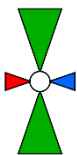


1482 BA

bncdoc.id	H90
bncdoc.author	Clynes, Michael
bncdoc.year	1993
bncdoc.title	The grail murders.
bncdoc.info	The grail murders. Sample containing about 44368 words from a book (domain: imaginative)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
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David Lee's classification	W_fict_prose

<p><1482/c></p>  <p>Key: Footprint ConEn1 Footprint ConEn2 Footprint ConEn3</p>	<p>At first, <u>I thought it was spilt wine but then it spread and I noticed little splashes coming down from the ceiling above</u>. I gazed up into the darkness but the rafters were cloaked in blackness. You've drunk too much, I thought, but then Benjamin noticed <u>the spreading pool and splattered drops</u>. 'Look!' he cried, pointing to <u>the widening scarlet stain</u>. The chatter and laughter died down. We all sat watching <u>the drops fall and the scarlet blot widen</u>. Benjamin was the first to recover his wits, standing up and pushing back his chair. 'What's above us, Sir John?' 'A small solar. A chamber with windows looking east. We only use it in summer.' Benjamin ran out of the room and I followed. Behind us the shouts and exclamations grew as <u>the scarlet stain spread</u>. We ran upstairs, knocking aside startled servants. I glimpsed Mathilda's white face then ran into the gallery, pushing open the door to the solar. The room was cold and dark, the windows shuttered. Benjamin cursed the darkness but, as in any good household, there were boxes right inside the door containing rushlights and candles. Benjamin lit one of these and we walked into the centre of the room. At first we could see nothing so crouched on our haunches, edging forward like crabs, feeling the soft woollen carpet. I touched something wet and sticky. Benjamin pushed the rushlight closer. God forgive me, I could have screamed in terror. Resting in the centre of the carpet, <u>severed at the neck, eyeballs rolled up in their sockets, was the decapitated head of the witch</u>. Grotesque in <u>death</u> as it had been, now putrefaction tinged the face a greenish hue. <u>The congealing blood from the severed arteries of the snow-soaked head</u> drenching the carpet and seeping down between the floor boards. My stomach heaved. We heard the door behind us open but Benjamin shouted for everyone to stay out. 'Come on, Roger,' he whispered. 'There is nothing we can do here.' Outside in the gallery Benjamin told the rest of the group <u>what we had found</u>. Lady Beatrice became hysterical, crouching against the wall, covering her face, whilst Rachel tried to comfort her. Santerre was shocked sober whilst Sir Edmund and Southgate were torn between a mixture of anger and fear. 'Clean <u>the mess</u>!' Benjamin snapped at Santerre. 'Just roll up the carpet, take it and its grisly contents downstairs and have it burnt. The floor can be scrubbed.' He looked at Sir Edmund. 'Roger is correct.'</p> <p><u>The Angel of Death</u></p> <p>walks this accursed house!' 'Who could leave such a thing there?' Southgate murmured. 'One of the servants, someone we do n't know,' Benjamin replied. 'But the head and the Hand of Glory come from that poor hag. Oh, by the way, where's our noble Sheriff Bowyer?' 'Drunk as a bishop,' Mandeville snarled. 'Now sleeping like a baby in his cot down in the hall.' Benjamin made to walk away. 'Master Daunbey,' Mandeville caught him up at the corner of the gallery. 'For God's sake, man, what am I supposed to do? My job is to trap conspirators, plotters ... not stumble around in the dark after <u>some secret assassin</u>.' Benjamin muttered something to himself. 'What is it? What is it, Daunbey?' My master looked up, his face as hard as stone, the skin drawn tight. 'I was just thinking of what you said, Sir</p>
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	<p>Edmund. This is not poor Buckingham, is it? Or some pathetic tailor like Taplow being trapped in his little cage and taken off to the slaughter house. And Templecombe is not some abbey where you can tap your toe and play the great lord. So how does it feel, Sir Edmund, to be the hunted instead of the hunter?’ And spinning on his heel, my master stalked off to his chamber. (My little clerk is muttering that Benjamin was acting out of character. That’s not true! Benjamin was a kind, gentle man. He always hated bully-boys and was correct to do so. Mandeville and Santerre had arrived at Templecombe wanting to make everyone dance to their tune. Instead, they had stumbled into a veritable snake pit.) I wandered round the galleries for a while for the dinner was both spoilt and finished. Sure enough, after a while I caught sight of my quarry, little Mathilda, her chubby arms full of blankets, tiptoeing along without a care in the world. I followed her up to one of the other floors and caught her by the elbow. ‘Mathilda, my sweet, a word.’ She whirled round but she was not frightened and I glimpsed the sparkle of triumph in her eyes. I drew her into a shadowy window embrasure. ‘You were n’t looking for gold, were you?’ She pouted prettily. ‘The money was secondary, was n’t it?’ I continued. ‘What were you looking for? Did you kill that clerk in the fire? What secret device did you use?’ She</p>
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