

These Shallow Graves

PROOF COPY - FOR REVIEW HOT KEY BOOKS



ALSO BY JENNIFER DONNELLY

A Gathering Light
Revolution
The *Waterfire* Series

For adults:
The *Rose* Series



PROOF COPY - FOR REVIEW HOT KEY BOOKS

These Shallow Graves

Jennifer Donnelly



PROOF COPY - FOR REVIEW HOT KEY BOOKS

First published in Great Britain in 2015 by Hot Key Books
Northburgh House, 10 Northburgh Street, London EC1V 0AT

Text copyright © Jennifer Donnelly 2015

The moral rights of the author and illustrator have been asserted.

All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored or
transmitted in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical,
photocopying or otherwise, without the prior written permission of
the publisher.

All characters in this publication are fictitious and any resemblance
to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British
Library.

ISBN: 978-1-4714-0514-3

1

This book is typeset in TBC

Printed and bound by Clays Ltd, St Ives Plc



www.hotkeybooks.com

Hot Key Books is part of the Bonnier Publishing Group
www.bonnierpublishing.com

PROOF COPY - FOR REVIEW HOT KEY BOOKS



Darkbriar Asylum for the Insane
New York City
November 29, 1890

Josephine Montfort stared at the newly mounded grave in front of her and at the wooden cross marking it.

“This is the one you’re after. *Kinch*,” Flynn, the gravedigger, said, pointing at the name painted on the cross. “He died on Tuesday.”

Tuesday, Jo thought. Four days ago. *Time enough for the rot to start. And the stink.*

“I’ll be wanting my money now,” Flynn said.

Jo put her lantern down. She fumbled notes out of her coat pocket and counted them into Flynn’s hand.

“You get caught out here, you never saw me. You hear, girl?”

Jo nodded. Flynn pocketed his money and walked off into the darkness. Moonlight spilled over the rows of graves and over the looming towers of the asylum. A wail rose on the night, thin and chilling.

And suddenly Jo’s courage failed her.

“Step aside, Jo. We’ll do it. Oscar and me,” Eddie said.

He was standing across from her, on the other side of the grave. He said nothing more as she met his gaze. He didn’t have to. The challenge in his eyes spoke volumes.

How did this happen? How did I get here? Jo asked herself. She didn’t want to do this. She wanted to be home. Safe inside her Gramercy Square brownstone. She wished she’d never met Eddie Gallagher. The Tailor. Madam Esther. Fairy Fay. Most of all, she wished she’d never laid eyes on the man buried six feet below her.

“Wait by the vault. Go back,” Eddie said. Not unkindly.

Jo laughed. Go back? How? There was no going back. Not to her old life of drawing rooms and dances. Not to Miss Sparkwell’s School. Not to her friends, or to Bram. It had all gone too far.

“Jo . . .”

“*You* wait by the vault, Eddie,” Jo said crisply.

Eddie snorted. He tossed a shovel at her. Jo flinched as she caught it, then started to dig.

✧ CHAPTER ONE ✧

*Miss Sparkwell's School for Young Ladies
Farmington, Connecticut
September 17, 1890*

“Trudy, be a dear and read these stories for me,” said Jo Montfort, laying out articles for her school’s newspaper on a tea table. “I can’t abide errors.”

Gertrude Van Eyck, all blond curls and dimples, stopped dead in the middle of the common room. “How did you know it was me? You didn’t even look up!”

“Duke told me,” Jo replied. Duke’s Cameos were Trudy’s favorite brand of cigarette.

Trudy sniffed her sleeve. “Do I smell?”

“You positively reek. What does Gilbert Grosvenor think of you smoking cigarettes?”

“Gilbert Grosvenor doesn’t know. Not about the ciggies, or the bottle of gin under my bed, or that utterly swell boy who delivers apples,” Trudy said, winking.

“Slang does not become a Farmington girl, Gertrude,” sniffed Libba Newland, seated nearby with her friend, May Delano.

“Neither does that fringe, Lib,” said Trudy, eyeing Libba’s badly curled bangs.

“Well, I never!” Libba huffed.

“And I’m sure you never will,” Trudy said archly.

“Stop being awful and read these, Tru,” Jo scolded. “My deadline’s tomorrow.”

Trudy sat down at the table and helped herself to a jam tart from Jo’s plate. It was three o’clock—teatime at Miss Sparkwell’s—and the common room was crowded with students on break. Everyone was chatting and eating except Jo, who was busy finalizing the layout for the second edition of the *Jonquil*.

“What do we have this week?” Trudy asked. “The usual tripe?”

Jo sighed. “I’m afraid so,” she said. “There’s a piece on the proper way to brew tea, a poem about kittens, Miss Sparkwell’s impressions of the Louvre, and advice on how to fade freckles.”

“Ye gads. Anything else?”

Jo hesitated, working up her nerve. “As a matter of fact, yes. A story on the abuse of girl laborers at Fenton’s Textile Mill,” she said, handing one of the articles to her friend.

“Ha! So funny, my darling!” Trudy said, smiling. Her smile faded as she read the first lines. “Oh dear God. You’re *serious*.”

Trudy kept reading, riveted, and Jo watched her, thrilled. Jo was a senior at Miss Sparkwell’s and had written for the *Jonquil* during her three previous years at the school, but this was the first important story she’d written. She’d worked hard to get it. She’d taken risks. Just like a real reporter.

“What do you think?” she asked eagerly when Trudy finished reading.

“I think you’ve lost your mind,” Trudy replied.

“But do you think it’s *good*?” Jo pressed.

“Very.”

Jo, who’d been perched on the edge of her seat, shot forward and hugged Trudy, a huge grin on her face.

“But that’s *entirely* beside the point,” Trudy said sternly as Jo sat down again. “If you hand in the layout to Sparky with *that* story in it, you’re done for. Detention for a week *and* a letter home.”

“It’s not *that* bad. Nellie Bly’s pieces are far more provocative,” said Jo.

“You’re comparing yourself to *Nellie Bly*?” Trudy asked, incredulous. “Need I remind you that she’s a scandalous lady reporter who meddles in other people’s business and has no hope of marrying a decent man? You, in contrast, are a Montfort, and Montforts marry. Early and well. And that is all.”

“Well, *this* Montfort’s going to do a bit more,” Jo declared. “Like write stories for newspapers.”

Trudy raised a perfectly arched eyebrow. “Is that so? Have you informed your mother?”

“Actually, no. Not yet,” Jo admitted.

Trudy laughed. “Not *ever*, you mean. Unless you want to find yourself locked away in a convent until you’re fifty.”

“Tru, this is a story that must be told,” Jo said, her passion clear in her voice. “Those poor girls are being mistreated. They’re worked hard and paid little. They’re practically slaves.”

“Jo. How on *earth* do you know this?”

“I spoke with some of them.”

“You didn’t,” Trudy said.

“I did. On Sunday. After services.”

“But you went straight to your room after services. You said you had a headache.”

“And then I climbed out of my window and went down to the river. To one of the boardinghouses there,” Jo said, lowering her voice. She didn’t want anyone to overhear her. “A farmer gave me a

ride in his wagon. I spoke with three girls. One was seventeen. Our age, Tru. The others were younger. They work ten-hour days standing at these hellish looms. Injuries are common. So is exposure to coarse language and . . . and *situations*. I was told that some of the girls fall in with bad sorts and become wayward.”

Trudy’s eyes widened. “Josephine Montfort. Do you really think that Mr. Abraham Aldrich wants his future wife to even *know* that wayward girls exist, much less write about them? The future Mrs. Aldrich must be pure in mind as well as body. Only men are supposed to know about”—Trudy lowered her voice, too—“about *sex*. If news of what you’ve done gets around, not only will you lose your place here, you’ll lose the most eligible bachelor in New York. For goodness’ sake, be sensible! No mill girl, wayward or otherwise, is worth the Aldrich millions!”

May Delano looked up from her book. “What’s a wayward girl?” she asked.

Jo groaned.

“Never mind,” Trudy said.

“Tell me,” May whined.

“Very well,” Trudy replied, turning to look at May. “A girl who is with child but without a husband.”

May laughed. “Shows what *you* know, Trudy Van Eyck. The stork brings babies *after* you’re married, not before.”

“Come, May, we’re leaving” said Libba Newland, shooting Trudy a dirty look. “The common room is getting a bit *too* common.”

“I’ll bet you a dollar Lib tattles to Sparky,” Trudy said darkly, watching them go. “I just finished my detention for smoking. Now *you’ve* earned me some more!”

Disappointed by Trudy’s lack of enthusiasm for her story, Jo snatched it back. She wished Trudy understood her. Wished *someone* did. She’d read Bly’s *Ten Days in a Mad-House* and Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*, and they’d touched her deeply. She’d

been appalled to learn how the poor suffered and felt compelled to follow the examples those two reporters set, if only in some small way.

She thought about the mill girls she'd spoken with. They'd looked so crushingly tired. Their faces were as pale as milk, except for the dark smudges under their eyes. They'd been taken out of school and made to work. They weren't allowed to talk or to go to the bathroom until their lunch breaks. One told her she could barely walk home at the end of the day, her legs hurt so badly from standing.

Their stories had made Jo sad—and blisteringly angry. “Trudy, why did I become editor of the *Jonquil*?” she suddenly asked.

“I have no idea,” Trudy replied. “You should've joined the glee club. Even you can't get into trouble singing ‘Come into the Garden, Maud.’”

“I shall tell you.”

“I had a feeling you would,” Trudy said dryly.

“I did it because I want to inform my readers. Because I wish to draw back the veil that hides the injustices that surround us,” Jo said, her voice rising. “We who have means and a voice must use them to help those who have neither. Yet how can we help them if we don't even know about them? And how can we know about them if no one writes about them? Is it so wrong to want to know things?”

Heads turned as Jo finished speaking. Girls stared. She glared back at them until they turned away. “They suffer, those mill girls,” she said, her voice quieter, but her heart still full of emotion. “They are so terribly unfortunate.”

Trudy took her hand. “My darling Jo, there is *no one* more unfortunate than we ourselves,” she said. “We are not engaged yet, you and I. We're spinsters. Pathetic nobodies. We can go nowhere on our own. We must not be too forward in speech, dress, or emotion

lest we put off a potential suitor. We are allowed no funds of our own, and most of all”—she squeezed Jo’s hand for emphasis—“no *opinions*.”

“Doesn’t it bother you, Tru?” Jo asked, frustrated.

“Of course it does! Which is why I intend to marry as soon as I can,” Trudy said.

She jumped up, snapped open an imaginary fan, and strode about the room imitating a society lady. “When I am *Mrs.* Gilbert Grosvenor and happily installed in my grand Fifth Avenue mansion, I shall do *exactly* as I please. I shall say what I like, read what I like, and go out every evening in silks and diamonds to smile at my beaux from my box at the Met.”

It was Jo’s turn to raise an eyebrow. “And Mr. Gilbert Grosvenor? Where will he be?” she asked.

“At home. Sulking by the fire with a copy of *The Wall Street Journal*,” Trudy said, imitating Gilbert’s eternally disapproving expression.

Jo laughed despite herself. “I’ll never understand how you were passed over for the lead in the school play. You belong on stage,” she said.

“I wasn’t *passed over*, thank you. I was offered the lead and declined it. Mr. Gilbert Grosvenor frowns upon theatricals.”

For a moment, Jo forgot about her own worries. She knew Gilbert. He was smug and disapproving, an old man at twenty. He was also stinking rich.

“Will you really marry him?” she asked. She could no more see beautiful, lively Trudy married to Gilbert than she could picture a hummingbird paired with a toad.

“I mean to. Why shouldn’t I?”

“Because you . . . You’ll have to . . .” She couldn’t say it.

“Go to bed with him?” Trudy finished.

Jo blushed. “That is *not* what I was going to say!”

“But it’s what you meant.”

Trudy looked out of a nearby window. Her eyes traveled over the lawns to the meadows, then farther still, to a place—a future—only she could see.

“A bit of nightly unpleasantness in exchange for days of ease. Not such a bad bargain,” Trudy said, with a rueful smile. “Some of us are not as well off as others. My papa can barely manage my school fees, never mind the dressmaker’s notes. And anyway, it’s not *me* I’m worried about. It’s *you*.” Trudy turned her attention back to Jo. “You know the rules: get yourself hitched, then do what you like. But for heaven’s sake, *until* you get the man, smile like a dolt and talk about tulips, *not* mill girls!”

Jo knew Trudy was right. Sparky would be appalled if she ever found out what Jo had done. So would her parents, the Aldriches, and the rest of New York. *Her* New York, at least—old New York. Well-bred girls from old families came out, got engaged, and then went back—back to drawing rooms, dinner parties, and dances. They did not venture into the dangerous, dirty world to become reporters, or anything else.

The boys got to, though. They couldn’t become reporters either—that was too grubby an occupation for a gentleman—but they could own a newspaper, run a business, practice law, breed horses, have agricultural interests, or do something in government like the Jays and the Roosevelts. Jo knew this but couldn’t accept it. It chafed at her spirit, as surely as the stays of her corset chafed her body.

Why is it, she wondered now, that boys get to do things and be things, and girls only get to watch?

“Jo?”

Jo looked up. It was Arabella Paulding, a classmate.

“Sparky wants to see you in her office,” she said. “Right away.”

“Why?” Jo asked.

“She didn’t say. She told me to find you and fetch you. I’ve found you, so go.”

“Libba tattled,” Trudy said ominously.

Jo gathered up her papers, dreading her interview with the headmistress. She was in for it.

“Don’t worry, my darling,” Trudy said. “You’ll only get a few days’ detention, I’m sure. Unless Sparky expels you.”

“You’re *such* a comfort,” said Jo.

Trudy smiled ruefully. “What can I say? I merely wish to smoke. Sparky can forgive that. You, on the other hand, wish to know things. And no one can forgive a girl for that.”