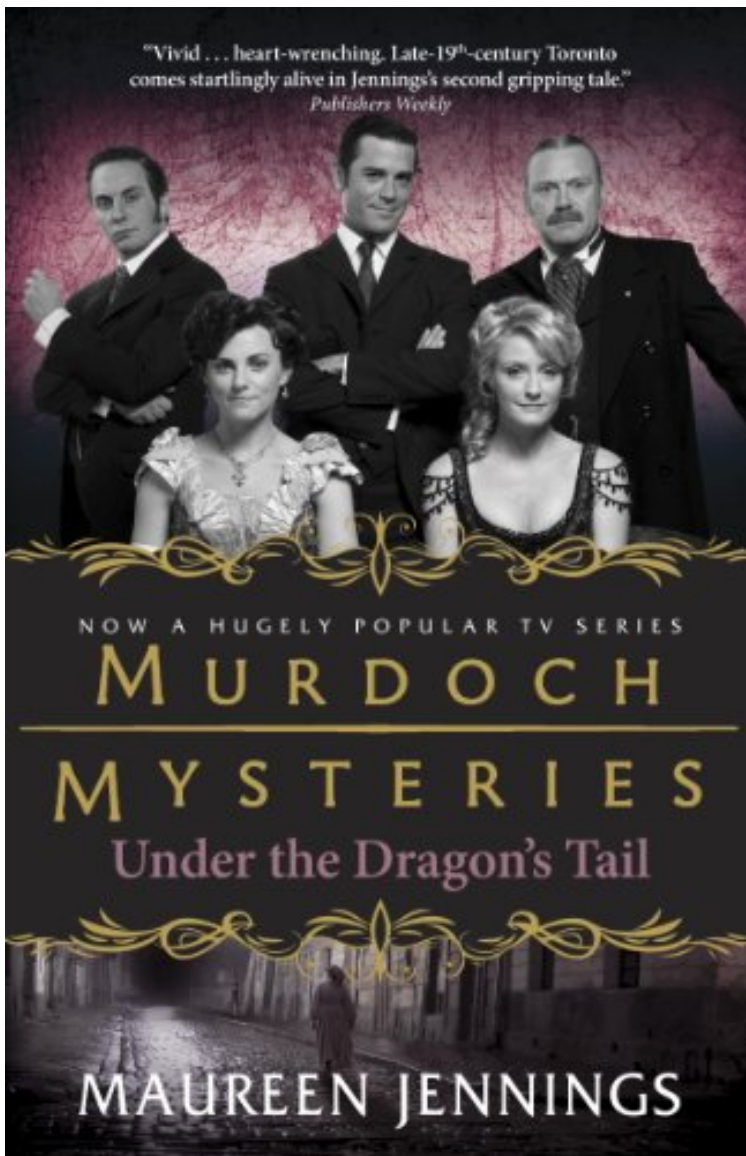


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# Under the Dragon's Tail



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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWomen rich and poor come to her, desperate and in dire need of help and discretion. Dolly Merishaw is a midwife and an abortionist in Victorian Toronto, but although she keeps quiet about her clients condition, her contempt for them and her greed leaves every one of them resentful and angry. So it comes as no surprise to Detective William Murdoch when this malicious woman is murdered. What is a shock, though, is that a week later a young boy is found dead in Dollys squalid kitchen. Now, Murdoch isnt sure if hes hunting one murderer or two.ExtraitChapter OneSunshine was streaming through the kitchen window, making the flies sluggish as they crawled across the pine table. Irritably, Dolly Merishaw swatted a few of them, brushing the carcasses onto the floor. Even that slight effort caused a stabbing pain behind her

eyes. She tried to wet her lips but her tongue was thick as cloth. She picked up the beer jug from the sideboard, but there were only dregs left and a bluebottle had drowned itself in the bottom. She knew the two boys were out scavenging along the Don River and that Lily was delivering laundry to her customers on Gerrard Street, but she resented the fact they weren't here to look after her, to bring her a pot of tea the way she liked. Useless slags, she said out loud. Not that she ever uttered a word of appreciation when her daughter waited on her. In Dolly's opinion, Lily had forfeited the right to thanks. She pushed up the window sash and stuck her head out. The air was warm and soft, the sun caressing. Early July was the best time of the summer, before the August heat roasted the city like a cut of beef. Even for Dolly, the sight of the trees dappling the street was appealing, and she leaned her arms on the windowsill for a moment. Two women bicyclists rode by, both of them sitting straight and rigid at the high handlebars. One was wearing knickerbockers and leggings, and Dolly noticed a passerby turn and glare. Many people were offended by these new bicycling outfits, Rational Dress, as they were called, but Dolly approved. She was happy to see women upset male tempers. She retreated back to the kitchen, wondering if she was well enough to go out. She decided she was. She fancied some calves liver for her breakfast, and Cosgroves, the butcher, wasn't too far. And she could go to the Dominion Brewery on Queen Street. They sold stale beer at a cheap price. Her felt slippers loose on her feet, she shuffled off to the parlour to get dressed. Ever since they had moved to Toronto, Dolly had been essentially living in this one room, as she was usually too full to climb the stairs to her bedroom. She slept on a Turkish couch, and Lily brought her meals on a tray. It was not uncommon for Dolly to throw the food at her daughter if she was displeased and Lily screamed back, raw, wordless cries. In the kitchen the boys listened, ears pricked, wary as fox kits. It took Dolly almost an hour to make the journey, but when she returned to the house, neither her daughter nor her foster sons had returned. Where is the slut? She poured herself some of the flat, bitter ale and took a long swallow. Her parched throat was eased at once. She put the package of meat on the table and opened it up, smoothing out the newspaper that the butcher had used to wrap the liver. Her glance was idle at first, but suddenly she paused, bent closer, and squinted at a photograph on the inside page. My, my, look who it isn't. A smear of blood partly obscured the picture but the caption confirmed her. She plopped the liver on the table and carefully tore the piece out of the newspaper. She read the notice again. What luck. Good for her, but bad for the other one. Clutching the strip of paper, she trotted off to the parlour, moving with more vigour than she had in a long time. The room was hot and buzzed with flies feeding off the remains of last night's stew. The curtains were still closed but she didn't open them. She could see well enough and she wanted privacy. Beneath the window was her prized desk. She went over to it, pulling out a leather thong that hung around her neck. The key was never anywhere else, and it was warm and greasy from nestling between her breasts. She unlocked the desk, rolled back the top, and sat down. There wasn't much inside. A blotter, a tarnished silver inkwell and steel pen, a jar of her special herbs, the tin where she kept her money. Usually she enjoyed counting the coins and the bills, but today she shoved the tin aside and pulled open the drawer at the back of the desk. Reverently, she took out a vellum autograph album. One of her clients had left it behind years ago, and Dolly had appropriated it for use as her record book. The cover was soft and supple, royal blue with the word Friends embossed in gold letters. The paper was thick and creamy. She placed the piece of newspaper on the blotter, wiped her fingers on her skirt, and opened the album. It didn't take her long to find the entry she wanted. In the eight years that had passed since then, her business had lessened considerably, and over the last three years there were no birth entries at all. Carefully, she tore out one of the unused pages and placed it on the blotter. She picked up the pen. The nib was crusty with dried ink but usable, and the inkwell hadn't dried out. She stroked, Dear Bugger! There was a blob of ink on the paper. Perhaps she'd better practise first. I'm sure you remember the occasion of our first meeting. The only way a person would forget that was if they were dead and she knew that wasn't the case. I have had some family troubles which has forced me into changing my name for reasons of privacy as I am sure you of all people can understand. Even writing that down made Dolly flush with anger. She'd been ruined through no fault of her own. I did as good by you as I could. Times are hard, my business has fallen off. A small gratuity would be kindly received. Or else . . . Revue de presse Vivid heartwrenching. Late-19th-century Toronto comes startlingly alive in Jennings's second gripping tale. Publishers Weekly A very powerful novel. Poison Pen [Murdochs] warm heart makes him the right sleuth for this cold city. New York Times There are touches of Anne Perry and Peter Lovesay in her clear-eyed look at the social ills of the period. Denver Post Grab a copy of Under the Dragons Tail [Jennings has] a wonderful ability to describe this place and time. Mystery Collectors BookLine A stupendously stimulating historical

mystery that will garner new readers for a rising star. Feminist Mystery s