“***Bloodstains***”: a ***Whitechapel*** ***Jack*** review

or after reading it, ”How H.H. Holmes gave me a brain tumor”.

***The Holmes Diaries***

Jeff Mudgett claims that he inherited two diaries from his grandfather, and after expert handwriting analysis, determined H.H. Holmes had authored them. He includes long transcriptions from these diaries, though without the inclusion of photocopies. Excerpts Mudgett includes detail several of Holmes’ murders, a prurient story of his childhood rape by a priest, and the story of his escape from prison and his staged execution. That’s right. In addition to claiming to know the identity of Jack the Ripper, Mudgett also asserts that H.H. Holmes tricked someone into going to the gallows in his place and went on to live a long life in the shadows. Mudgett posits that, according to the diaries, his great-great-grandfather was present in London with one of his assistants (a literal partner-in-crime) during the Whitechapel Murders. According to Mudgett, the diaries describe “training sessions” between Holmes and his assistant. The man was instructed to murder prostitutes and excessively mutilate their bodies in order to cause a sensation in the country. Holmes’ intent here was to distract from his own murders and sexual-organ harvest of upper class women. Rich women’s ovaries would supposedly have healthier hormones in them to aid in Holmes’ pursuit of a youth serum that would allow him to live an unnaturally long life. There is a certain logic to Mudgett’s theory about Holmes’ role in the Ripper killings. Objections to Holmes’ candidacy as a Ripper suspect include the difference in M.O. between the methodical Holmes and the almost hysterical sexual sadism of the Ripper. Mudgett’s theory, however, makes it so that the mutilations were a deliberate forensic countermeasure to throw people off Holmes’ trail and accomplished by a different hand (though under Holmes’ direction). Unfortunately, in the opinion of this reviewer, the melodramatic tone of [Bloodstains](https://whitechapeljack.com/bloodstains-by-jeff-mudgett) calls the credibility of Mudgett’s story into question. It is undeniably over the top, though Mudgett does beg forgiveness from the reader preemptively during the introduction. “Be patient with my sometimes struggling writing. Remember, there were no ghost-writers involved with the creation of Bloodstains—just a ghost.” Patience is also necessary to withstand the long rambling segments in which Mudgett describes hallucinations of Holmes’ ghost. Coincidentally, around the same time Mudgett inherited the diaries, he also inherited the murderer’s arrogant and demanding spirit. He literally sees his great-great-grandfather’s face and hears the man’s voice in his head, trying to convince Mudgett to become a killer as well. Doctors explain the hallucinations, attributing them to an equally coincidental development of a brain tumor and periodic life-threatening seizures. The illness threatens Mudgett’s life throughout the story, and at one point he is given a terminal diagnosis. The tumor also miraculously dissipates around the same time that Mudgett solves a few personal mysteries surrounding his ancestry. The Ripper theory presented in Bloodstains is probably the least absurd part of the story, and though it has been the major takeaway for many reviewers, plays a very small part in the scope of the book. The entertainment value of [Bloodstains](https://whitechapeljack.com/bloodstains-by-jeff-mudgett) may appeal to some Ripperologists. Anyone searching for physical evidence and critical analysis, however, will likely be frustrated with the read and should stick to Mudgett’s TED (*Technology, Entertainment, Design, a media organization posting online discussions of ‘ideas worth spreading’*) talk.

 

 Jeff Mudgett