



A DECENT MAN CAUGHT UP IN AN INDECENT TIME

# FUREY'S WAR



T.W. Lawless & Kay Bell

## CHAPTER FOUR

‘Somebody’s asking to speak to you, Sergeant.’

Higgins’s uniform is open at the collar. It makes us look slovenly.

‘Asking to see me?’ I reply. ‘Did you get a name?’

‘I asked, but she wouldn’t say. She was a bit stirred up, by the look of her.’

‘Right.’ I push away from my desk and stand up, wondering which do-gooder has decided that today is a good day to inform on what the neighbours got up to over the weekend. ‘And for goodness sake, Constable, do up your top button.’

He grimaces. ‘But it’s too tight, Sergeant. It makes me feel like I’m choking.’

‘I’m not your mother, Constable Higgins. I don’t care if it chokes you until you’re blue in the face. Button up. It’s the uniform.’

I leave Higgins struggling with his button and go out to the counter. A woman I don’t recognise stands opposite me. She sports a platinum bob, cupid’s bow lips and pencilled eyebrows. It’s as if the twenties never left us.

‘You in charge here?’ Her voice grates. She fiddles with her bag and pulls out a cigarette case.

‘Sergeant Furey. And you can’t smoke in here.’

‘Why ever not?’ she asks. ‘It calms my nerves. And believe me, they need calming.’

‘Regardless. No smoking, Mrs...’

She pouts and slips the case back into her bag. ‘Mrs Singleton.’

‘I don’t know you. You new to town, Mrs Singleton?’ I look at her from top to toe. *Jean Harlow*. Cloche hat, gloves and a cotton dress: a bit old-fashioned, but she’s dressed soberly enough. ‘So, what can I do you for?’

‘I just moved into a house on King Street last week. Me and my two girls. The climate here agrees with me, you see. Not as humid out here as on the coast.’ She waves her hand about, like she’s swatting flies. ‘I’m a widow, you see, Mr Furey, minding my own business. This morning, I come out to sweep my front step and I find this.’

I'm about to correct her when she heaves a cardboard box onto the counter, and places her handbag next to it.

'Left at my door.'

The box has nothing on it. I don't quite know what I'm about to see. I tilt the box, peer inside and take a step backwards. 'Is it...a baby?'

'Looks like a baby to me,' she says dryly.

I take another look. Its eyes are shut. It's barely weeks old, possibly only days. 'But not yours?'

She rolls her eyes, and for once I have to agree that I would have done the same in reply to my question. As well preserved as she is, she's clearly beyond childbearing. I take another look at the contents of the box. The baby's swaddled in a grubby towel. It's barely breathing, but it seems to be alive.

I ask, 'You don't happen to know whose it is?'

She's brittle. 'Well, I wouldn't have brought it here if I did. All I know is, the box was on my doorstep when I got up this morning. I've done my bit and brought it in and, as I see it, now it's your responsibility.'

I bellow for a constable, and Mahoney appears beside me at the desk. I point at the box. He gasps at the sight of the baby. 'Take the baby quick, down to the hospital as fast as you can, Constable. Apparently, it's a foundling.'

Mahoney lifts the box gingerly.

'Quick, man. It's a baby, not a bomb! God only knows how long it's been since it was last fed and watered,' I growl. 'It's an emergency. Push yourself ahead of anyone else, even if you have to pull rank, and be sure to tell the nurse that.'

He places the box under his arm and scurries out of the station and down the street, as Mrs Singleton picks up her bag and turns to leave.

'Just a minute, Mrs Singleton, I'd like to take your statement before you go. For the record, you understand.' I try to sound sympathetic.

'I'm a busy woman, Mr Furey, I really don't have time...'

I drop the sympathy. 'It's Sergeant Furey, Mrs Singleton, and I really must insist... Something you tell

us might help us find the baby's mother.'

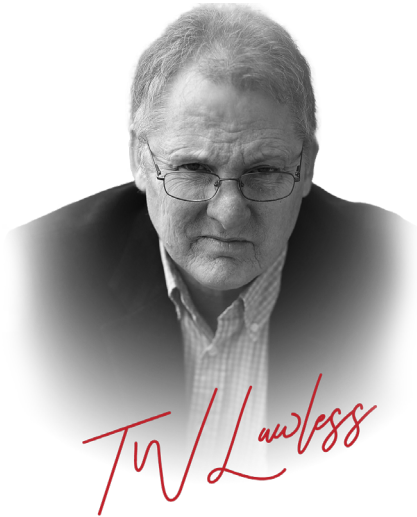
She taps the counter with her lacquered nails. 'I'm no mind reader, Sergeant, but I'd say she doesn't want to be found.'

'Well, regardless, we'll have to try to find her. The interview won't take long, and then you can be on your way.'

She scowls. 'I don't think you understand. I don't want to get involved,' she mutters.

Something's unsettled her. I start to wonder if the baby might not belong to one of her daughters.

'Too late,' I tell her, 'you already are.'



## About T.W. Lawless

After initially studying journalism at university, T.W. Lawless worked as a registered nurse for many years before turning his hand to writing fiction. T.W. is the author of six thrillers, including two Amazon Kindle best-sellers (Homecountry and Thornydevils), as well as the co-writer of the soon-to-be released murder-mystery Furey's War.

His passion is writing, and when he's not writing a book, he's planning the next one

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