
Dead White Female

By

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The Sam Jones Mysteries – Volume 1

Fahrenheit Press 2016

*In memory of Jules, an early reader and Camden clubber, who loved the
Sam books Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) when they first came out.*

And many thanks to Fahrenheit Press for reissuing them now! I hope readers who found them in the '90s will revisit them with pleasurable nostalgia, and that new ones will have a great deal of fun making Sam's acquaintance.

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Alice through the looking-glass learns that if she wants to reach the house she needs to walk away from it, into the garden; only then will she find herself climbing the steps Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) that lead up to its front door. She doesn't have any difficulty following the rule. But then, Alice was a highly sophisticated child. I, on the other hand, can't turn my back on anything, even as a matter of strategy. Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) I have to push and push at what I don't understand, forcing it to give me answers. My way's more direct, but you run the risk that what you're looking for may end Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) up broken in your hands.

By the time it was over, it wasn't only Lee who had died. I Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) started out with her death, and caused two others; I fell Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) in love and got my heart broken. I broke some things myself, for good. Hearts mend. Necks don't.

But I found out how Lee died. Like Alice, I like to finish what I set out to do.
Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1)

That's not really a fair comparison. Alice never killed anyone, after all.

* * *

Detective Inspector Fincham had a smooth pink face and pale ginger hair. They clashed badly. His eyebrows and eyelashes were so pale that they merged into his skin, giving his features a curious lack of definition, as Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) if he were recovering from severe burns. His tie was Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) secured in a perfect knot precisely above his collar button. Clearly not a natural rebel.

He stared at me and I stared back. We had been working on this routine for some time and by now it was Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) honed down to its essentials. There was nothing else to look at apart from the desk lamp, which had no intrinsic interest. The walls were painted a pale shade of yellow, the yellow of phlegm Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) rather than buttercups. The floor was scuffed linoleum, the desk was grey Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) formica and the chairs grey plastic. Call in Ivana Trump to redecorate, now.

My statement lay on the desk in front of me. Finally, shrugging, I signed it on the dotted line and pushed it over to him.

'I'm still not happy with it,' I said rather sulkily. 'It's all right as far as it goes . . . But Lee was just not the sort of person to wander drunkenly down into a Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) pitch-dark garden at night, fall over and hit her Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) head on a brick. It doesn't make sense.'

'None of the Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) other party guests who have given statements seem to feel that there's anything surprising about it, Miss Jones.'

As a matter of tactics, I decided to let the 'Miss' go. 'No-one else you've talked to really knew her,' I pointed out instead. 'That's why they aren't questioning it.'

'And your acquaintance with her was based on one year at art college, during which she was your tutor. Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) Not that extensive a friendship, would you say? By your own account, you hadn't seen each other for several years.'

'I still knew her well enough. And she wasn't drunk.'

'But she had been drinking?'

'Yes,' I admitted reluctantly.

'She'd had a few drinks, shall we say?' DI Fincham raised his eyebrows at me, wanting my agreement. His pink eyelids, sliding upwards, looked raw, scalped, the ginger eyelashes hardly visible. I Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) wondered why he didn't dye them. Pale brown would look plausible. You could buy home dyeing kits nowadays if you were too embarrassed to go to a salon.

'She strolled out into the garden,' he was continuing, 'in search of some fresh air, perhaps wanting a break from the noise. I understand from the neighbours that the party was quite riotous.'

His eyes rested disapprovingly on a rip in my crocheted tights.

'Mrs Jackson wouldn't even need to have been particularly drunk to stumble on a loose brick. The garden was littered with them. And as you yourself mentioned, it was unlit. She tripped, fell over and hit her head on another brick. We found traces of blood on one near where she was lying.'

'So why would she have gone down into the garden in the first place?' I said stubbornly. 'She said herself she was tired and was going home. I told you that already.'

He shrugged. 'That I would certainly be interested to know. Contrary to what you seem to believe, Miss Jones, we do have a policy of treating all deaths as suspicious, at least initially. When we have autopsy results I'll be in a position to see if Mrs Jackson's injury tallies with the theory. Though ultimately it'll be up to the inquest to decide.'

'Then no-one saw her going into the garden?' I asked.

'No. Neither by herself nor accompanied. But quite frankly, Miss Jones,' he said drily, 'from the condition of most of your fellow-guests this morning, I wouldn't be surprised if one Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) of them had spotted her in the company of a large pink elephant. Tap-dancing.'

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DI Fincham arranged my statement on top of a neat pile of papers.

'What will you be able to tell from the autopsy?' I persisted.

He looked Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) a little guarded, but he answered the question anyway. I was impressed.

'Whether she did in fact hit her head Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) on the brick found beside her body, and if that's the only cranial injury. Obviously, if there were another, we would have to re-examine everything. Her blood alcohol level, to see if it makes sense that she might have been shaky on her feet. And, of course, whether she was under the influence of anything else.'

He looked at me pointedly. I wriggled slightly in my seat and resisted the impulse to check my nostrils for traces of white powder.

'So I'm the only person who doesn't believe this is as simple as it looks,' I said.

He shrugged. 'So far, from all the statements that have been given, I'd have to say yes. As I say, it depends to a large degree on the autopsy results. But – yes, you're the only one. After all, Miss Jones –' he looked at me hard – 'it's not as if you have any more evidence to Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) give, is it? There's nothing that you haven't told me?'

I shook my head. 'It's just a feeling. Believe me, if there were something concrete I'd be happy to tell you.'

He must have seen it was the truth, because he relaxed back into his chair.

'Well, in that case—' he began.

'There's nothing more to say.' I finished it for him. I stood up and pulled on my jacket. 'I'm sorry I've been wasting your time.'

He looked as if he were about to say something else, but I was sick of this little room with its talk that was going nowhere and its stuffy air. Turning on my heel, I swept out of the door in as dignified a manner as I could manage, given that I'd only had a few hours of sleep and was Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) still a little high from some Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) self-indulgent behaviour last night at the party. I stalked down a seemingly endless series of smegma-yellow linoleum corridors, too angry to stop and ask anyone for directions, and finally exited into the car park by a sheer fluke. My beat-up little red van, a Ford Escort which I hoped for its sake had seen better days, was half-hidden behind police cars. It looked uncomfortable; it wasn't used Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) to being in such company. I didn't start the motor straight away. I sat in the van and thought for a while about what I was Dead White Female (The Sam Jones Mysteries Book 1) going to do now.

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