

L O R E

Burke and Hare: In the Name of Science

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Based on the podcast Lore

By

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A loud THUD stops his descent.

A splintered wooden coffin digs into his shoulder. BLOOD spurts out.

As the earth settles, the guard peers into the coffin.

It's empty.

GUARD (CONT'D)
(horrified)
What?

As he reaches again for his whistle --

4

INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNEL - DAWN

4

Streaks of a dirt track lead up to a grunting, hulking MAN, SHOLTO MACDONALD, 42, portly, covered in red hair, hands caked in dirt, fingernails black as soot, in the shadows, dragging a large mass. Almost zombie-like.

The sound of ripping fabric, then reveal --

A DEAD BODY, its clothes tearing on the ground beneath it. The hulking man pulls the corpse free.

A whistle SCREAMS in the distance.

He smiles. OFF this --

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

4A **MAP ANIMATION SEQUENCE** 4A

Zoom through a map animation of 1820's Scotland --

5 **EXT. EDINBURGH - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING** 5

CHYRON - EDINBURGH, SCOTLAND. 1827. The center of medical sciences and research.

Two streets. Perfect examples of the slums of Edinburgh.

6 **INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT** 6

A run down tenement. Barely lit with wallpaper peeling.

CHYRON - NOVEMBER 29th, 1827

WILLIAM BURKE, 35, dark Irish, weathered and DRUNK, KICKS open the door from his flat and enters.

BURKE

Whisky --

WILLIAM HARE, 28, unkempt, bearded. On the surface he's calmer than Burke, but underneath is a boiling furnace. He comes out of his adjacent room, throwing his coat on.

BURKE (CONT'D)

The one damned thing this country does right. Because treatin' us Irish folk is definitely not on the list.

HARE

I'll drink to that.

BURKE

(arm around Hare)

From one second class immigrant to another!

They enter the hearth of the boarding house. Sitting in front of the fireplace is DONALD, 64, fat, old, grayed and vacant.

BURKE (CONT'D)

Oy, Donald, you want to join?

Donald doesn't answer.

HARE

Dooooonald?

Burke nudges Donald, who grunts, barely conscious.

BURKE

Look who got a head-start. We'll be
back Donny boy. But for now?
Whisky.

CUT TO:

7

INT. WHITE HART INN - NIGHT

7

A smoke-blanketed local watering hole. A raucous fiddle and tin whistle scream over the yell-singing and laughing.

Burke and Hare walk through nodding to the other regulars.

BURKE

Must be Padraig's Day.

CHYRON: St. Padraig's Day; Noun. Irish Holiday: Lá Fhéile Pádraig, "The Day of the Festival of Patrick" March 17th.

HARE

It's November.

BURKE

My point. There must be some reason
for the party.

HARE

There's no reason to need a reason.

BURKE

Well said.

In the middle of the bar, DAFT JAMIE, 18, over 6ft tall -- a sweet faced, mentally challenged young man with a club-foot -- dances a jig with a pint of milk sloshing about in his hand.

HARE

(ironically)
Little fella sure can move his...
foot.

Hare takes out his whittling KNIFE and current project, a detailed rabbit. Burke comes back with drinks.

BURKE

Whittles at a pub. I imagine the
ladies love you for your big knife.

Hare, tempered but angry, points, with his knife, at Sholto raising a pint.

SHOLTO

(to Jamie)

A cheer for the wee lad Jamie --

(the crowd CHEERS)

A cheer for all! Enjoy this round.

(awkward regal bow)

Courtesy of yours truly.

The crowd erupts, CHANTING HIS NAME. Burke included... but not Hare. Burke nudges him with raised eyebrows --

HARE

That Sholto -- out here buying the house drinks...

BURKE

Bless him.

HARE

Bit of a slap in the face, innit? He owes me eleven shillings.

BURKE

It's free. All that matters --

HARE

Eleven shillings.

BURKE

For what?

HARE

He's not great at cards.

BURKE

Well he's right there, isn't he?

Hare stands up, KNIFE in hand and heads over. Burke SLAMS his pint down on the table and follows.

ANGLE ON: MOMENTS LATER - SHOLTO

Slammed against the wall, a blade inches from his eyeballs.

HARE

Eleven shillings, you great cow.

SHOLTO

Was it that much?

HARE

Eleven shillings. Or one.

SHOLTO

One what?

HARE

One cut, right through yer eye.

Sholto pulls out a huge wad of pounds. Way more than eleven.

BURKE

(re: the cash)

Plus interest, for my friend's suffering. Or maybe he'll slice you up anyway?

SHOLTO

No, No... please.

(then)

If you'll indulge me gentlemen, I have a business proposition that will make this look a pittance.

(looks around)

But, in private please.

8

INT. WHITE HART INN - BOOTH - LATER

8

As the dancing and singing goes on, Sholto fills them in --

SHOLTO

-- and all in the name of science.

Hare is ignoring this conversation and whittling away.

BURKE

Until you get caught.

SHOLTO

A corpse technically isn't property so we're not stealing. Legally speaking, it's just --

HARE

(not looking up)

Trespassing.

SHOLTO

That's why we get creative. If they set up watchtowers, we go under.

HARE

Tunnels.

SHOLTO

Exactly.

A grin of rotted teeth, impressed with himself.

SHOLTO (CONT'D)

The doctors in Surgeon's Square pay for every body, no matter the condition. You see, they're on a race to cure all the diseases and they need bodies to study. Robert Knox, he's my doc on the inside.

BURKE

And you're cutting us in because...

SHOLTO

Let's start with the knife.

HARE

Fair point. And?

SHOLTO

And my crew ain't the responsible types. Don't always show up. Need two I can count on, right?

BURKE

Ok. Where and when?

SHOLTO

Two hours. Charity Workhouse.

BURKE

The whorehouse?

SHOLTO

That's the charity.
(more slimy teeth)
I'm off there now.

He SLAMS 15 shillings on the table.

SHOLTO (CONT'D)

For the debt. And the drinks.

Burke takes them. Hare lowers his knife. It's a deal.

9

INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - LATER

9

Burke is bundled up for the fierce Scottish weather. Hare walks into the foyer in just a long sleeve shirt.

HARE

Grave robbing... Is that what it's come to, then? Digging the dead out of the ground.

BURKE

They're dead. They've no opinion.
(beat)

(MORE)

BURKE (CONT'D)

We can make more workin' one night
in the ground than six months on
the docks, and you're afraid of
what? The magistrate?

HARE

The magistrate. And the Good Lord.

BURKE

Good Lord. Let God have his go in
Heaven, let me handle things here,
in the actual earth, all right?

HARE

We can't just go and steal a body--

They turn the corner and realize that Donald, still sitting
next to the fireplace, has been listening the entire time.

HARE (CONT'D)

...er, theoretically...

Covering, albeit weakly.

BURKE

Donald?

No response.

HARE

Donald? You okay there, mate?

Hare pokes him. No response. Donald is dead.

BURKE

Oh Christ. Poor fella.

HARE

(it dawns on him)
How long has he been dead?

BURKE

Long enough, I suppose.
(then)
With no family to speak of.

HARE

We should get him to the hospital.

BURKE

Yes, we should.
(then)
Or to a Surgeon.

They walk up to Donald. Burke gently closes Donald's eyes --
Hare realizes Burke's plan.

BURKE (CONT'D)
For a small fee, of course.
(then)
In the name of science.

10 **EXT. SURGEON'S SQUARE - DAWN**

10

A rusted steel door with a plaque labeled *ROBERT KNOX; MEDICAL LECTURER; FRSE - FRCSE - MWS.*

Burke and Hare stand at the door with a rickety wooden cart containing a large load barely covered by a filthy blanket.

Hare nervously looks around.

HARE
Is this the one? We can't be
knocking on wrong doors all
morning.

BURKE
Relax, it says *KNOX* right there.

Burke goes to knock... but before he makes contact the door
CREAKS open.

Three STUDENTS, 20s, in stylish suits covered by faded,
stained aprons stand in the entryway. They don't say a word.

Burke, enterprising.

BURKE (CONT'D)
Umm... Sholto Macdonald sent us?

Silently, they wave Burke and Hare, and their cargo, inside.
The door slams behind them.

11 **INT. KNOX OPERATING THEATRE - MORNING**

11

This is an 1827 operating theatre. Key word: THEATRE. The
operating table is angled so that the audience can see every
cut of flesh and drip of blood.

ROBERT KNOX, 34, bald, driven, surgical and enamored with his
thoughts, waves the students to put the rotund corpse of
Donald on the table.

The body flops onto the plank. Knox inspects it. Impressed.

Methodically, silently, the students cut through Donald's
tatters with clothing shears.

KNOX

Not a speck of dirt.
(sniffs it)
No rot, beyond the alcohol that I'm
sure all of you have had.

He gently caresses Donald's hair. Touches his skin, which is
a bit swollen around his joints.

KNOX (CONT'D)

The world in Scotland is different
from what you lads are used to in
Dublin.

BURKE

Sorry... sir, I'm from Urney.

KNOX

Dublin. Urney. Cork. You're all the
same over there aren't you.

Hare looks annoyed, but Burke nods to Knox to keep going.

KNOX (CONT'D)

Scotland's place in the world
depends on the advances we make for
our humble audiences right here in
this operating theatre.

With a flourish of his hands towards the empty stands he
grabs a small silver pointer and pokes a hole in Donald's
thigh. Yellow pus Oozes.

Burke gags a bit. Hare doesn't flinch.

KNOX (CONT'D)

Dropsy. Delicious. You see, you may
not have medicine in *Dublin*, which
is one reason that you all run here
like loose foxes. But we do. And a
body like this will get us closer
to curing a condition like...

Knox pokes the hole a little more. More pus.

KNOX (CONT'D)

...This.
(to the students)
You, boy... bottle this up and then
give these men seven pound and
fourteen shillings.

Burke is no longer sick to his stomach.

KNOX (CONT'D)

And gentlemen. If you have more in this pristine condition, I'll compensate you more than adequately.

Knox EXITS. Burke eyes open wide and he grins.

Off Donald's corpse.

BURKE

Pristine.

12

INT. WHITE HART INN - NIGHT

12

The pub is RAUCOUS. The music blaring and Burke, flush with cash is living it up. Hare sits in his usual booth, whittling away. Burke is handing out pints, left and right.

Sholto approaches Burke --

SHOLTO

Ya screwed me last night. Thought I could count on you and --

BURKE

Fat man, here, have a pint.
(hands him a pint)
Apologies for the no-show, but as the Lord is my witness, we didn't resurrect a single soul last night.

SHOLTO

Then where'd you get the money?

Burke offers another pint. Sholto begrudgingly takes it.

BURKE

Donald.

Then Burke offers one to Daft Jamie. Daft Jamie doesn't really speak, smiles and motions he doesn't like alcohol.

BURKE (CONT'D)

None? How do you live, boy?

Daft Jamie grabs his half empty glass of milk from the bar.

BURKE (CONT'D)

Well, then it's milk for you --
cheers to all you filthy Scots!

The crowd jumps and CHEERS.

SHOLTO
 (to Burke)
 Who the hell is Donald?

Burke pats him on the back again.

BURKE
 Was, good friend. Was.

13 **EXT. GRASSMARKET SQUARE - AFTERNOON**

13

Burke and Hare, viciously hungover, approach the local PUNCH and JUDY show. The crowd, Daft Jamie up front, is mesmerized.

CHYRON: PUNCH AND JUDY: TRADITIONAL, POPULAR, AND VIOLENT PUPPET SHOW WHOSE FIRST MODERN PERFORMANCE DATES BACK TO 1662 IN ENGLAND.

14 **DOC POD - PUNCH AND JUDY I**

14

PUNCH and JUDY, the classic puppets, entertain.

PUNCH
 Judy. Did you hear that if you get buried you may not meet yer maker?

JUDY
 Oh?

PUNCH
 Yesss, c'mere for a second.

Judy walks over. Punch punches her.

JUDY
 What was that for.

PUNCH
 I wanted to see what happened if I had to bury you.

JUDY
 I'll tell you, I'd be at rest and my soul would go to heaven.

PUNCH
 Hell.

JUDY
 Heaven.

Punch punches Judy.

JUDY (CONT'D)
 Hell.

Crowd laughs.

PUNCH
But some people...
(looks to the audience)
Won't get that pleasure.

JUDY
Oh?

PUNCH
Indeed. They're called
resurrectionists.

ANGLE ON HARE IN REALITY: Hare looks around guiltily, but the audience is laughing along... so Hare relaxes, and watches:

RESUME PUNCH AND JUDY SHOW:

JUDY
Re-za-wha?

PUNCH
Resurrectionists.

JUDY
Re-za...

Punch punches Judy.

PUNCH
(to audience)
Grave Robbers.

CHYRON: RESURRECTIONIST, noun: a person who exhumes and steals dead bodies, especially for dissection; body snatcher.

JUDY
Well why didn't you say that in the
first place?

PUNCH
I'm learn-ed. And you know what
else I learned? There's a massive
shortage of bodies for medical
research. No body is safe. They
come around, steal your body and
chop it up! For science!
(to audience)
They might even come looking for
you one day!

CROWD
Oooooohhh.

JUDY

*But why not just use all the dead
bodies that die from sickness?*

PUNCH

Ahh, good question. For a woman.

Crowd laughs.

PUNCH (CONT'D)

*The law prohibits any bodies other
than that of criminals being used.*

JUDY

So they can definitely use yours?

*Judy reaches from under and with one swift motion swings a
pan and knocks Punch right out. She drags him off.*

RESUME:

Hare watches with a big smile. Entertainment.

BURKE

Hey --
(grabs Hare's arm)
We have work to do.

Hare's smile disappears.

15

INT. WHITE HART INN - NIGHT

15

The pub is quieter compared to the previous nights. Burke and Hare sit in their booth, nursing pints.

BURKE

You seem quieter than normal. And
that's saying something.

HARE

I don't like it.

BURKE

The money?

HARE

Playing God.

BURKE

Billy, we're two Irish immigrants
in a pub on a Sunday afternoon when
most people are at church. There's
nothing God-like about ANY of this.

HARE

't isn't right.

The door to the pub SWINGS open. ABIGAIL SIMPSON, 42, a professional alcoholic, looking half dead, much like Donald once did, stumbles over to the bar and --

ABIGAIL
Something wet, if you would.

She starts to cough up a phlegm filled storm. Her eyes are dark red bloodshot, as snot drips from her nose. Advanced Tuberculosis. She wipes it off with her hand.

The INNKEEPER drops a pint in front of her. Avoiding contact.

INNKEEPER
Kindly keep all of your *consumption*
to yourself, dear.

Hare notices Burke intently staring. Nudges him.

CHYRON: CONSUMPTION, noun: a wasting disease, especially pulmonary tuberculosis. In the early 19th century, one in four deaths in the United Kingdom was due to "consumption."

BURKE
Don't know her. It ain't dropsy,
but she's still gotta be worth more
than the average, healthy whore.

He rocks to his feet and heads to the bar with his empty.

BURKE (CONT'D)
(re: her pint)
Wet enough?

ABIGAIL
(finishes it)
...Nope.

BURKE
Allow me to rectify that.

He waves to the Innkeeper to bring two more.

BURKE (CONT'D)
I'm William B--

ABIGAIL
Abigail. Simpson.

She sneeze/coughs a wad of bloody mucus onto Burke's coat.

BURKE
Nasty cough you've got. In this
cold, you could catch your death.

ABIGAIL
Ain't no cold, and you know it.

BURKE

My condolences then.

ABIGAIL

Not looking for condol... condol.
What you said.

BURKE

In that case, how about another?

He waves, the bartender drops two drinks in front of them.

Burke raises his glass. Smiles. Makes sure Hare sees it.

A SEQUENCE OF SHOTS: A PARADE OF BOOZE FROM BURKE TO HER.

-- SHOTS. Abigail coughs.

-- PINT. Abigail spits blood into the spittoon.

-- SHOTS. Abigail is almost unconscious.

RESUME SCENE

Abigail seizes up. Her eyes roll to the back of her head and she falls. SLAMMING her head into the side of the bar. BLOOD splatters everywhere. She is unconscious.

INNKEEPER

Boys, get her out of here before
she's a corpse.

BURKE

Wouldn't want that.

16

EXT. WHITE HART INN - NIGHT

16

The door swings open. Burke drags a now barely conscious Abigail outside. She slumps against a wall.

BURKE

Where did you say you lived?

ABIGAIL

(almost unintelligible)
The floor. I can find it myself.

She stumbles off, blood running down her head. She pauses, and slumps 15 feet away from Burke and Hare.

Hare turns to head back in. Burke grabs him.

BURKE

She's not gonna make it through the
night.

HARE

Night is hardly done, and neither
is she.

(realizes)

Is that what all that was for? All
the drinks, all the money you spent
on her --

BURKE

An investment.

(points at Abigail)

She's not going to make --

Hare looks to where Abigail USED to be.

HARE

So much for your investment.

BURKE

Shit.

Burke starts to walk in Abigail's direction.

HARE

Liam, come back here --

Burke stays the course. Resigned, Hare follows.

17

EXT. ALLEY / TUNNEL - NIGHT

17

Abigail lies unconscious on her side in the middle of the
dark alley. Snot, phlegm and blood cover her entire face.

BURKE

All but embalmed.

HARE

Yet still drawing breath.

Burke kneels next to her.

BURKE

Is she though?

He rolls her onto her back.

BURKE (CONT'D)

I could use a bit of help.

HARE

You've lost your mind.

BURKE

Seven pounds. You want to give that
up over this drunk? Now who's lost
his mind.

Hare's resolve weakens. It's a lot of money.

BURKE (CONT'D)
Next round is on me. Hold her
chest.

He smothers her face with his hands, snot and spit slather out from under his choke, pinching her nose and covering her mouth. And then...

Abigail suddenly comes to. She releases an unholy BELCH. Burke scrambles away, and Hare jumps back.

But just as suddenly, Abigail DIES.

HARE
The hell was all that?

BURKE
Science. Now, help me with it.

He means the body. Hare does. She's an *it* now.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO18 **INT. KNOX OPERATING THEATRE - NIGHT**

18

Like a slab of meat on a butcher block, Abigail's body is rolled onto the operating table, her head hitting with a THUD. Bruised, bloodied and still covered in snot and spit.

Burke waits as Hare fixes on the corpse. Her OPEN EYES. Then--

KNOX

What am I supposed to do with this?

Knox enters with his students, now FIVE INSTEAD OF THREE. All impeccably dressed with new aprons. Knox with a new suit.

BURKE

Her head is a bit mussed, but...
The rest? Totally clean. And fresh,
except for the...consumption bit,
which I assumed --

KNOX

-- Yes. But the face... no matter
how pristine the body is
underneath, a face like this is
what the students will look at
first, and they may not believe
that the body doesn't follow suit.
My previous samples, though
purchased at a discount, have left
me in fourth place in a three horse
race. This is all for research and
performance gentlemen. If I can't
show the body off to the rest of
the medical community, if I can't
perform with the best samples and
further my discoveries then

(points to students)

this lot will leave and go to a
competitor's operating theatre,
with better...wares...and...

(points to his theatre)

...this,

(soft)

my life's work...ceases to exist.

(then, HARD)

I WILL NOT HAVE THAT. Do you
cretins understand?

Burke and Hare step back at Knox's sudden outburst, nodding quickly.

KNOX (CONT'D)

In civilized countries, this is what is called an understanding. We now have an understanding.

(hard)

You only get six pounds... and a free lesson in what we in Scotland consider work ethic. Quality counts, gentlemen. Don't let your Irish roots get in the way of doing a good job here.

Burke and Hare look up at Knox, and for a brief moment we think Knox takes pity for being hard on them. But --

KNOX (CONT'D)

(under his breath)

Oh and do be careful with how you're acquiring the merchandise, don't want coppers round here. They're better served in your part of town.

(loud again)

Now begone.

He walks out, waving at his students to pay. As money is exchanged. Hare looks guilty. Burke, however looks like he just won the lottery.

19

INT. WHITE HART INN - NIGHT

19

More drinks and dancing. Hare whittles away, three empty pint glasses surround him, a barrier from human interaction. Burke hands Daft Jamie a glass of milk --

BURKE

You don't speak much do ya?

Daft Jamie shrugs, but then, a prostitute, MARY, 19, fair skin and the prettiest woman in the entire pub, approaches. Daft Jamie stops shrugging, smitten by this beautiful lady.

MARY

I heard you two are the life of the party. Let's have a good time.

HARE

Bit far from the confines of the Charity aren't you love?

MARY

I go where the work is.

HARE

Well this is where the work isn't.

MARY

Too much woman for you.

HARE

(looks her over)

Too much for the woman.

Burke takes Mary by the shoulder to lead her off --

BURKE

Ok. Off you go, plenty of suitors
looking to ruin you proper --

As Mary turns, she SMACKS into Jamie, who SPILLS milk all
over her. He drops his glass. It SHATTERS --

MARY

(to Jamie)

Look at this miserable shite.

Jamie goes to apologize. But nothing comes out. He tries
again and can't speak.

MARY (CONT'D)

(re: his foot)

What in the name of all that is
holy is *that* hideous thing?

HARE

The boy doesn't talk. Not really.

MARY

(gets in Jamie's face)

Can't even talk out of that jobby
face? Disfigured and mute, you
scabby roaster?

The bar has slowed to a halt. Everyone stares.

INNKEEPER

Oy! Get her out of here.

The crowd erupts, pushing her out of the bar.

But Jamie has slumped against the wall, curled up into a
ball, sobbing uncontrollably. Hare sees this and gets angry.
*But Burke gives him a calming gesture, then follows close on
Mary's heels.*

20

EXT. WHITE HART INN - MOMENTS LATER

20

Burke runs out of the pub and approaches Mary.

BURKE

M'lady, apologies. We shouldn't
have let them treat you like that.

He produces three pounds from his pocket. (*\$500 U.S. today*)

MARY

Apology accepted. Lead the way...

Burke gently takes her by the arm and they walk away. He looks back as Hare exits and catches up, still angry.

HARE

What's going on then?

BURKE

Just gonna let off some steam...
nothing to worry about.

21 **INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - BURKE'S FLAT - NIGHT** 21

They enter Burke's filthy flat. Hare stands away from her.

MARY

Oy, afraid of me, are you?
(turns to Burke)
What about you?

Burke PUSHES her onto the bed.

MARY (CONT'D)

Oh, you like it a bit rough?

Burke climbs on top of her, then looks at Hare. Burke GRABS her by the hair. A little too rough.

MARY (CONT'D)

Oy. Hey. Let go --

BURKE

Billy, remember... quality counts.

Burke relaxes his grip. Delivers this entirely to Hare with a smile on his face.

BURKE (CONT'D)

Miss, my name is William Burke and
this is my... partner, Billy Hare.

Hare's now enraged that Burke used their names.

MARY

I don't care, boys.

BURKE

Well good. Where was I? Like this.

Burke pinches her nose while holding her mouth shut. Tears well up in Mary's bloodshot eyes.

He motions to Hare as he swivels off her chest to get a better grip on her nose and mouth.

BURKE (CONT'D)

Hop on.

CHYRON: BURKING, verb (used with object): to murder, as by suffocation, so as to leave no or few marks of violence.

Hare obliges and sits on her chest, she cannot breathe and her muffled screams begin to fade. Through all of this anger Hare still can't bear to watch the light go out of her eyes.

And then... it does. Mary DIES.

A MONEY SYMBOL APPEARS ABOVE HER HEAD. "£9 6s". BOTH MEN SEE IT. THAT IS THIS BODY'S WORTH.

CHYRON: £1 in 1827 = 138.00 USD in 2018. £9 6s = \$1,324.80

They pick up the body, and FLOP IT ONTO --

22

INT. KNOX OPERATING THEATRE - NIGHT

22

-- The OPERATING TABLE is now BRAND NEW. The theatre looks completely remodeled and *pristine*. Knox, in a new suit, is now wearing state of the art copper magnifying spectacles. Money's exchanged. Burke swings the theatre doors open -- Burke and Hare look up at the renovations and Knox's new gear.

HARE

(whispers to Burke)

Oy, he's certainly doing well now isn't he?

BURKE

Because of us, mate.

KNOX (V.O.)

... the effects of prostitution on the body, and their diseases...

A SEQUENCE OF SHOTS: DREAMLIKE in quality. A bit surreal.

23

INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - BURKE'S FLAT - NIGHT

23

-- Hare opens the door for a DRUNK MAN.

The Drunk Man, clenching a bottle, lies on the floor as Burke kills him. Hare helps out by sitting on his chest.

PUPPET KNOX (O.S.)
Did someone mention my name?

A puppet of Dr. Robert Knox appears holding a human skull.

PUNCH
Oh, Lord. He's here. Which means
we're not!

Punch and Judy exit.

PUPPET KNOX
Now now, why would you run from me?
My only lot in life is to make all
of your lives better, no?
(opens his hands)
I am but a humble servant.

The crowd BOOS.

PUPPET KNOX (CONT'D)
Don't take my word. Listen to my
two best friends.

Two puppets appear, but they're not Punch and Judy... instead
it's PUPPET BURKE and PUPPET HARE.

Hare rubs his eyes in the real world, not understanding --

PUPPET KNOX (CONT'D)
My good Irish friends, welcome
back. What have you been up to?

PUPPET HARE
Spending all my money on women and
wine.

PUPPET KNOX
And I've given you a lot of money!
(then)
Anything else I should know about?

PUPPET BURKE
Killing more or less everyone for
money. Thank you very much, Doctor.

PUPPET KNOX
Don't mention it. I mean that...
don't mention it.

Hare scans the audience. Is he going crazy?

PUPPET HARE
(looks at REAL HARE)
And you, Billy? Are you going to
mention it?

Puppet Knox and Puppet Burke both HIT Puppet Hare causing both Puppet Hare and real Hare to stumble back.

*PUPPET BURKE
Imagine you did. We'd both hang.
(to real Hare)
Or... Maybe that would be better.
Then at least you could sleep.*

*PUPPET KNOX
On my table.*

More LAUGHTER from the crowd.

Hare has had enough, knowing he's off his rocker... he turns and runs away as the puppets yell after him:

*PUPPET HARE
Good luck sleeping, Billy!*

35

INT. WHITE HART INN - NIGHT

35

Burke slams down his fifth pint of the night as Hare enters.

BURKE
All hail the walking dead.

HARE
Not tonight. Just let me drink.

BURKE
I'll buy you a round or four.

HARE
Maybe you should stop waving your goddamn money around.
(pushes him)
You don't think people notice your new coat? That every meal is at a restaurant now? That you've bedded half the whores in the city?

BURKE
Billy. I thought you were more worried about your eternal soul?

HARE
Who says I ain't? But you wouldn't understand that, would ya.

BURKE
Listen --

HARE

No, you listen. Fine, you don't care about sin or damnation, but you sure as hell care about getting caught, so--

BURKE

Billy, calm down --

HARE

Call me Billy again, you'll be doing it without your teeth.

BURKE

William. It's clear you're in a foul mood, so I'll let it pass. But remember, this --
(motions around the bar)
And, sin or not, it's us getting caught, not just me. It's all us.

Burke walks away, entertaining his new friends.

BURKE (CONT'D)

Who wants to play with my bagpipe?!

Leaving Hare in a state of pent up rage.

A **MONEY SYMBOL** flickers momentarily on Burke's back as Hare stares.

Burke stops and turns to look back at Hare. A **MONEY SYMBOL** flickers on Hare's head.

A PROSTITUTE walks up to BURKE, runs her hand over Burke's pants. Burke stares at Hare the entire time, grinning. As he rubs the prostitute's head.

Hare takes his knife out.

Burke caresses her face. Hare squeezes his blade, CUTTING HIMSELF. Blood runs down the blade.

Burke breaks eye contact. Hare approaches the other side of the bar. He waves at the Innkeeper for a refill, and while he waits, reaches into his pockets...

They're empty. He's broke. Again. He stares back towards Burke, handing a full pint to the prostitute.

Burke sees this. To Innkeeper.

BURKE (CONT'D)

All of Billy's drinks are on me!

36 **EXT. ALLEY / TUNNEL - NIGHT**

36

Burke and Hare, now both extremely DRUNK, walk home.

BURKE
Listen...

HARE
It's fine.

BURKE
You know you're like a brother...

HARE
I said it's fine, mate.

They both stop when they see a body slumped in a corner a few meters away. A BRIGHT **MONEY SYMBOL** flickers from "**£6**" and increases all the way up to "**£14+**" as they get closer.

BURKE
Nightcap. And you're broke.

Hare is too drunk to bother disagreeing.

HARE
Fine, let's just get on with it
before I pass out on top of him.

Burke straddles their new soon-to-be victim's chest, covered in a tattered blanket and begins to *BURKE* him.

Hare goes to assumes his usual position when the body MOVES.

Its legs SPASM... a CLUBBED FOOT slips out from under the blankets.

Daft Jamie WAKES UP.

He LASHES out, not knowing who his assailants are and easily THROWS Burke off. KICKS Hare away. Jamie is too scared and the guys are too drunk.

HARE (CONT'D)
Jamie, Jamie. It's us.

BURKE
Shite. He knows who we are now.

Before Hare can interject, Burke CHARGES at Jamie.

It doesn't work. Jamie grabs Burke and beats his head into the stone wall. BLOOD splatters from Burke's forehead.

Jamie towers over Hare and advances. Hare pushes him away.

HARE

Jamie, we didn't know it was you --

Jamie punches Hare again. Hare snaps. He pins Jamie against the wall and unleashes PUNCH after PUNCH onto his face. He grabs his head and slams it into the stone.

Jamie, bloodied, tries to resist. Speaks for the first time --

DAFT JAMIE

...I'll tell my mother.

Hare sees through the bloodlust and lets go. Jamie kicks out, hitting Hare in the groin, knocking him down.

But Burke is back up, grabs Jamie from behind and locks his arms around his neck. Jamie kicks out, trying to scream... but nothing escapes his locked windpipe.

Jamie slumps, then collapses. DEAD.

Staring at his one-time friend, Hare, with lifeless eyes...

END OF ACT TWO

KNOX (CONT'D)

And be very careful. That head will
prove the rumors I've been hearing,
about murderers walking our
streets, if you can believe it?
(even lower)
And I can't be a party to murder.
Do we have an understanding?

Both men nod. Dejected, they start off. Then Knox stops Hare
and turns him around. He extracts the foot from the sack --

KNOX (CONT'D)

For science.

A shilling. He throws it into the sack.

39

EXT. DARK CANAL - DAY

39

Hare sits at the edge of the dirty water. Feet hanging over.
Bloody sack next to him. Burke sits a bit away, smoking.

Hare stands up, grabs the sack and attempts to fling the head
out of it into the canal.

The head won't come out.

HARE

(effort) Oh, for fu...
(inaudible)...sake.

He reaches his hand in. The SQUISH of still-warm flesh and
tendrils makes him recoil his hand right out.

Burke is oblivious as he smokes his cigarette.

BURKE

Fancy a pint?

Hare shakes the bag, but the head won't come out.

HARE

...Oh Jesus, Mary, Joseph and the
entire Last Supper...

Hare has had it. He flings the entire bag into the canal.

HARE (CONT'D)

I'm done.

He walks away. Burke lets him go.

The sack with Daft Jamie's head GURGLES and BUBBLES as it slowly sinks.

40 **EXT. GRASSMARKET SQUARE - DAY**

40

Hare comes upon the Punch and Judy show, now the PUPPET BURKE and PUPPET HARE show. The crowd is laughing. Hare's attention goes from the stage to Daft Jamie's empty seat in front.

CHRYON: PUNCH AND JUDY: A PUPPET SHOW EXTOLLING THE VIRTUES OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND MURDER. FOR CHILDREN.

40A **DOC POD - PUNCH AND JUDY III**

40A

PUPPET BURKE

What's wrong Billy? Cat got your tongue? Doctor got your foot?

The crowd ROARS WITH LAUGHTER.

PUPPET HARE

Let's ask him again shall we?
Oooohhh Doctor?

Puppet Knox comes down stage center.

PUPPET KNOX

People are starting to ask questions. Did you think you could just leave?

(to the audience)

He thought he could just leave...

(re: the empty seat)

We saved you a seat.

ROARS of laughter. Hare starts to hyperventilate.

PUPPET KNOX (CONT'D)

I gave you ONE job. I told you to get me bodies that were in good shape. Did I have to preface it with, not bodies that EVERYONE KNOWS WERE MURDERED?

(then, calm)

You're going to hang, Billy. Whether you stop now or you kill a hundred more Daft Jamies... or maybe some of these people?

The crowd, one by one starts to turn and stare at Hare. Each one of their faces BLOODIED like Daft Jamie's. **MONEY SYMBOLS** appear above each of their heads.

PUPPET KNOX (CONT'D)

Quality, Billy. Or... I'll tell my mother.

HARE

You?

BURKE

Well... family is a whole different beast, mate. Come have a drink with us. Just *family*.

(beat)

Isn't that what you really want?

43 INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

43

Hare looks back down the hallway.

HARE

This isn't the way to your flat.

BURKE

The Gray family are out of town and asked me to keep an eye out. And it's nicer than our dirty flops.

HARE

Fine.

44 INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - GRAY FAMILY FLAT - NIGHT 4

Burke and Hare enter this much larger, nicer flat to find MARGARET DOCHERTY, 28. Inebriated but alert.

BURKE

Cousin, meet my dearest friend, William Hare of Londonderry.

MARGARET

How do you do?

HARE

(something feels off)

A pleasure.

BURKE

Speaking of, I come bearing drinks--
(pours a round)
Family... At the end of the day,
it's all we have.

He fixes on Hare and slams down his shot. They join him.

BURKE (CONT'D)

If you'll excuse me, seems like my bladder needs more space.

Burke leaves for the bathroom.

HARE

So cousins, huh? When's the last--

MARGARET

Oh... well. To be perfectly honest, I can't place him. I only just arrived to Edinburgh two days ago, but he seemed so convinced and sweet that I felt maybe I was off.

HARE

Seemed convinced, did he?

MARGARET

Of our relation. I do see it in the eyes a bit --

HARE

Oh, I see something too. Clearly.
(darkens)
Forgive me, Margaret, seems nature is screaming my name as well.

He charges down the hall to the bathroom.

45

INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - BATHROOM

45

The door SLAMS OPEN. Hare rushes Burke, pins him to the wall.

HARE

You lying sack of shite.

BURKE

Easy there, Billy. Wouldn't want Margaret to hear.

HARE

(punches him)
That's for calling me Billy.
(punches him again)
And that's for lying, for pulling me back into your madness.
(holds a punch)
I told you, I'm done.

Burke shakes it off, wiping the blood from his lips.

BURKE

Now who's lying? You knew, William. You knew exactly where this little reunion would end. You like it. You just don't like that you like it.

HARE

Stop.

BURKE

Sixteen, so far. Women. Men. Jamie.

HARE

Stop.

BURKE

It's me or her, Billy. Her we can explain, but me? That'll be seventeen on your conscience and you'll hang for every one of us.

Hare sees finally... he has no choice.

CUT TO BLACK:

OVER BLACK

The sound of gurgling, gasping and scratching of wood over --

BURKE (V.O.)

God our Father, your power brings us to birth. Your providence guides our lives. And by Your command we return to dust.

The sounds of a woman struggling fade to silence.

46

INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - GRAY FAMILY FLAT - NIGHT 6

Margaret's eyes are now closed forever on the floor next to the bed. Burke sees the **MONEY SYMBOL** over Margaret.

Burke smiles, stretches on the bed to rest his eyes.

BURKE

She needs to be out before sun up.

He stumbles as he tries to get up. Buries his head into the side of bed. Hare reassures his friend.

HARE

It's not even midnight yet.

Off the clock on the wall - it's FOUR IN THE MORNING.

HARE (CONT'D)

Let's just take a rest for an hour or two. We'll move her then.

He swings the hour hand back to 11:00 PM then slumps against the wall. Eyes wide open. Burke slides off the bed and passes out next to Margaret.

Finally, mercifully, knowing what he's just done... sleep finds William Hare.

47 **INT. TANNER CLOSE BOARDING HOUSE - GRAY FAMILY FLAT - MORNING**

The only sounds heard are the deep breaths of William Hare.

A deliberate, slow pull away from Hare. His breathing stops.

M.O.S.

Hare sits, slumped in a chair, staring at The GRAY CHILD, 12. The child stares back, eyes wide. Hare looks over to the dead body.

A sitting-still *time-lapse* on Hare, numb and unresponsive.

The child's eyes follow his gaze and he starts SCREAMING.

RELIEF. This is what Hare wanted. Burke wakes up next to him and freaks out as he sees the GRAY FAMILY, returned *early*, standing over them.

The Gray child is still screaming at the dead woman.

MOMENTS LATER... the POLICE enter and TACKLE Burke as he tries to flee. He falls to the ground. Two policemen restrain him by pinning his body down.

Hare watches all of this, reaches for a SACK next to his chair, then --

The police TACKLE him to the ground.

The contents of the sack spill out. 17 whittled murder dolls. They tumble out in slow motion.

Fat Donald, many ladies of the night, the drunk man with a bottle, Daft Jamie, complete with club foot, and their latest - the freshly carved/killed Margaret Docherty.

Hare's face comes into frame near the statues as it slams to the floor, much like many of their victims.

With an audible exhale, he smiles. Off his eyes closing--

48 **DOC POD - PUNCH AND JUDY IV**

48

Dream like Puppet Burke and Puppet Hare show. Puppet Burke and Hare are front and center.

*PUPPET BURKE
So what happened to you?*

*PUPPET HARE
You mean after we got arrested?*

PUPPET BURKE

Yes. Which by the way...

Puppet Burke punches Puppet Hare.

PUPPET BURKE (CONT'D)

PUPPET HARE

Thanks for nothing. OW!

*

There's no crowd laugh track this time.

PUPPET BURKE (CONT'D)

Go on.

PUPPET HARE

Right, well we got charged for 16 murders.

PUPPET BURKE

Interesting. How did they find out?

PUPPET HARE

I told them.

PUPPET BURKE

YOU WHAT?

Puppet Burke beats him pretty hard.

PUPPET HARE

I suppose I deserved that.

PUPPET BURKE

So we were both hanged?

PUPPET HARE

Well not quite.

A slow pull back.

PUPPET BURKE

What do you mean not quite?

There is only one person watching the show. William Hare.

PUPPET HARE

Well. The thing is, Liam. I turned King's evidence.

CHYRON: KING'S EVIDENCE, noun: one who gives witness for the crown in exchange for leniency in British criminal proceedings – used when the British monarch is a king.

PUPPET BURKE

No!

PUPPET HARE

*I confessed in exchange for
immunity. The government wanted to
punish someone so we made a deal!*

PUPPET BURKE

SO WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU?

49 OMITTED

49

50 **EXT. GRASSMARKET SQUARE - DAY**

50

PUPPET HARE (O.S.)

No one actually knows.

William Hare, alone in the audience, older, looking worse for wear, his run here ended, DISSOLVES into thin air.

PUPPET BURKE

*But we all know what happened to
me, William Burke.*

PUPPET HARE

*Yes. You were hanged by the neck
until dead --*

Now a crowd ROARS. A HANGMAN'S NOOSE flies in. Burke looks up at it as it slips over his head.

PUPPET HARE (CONT'D)

*-- And then your fresh and mostly
pristine corpse...*

PUPPET BURKE

Mostly pristine?

PUPPET HARE

Well, you are Irish.

The noose tightens.

PUPPET BURKE

Right, right... carry on.

PUPPET HARE

Your corpse still exists.

PUPPET BURKE

TA DA!

Puppet Burke and Puppet Hare both take a bow.

*As Puppet Burke comes up from the bow, the noose SNAPS and
JERKS his body. A BONE CRACK.*

