

The Moonstone (Wilkie Collins) – episode 15

Franklin Blake went up to Yorkshire to see Dr Candy, but the sick old man could remember nothing of the night of the birthday. Ezra Jennings, Candy's assistant, took notes of things the Dr said during his delirium, and it would seem that the doctor gave Franklin opium that night, so that he took the diamond under the influence of the drug. Ezra and Franklin plan a reconstruction with witnesses.

FOURTH NARRATIVE

From the Diary of Ezra Jennings

1849 - June 15th. Terrible pain all day. I wrote a letter to Miss Verinder.

June 16th - Woke late after a terrible night - yesterday's opium produced awful nightmares. A return of the pain at dawn. It was late morning before I could visit Mr Blake. He had had a very restless night. 'Exactly what happened last year when I gave up smoking!' he complained. I advised him to get some fresh air.

He told me he had written to Mr Bruff, his lawyer. I left him to go and see my patients, feeling oddly happy. I feel such a contrast between the way this charming young man treats me and the merciless distrust of everyone else. Everyone except poor Dr Candy, of course. I owe him everything.

June 17th - In the night, Death came whispering around my bed again. Miss Verinder's reply arrived in the morning. A charming letter! She sees no need for the experiment, saying my letter is proof enough for her that Mr Blake is innocent. She even blames herself for not having suspected some kind of trick before! Nevertheless, she asks me to tell him that we have her permission to use the house for the experiment. She has written to Mr Betteredge, asking him to prepare the house, and even offers to be one of the witnesses. I believe she wants to be there to tell him, before he goes through with the experiment, that she loves him and that there is no need to prove himself. She declares that she has always loved him, even during the last year. Is it possible that you, Ezra Jennings, before you go, may bring these two fine young people back together?

Two o'clock — Mr Blake's condition is the same: a night of broken sleep, loss of appetite, nervousness. I told him everything he needed to know about Miss Verinder's reply. 'She agrees simply out of common politeness!' he replied. 'But she keeps her own opinion.'

Five o'clock — I have written to Miss Verinder.

June 18th — More horrible pain in the early morning. I had to return to the opium for the hundredth time. It was one o'clock before I could drag myself to the hotel. Mr Betteredge was with Mr Blake when I arrived. Mr Blake had slept badly again. He had received a letter from Mr Bruff, saying he totally disapproves of the experiment, and that he could see better magic shows in London. But Mr Blake was determined to go through with the experiment. I discussed the preparations with Mr Betteredge. It isn't going to be easy — the house has been shut up for a year.

June 19th - A letter from Miss Verinder, agreeing to my arrangements.

June 20th — Mr Blake was extremely nervous — he is now continually restless at night. Sergeant Cuff wrote to him from Ireland saying that because

of Lady Verinder's generosity towards him he agrees to help Mr Franklin in any way he can. I advised him to inform the Sergeant of everything that had happened and invite him to be present during the experiment.

June 21st — Mr Blake has had his worst night yet.

June 22nd — The house will be ready tomorrow. There is nothing to do now except wait until Monday and watch Mr Blake carefully. I was glad to hear that Mr Bruff has agreed to come. He is strongly against the experiment and therefore will be a valuable witness. If we convince him we can convince anyone.

June 24th — Mr Blake and I went for a drive today. The fresh air calmed both our nerves. I had more terrible pain last night.

June 25th. Monday — At last! The day of the experiment.

Seven o'clock — We're now going to eat. After dinner I'm going to make conversation about the Moonstone. When I've filled his mind with it I'll give him the first dose. My notes inform me that Dr Candy gave him forty drops - quite a large amount.

Ten o'clock — Miss Verinder and Mr Bruff arrived together an hour ago. She was shocked, of course, by my appearance, but she hid it better than most. 'I can't treat you like a stranger, Mr Jennings,' she said warmly. 'Your letters have made me so happy.' I felt a wave of pleasure go through me. 'Where is he now?' she asked. I told her I had already accompanied him to his room. She went straight to hers. I went upstairs to Mr Blake.

'When are you going to give me the opium?' he asked. It was not yet ten o'clock. Dr Candy could not have possibly given him the dose before eleven. I told him I would keep him company until then. We talked for a while and now I sit writing while he reads. It is now nearly eleven. I'm so excited that not even the pain affects me!

Two o'clock a.m. — The experiment is now over. This is what happened. At eleven I rang the bell for Betteredge and told Mr Blake to get ready for bed. Betteredge and I went and knocked on Mr Bruff's bedroom door. I asked the lawyer to be present when I prepared the opium, and then remain with us in Mr Blake's room. He agreed reluctantly, saying he had more important things to do, making a show of gathering up his legal papers. We then went to see Miss Verinder.

She was pale and restless, striding up and down. She asked me how he was, how long the opium would take to work. I said roughly an hour. She agreed to wait in her bedroom, exactly as before. I measured out the dose, mixed it with water, then got out the piece of glass that was to be the diamond. She showed me the drawer to put it in. Betteredge and Bruff witnessed everything. We then left Miss Verinder and returned to Mr Blake. They saw me give him the dose and tell him to lie down and wait. We sat down to wait with him. I encouraged Mr Blake to talk to me, always bringing the conversation back to the diamond. We talked about bringing it from London, the Indians, putting it in the bank in Fritzinghall, taking it out again. Little by little the opium began to do its work. His eyes began to shine, sweat appeared on his forehead. Gradually his talk lost its sense. Finally, he became silent. Then suddenly he sat up in bed. Tea minutes passed. Nothing happened. He began to talk to himself.

At twenty past twelve he put one leg out of bed and said, 'I wish I'd never taken it out of the bank. The Indians may be hidden in the house. How can I

sleep? — the diamond isn't even locked up.' He got up, then — to my surprise — lay down again. I had a horrible feeling the experiment had failed, but then he slowly got up again. We waited, hidden behind the curtains. He crossed the room, opened the door and went out.

We followed him along the corridor. Without looking back, he went straight to Miss Verinder's rooms, opened her sitting-room door and went in. He went to the middle of the room and looked round him. The door of Miss Verinder's bedroom was slightly open. I could see the dim outline of her white dress just inside.

After a minute he went to the Indian cabinet, opened drawers and found the diamond. He took it out and stood still again.

What would he do next? Would he leave the room and show us what he did with the diamond when he had returned to his mom? No. He let the diamond drop out of his hand. It fell by the door, visible to him and to us. For a long time he looked down at it emptily, until suddenly his head sank down on to his chest. It was too late. The calming action of the drug had begun.

'It's all over,' I said. 'He'll probably sleep for the next six hours.' We gathered around him. 'He can sleep here on the sofa,' Miss Verinder said. 'I'll watch over him.' We placed him on the sofa, and for the rest of the night she and I kept watch over him in silence. Towards six I felt my pain coming back and made an excuse to leave the room. Luckily, it was not a long attack, and I was soon able to return.

It is now eight o'clock. He will soon wake up. I am going to leave them alone together.

Eleven o'clock — The house is empty again. They all went back to London by the ten o'clock train.

Mr Blake will write and tell me what happens in London.

Miss Verinder has invited me to stay here in the autumn when they return — for their marriage, no doubt. My patients are waiting so I must hurry.

FIFTH NARRATIVE

The story continued by Franklin Blake

I woke that morning ignorant of what I had said or done after the drug first took effect. I opened my eyes and looked into Rachel's.

When we arrived in London, a boy called Gooseberry met Bruff at the station. After listening to him, Bruff said he had to leave immediately on important business. He pulled me to a taxi and told the driver to hurry to Lombard Street. 'News of Luker,' he said. 'He was seen leaving his house accompanied by two policemen in plain clothes.'

Gooseberry came into the crowded bank with us. Two men came up to Bruff as soon as we entered. 'Have you seen him?' asked the lawyer. They said Luker had arrived half an hour ago and gone into an inner office. 'Let's wait then,' Bruff said.

I couldn't see any Indians anywhere. 'They must have a spy here,' Bruff said. Gooseberry pulled on his coat. Luker was leaving an office with his two guards. 'Watch him,' Bruff whispered. 'If he passes the stone to anyone he will do it here.' Luker went straight to the door without noticing us. In the crowd I saw his hand move suddenly as he passed a short, fat man. At the

door his guards placed themselves on either side of him.

They left, followed closely by one of Bruff's men.

I pointed out the man to Bruff. 'Did you see anything?' I said. He shook his head. Neither Bruff's second man nor Gooseberry were anywhere to be seen. 'What do we do now?' I asked.

'Come back to my office and wait,' he replied. Bruff's second man was waiting there when we arrived. 'I'm sorry, sir,' he said. 'I was sure I saw him pass something to an elderly gentleman. It turns out he's a respectable doctor in Westminster.'

Bruff asked him where Gooseberry was. He didn't know.

As we were having supper at Bruff's office, the man who followed Luker returned. Luker had gone straight home and not gone out again. His guards had left later. 'He would never have sent them home if he had the stone,' said Bruff. The house was being carefully watched. There had been no sign of the Indians.

We waited until it was time for Bruff to go home. I returned to Rachel, leaving my address in case the boy returned.

When I got home after midnight my servant informed me that Gooseberry had called. He would return early the next day.