

**MURDER AT THE
LOUVRE**

By Jim Eldridge

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Allison & Busby Limited
11 Wardour Mews
London W1F 8AN
allisonandbusby.com

First published in Great Britain by Allison & Busby in 2023.
This paperback edition published by Allison & Busby in 2024.

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

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

ISBN 978-0-7490-2908-1

Typeset in 11/16 pt Adobe Garamond Pro by
Allison & Busby Ltd.

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Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

For Lynne, my inspiration

CHAPTER ONE

London, July 1899

‘You look puzzled,’ commented Daniel Wilson to his wife, Abigail.

The pair, known as the Museum Detectives, were sitting in the living room of their house in Primrose Hill, Daniel reading *The Times* and Abigail studying a letter that had arrived for her that morning.

‘I am,’ said Abigail. She handed the letter to Daniel for him to read.

‘This is very flattering,’ said Daniel. ‘Professor Alphonse Flamand, who one assumes is a prominent figure in the world of archaeology as he’s writing from the Louvre in Paris, is inviting you to join him on a dig in Egypt.’

Abigail, as well as working with Daniel investigating serious crimes at museums, was also an internationally known archaeologist who, before she and Daniel had got together, had spent a large part of her life undertaking archaeological excavations, particularly in Egypt, working alongside some of the world’s very best archaeologists. This included working with the renowned Flinders Petrie in Hawara in Egypt.

He handed the letter back to her. 'Are you going to accept his offer?'

'You don't understand,' said Abigail. 'Professor Flamand is no fan of mine. On the contrary, he has attacked me in print as a female adventuress. The professor is one of those who doesn't believe that there is any place for women in the world of archaeology, except as some kind of handmaiden to fetch and carry and admire the men. I can't understand why he would be writing to me, of all people, inviting me to work with him on a dig in Egypt.'

'Perhaps he's mellowed in his attitudes as he's got older,' suggested Daniel.

'I hardly think so,' said Abigail. 'It was only about six months ago he wrote an article in a French magazine attacking female archaeologists, as well as female scientists, and made sure to include my name. Although he referred to me by my maiden name of Abigail Fenton.'

'But this letter is definitely addressed to Abigail Wilson,' Daniel pointed out. 'Perhaps he doesn't know that Abigail Wilson and Abigail Fenton are one and the same person.'

'Oh, he knows all right,' said Abigail. 'In this article he accused me of riding on my detective husband's coat-tails in – and I quote – "another ludicrous attempt to prove she is as good as any man".'

'Nice chap,' said Daniel with an ironic smile. 'So, are you going to ignore it?'

'I don't know,' said Abigail uncertainly. 'I'm intrigued to know why he's written with this invitation, in view of his attitude towards me.'

‘Where is this dig to be?’ asked Daniel.

‘He doesn’t say. Just Egypt. He says at this moment the details are being kept secret to avoid anyone else finding out and moving in first.’ She sighed. ‘Sadly, that’s not uncommon, so I can understand his caution. He says he will furnish me with all the details if I would care to meet him in his office at the Louvre at 11 a.m. on 10th August.’

‘That’s just ten days away,’ said Daniel.

‘Plenty of time to make arrangements,’ said Abigail.

‘So you’re going, then?’

‘I am. Hopefully this could lay to rest his ridiculous bias against women.’ She looked at her husband. ‘Have you ever been to Paris before?’

‘No.’

‘Then you’ll come with me, I hope?’

Daniel looked doubtful. ‘Does this professor mention my coming with you?’

‘I’m not suggesting you have to meet him,’ said Abigail. ‘We can enjoy the delights of Paris together. Think of it as a holiday.’