with some blood from a small wound. Despite the soreness due the uncomfortable position, the map was safe in his pocket and that was all that mattered. He smiled, feeling victorious for no clear reason.

*Perhaps it was a tumultuous dream and nothing more.
Although I certainly won in the end.*

Satisfied, he retrieved his top hat and the lantern that had fallen on the bridge, blending into the lonely darkness of the docks.

Maybe fainting in the cold water is giving me a slight fever...

Following the map's lines and overcoming the dizziness that grew with each step, he did not expect to discover such unpredictable paths leading to an old and forgotten ship, where a large hole in the hull testified its forced retirement. For a moment he empathized with it, a foolishness he blamed the fever for.

Here lies my final destination. I can swear to that.

He did not have to look too hard when he entered the hollow corpse of rotting wood. In a corner, the X marked on the map matched the top of a humble chest, that could be easily overlooked by anyone. How and why that location had been chosen by Percy was a fleeting curiosity in the physician's mind, that went away as soon as the weak seal was broken.

He would never have expected the possibility of a pirate hiding something so peculiar so carefully.

Between curiosity and disappointment, he grabbed the small glass bottle carefully wrapped in a scroll, that being the only content inside the chest. He carefully unrolled the small note, unsure if he would find the solution to the mystery or the beginning of another.

After a life of betraying, stealing and torturing, I have reached my last shore. But we know it can't be that much worse than the unsightly docks we are used to.

Now that you are tired of wandering aimlessly and your only legacy is the hatred of your enemies and unpaid debts, the day of your final escape has arrived. The exact dose for everything to end as it should, the way I chose. See you in hell, lucky gentleman.

*From me to myself,
somewhere in the past.*

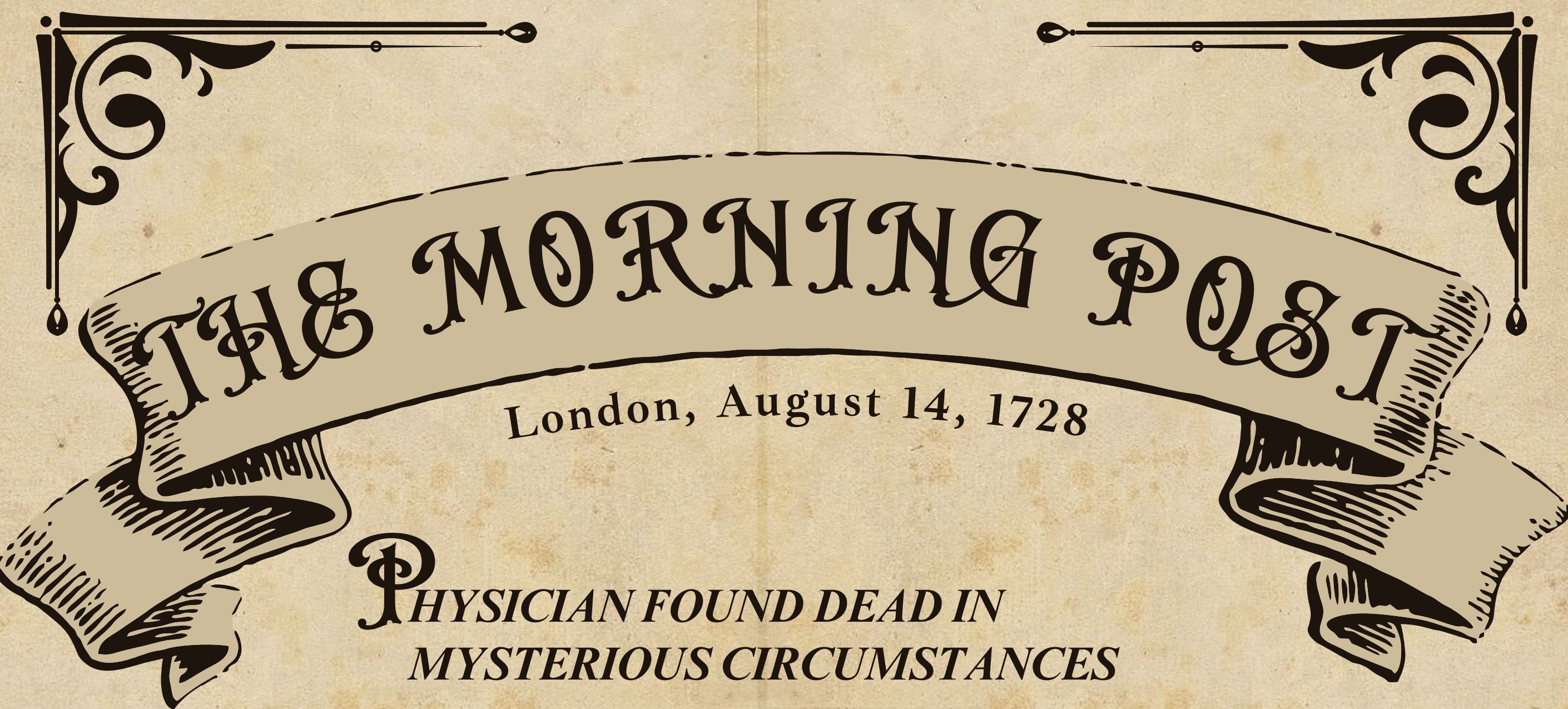
Despite the shaky handwriting, the paper contained truths that only alcohol can elucidate.

Charles stared peacefully at the greenish liquid he knew very well.

The name Percy-or-so meant nothing. It is absurd to believe that a low-ranking sailor would have thought of a plan so refined to begin with.

Maybe he hadn't even existed in the first place. Whatever.

That was a strategy only fitting of the surgeon and con artist Charles Atkins.



PHYSICIAN FOUND DEAD IN MYSTERIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

Charles Atkins, Physician appointed for royal service, was found dead in the morning by the first sailors to arrive at the docks. Investigating the excessive amount of rats in the ruins of a ship (which is awaiting official approval to be definitively destroyed), they came across the poor physician's body. The evidence points to suicide, although the open chest and the map found in his pocket are suspicious objects.

The case of Charles Atkins became known a few years ago, when he was responsible for the capture and death of the gang of pirates by whom he was kidnapped. He used his intelligence in favor of good and justice, deceiving the brutes and guiding them to Navy ships from which they could not escape.

Atkins acted honorably in court, ensuring the hanging of the entire group of the terrible Captain Mortimer, thus obtaining a well-deserved royal pardon and the possibility of practicing his craft with dignity for the benefit of the country.

This is a mystery that the Justice system will strive to solve, given the mysterious circumstances and the doubts as to whether there are crimes involved. At this time, an examination is being carried out at the physician's residence.



“Damned Low, a thousand times! Old Phill can't do it alone...”

Sitting on a barrel, the one-legged pirate clumsily tried to wear his rustic and rotten prosthesis, indifferent to the singing of the skeletons around him and the march of the Queen and her Children. But suddenly something seemed to catch his attention enough to divert him from the task... and he smiled broadly with yellow and gaping teeth when he saw who was approaching.

“Ah! Look who arrived just in time!”

A man in worn and torn pirate clothes, long black hair tied in a red bow and a vacant expression on his sunken face stopped in front of Phill, holding a rusty scalpel.

“I took a little longer than the others... But I'm here.”

“Welcome to London, surgeon! Old Phill needs you! Bwahuahua!”

***The pirate songs continued to
sing impossible stories, fading
in the horizon.***

THE END

Author's words

Hello! Thank you for reading this far.

This is an old story that I reread and decided to experiment with layout and typography to tell the story in a different way.

I hope you enjoyed it!

All images, fonts and textures are free resources from Canva itself.

I invite you to check out my personal website where I share and publish my original creations and offer my services:

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Brasil, 2025.