

Mary Wilds

## Mrs. Medea

She was my first murderer. I'd been catapulted into crime reporting before I knew what had hit me; doesn't it always go that way? One minute I'd been toasting freedom (from school) with my friends, and the next I found myself in a newsroom, hundreds of miles away. I suffered that shock one always feels when one starts to work. You are getting up early, for the rest of your life. Given how far away my new job was from home, I spent most of my time with strangers. Hoping I was convincing them I was not a fraud. That all this was a façade. That I didn't know what I was down, however much I pretended I did. Luckily, most of us on the crime beat investigated the mundane. Met with cops to hear about break-ins, and the occasional bank robbery. Then things got real, and very quickly. There was a very memorable story in the air. And I'd be picked to cover it: why they picked me and not one of the other crime reporters I'll never know. Might have been as simple as an eeny, meeny, miny, mo. Who knows? But the reason grew less important than the fact that I'd have to do it. Interview Maggie Corcoran, infamous murderer, before she got sent off to the big house. Killer of children, namely her own. Yes, forerunner of Susan Smith, Andrea Yates, Diane Downs. Far more hands-on than Susan had been; Maggie did her own dirty work. Far colder and calculating than Andrea. Maggie didn't even pretend she was sending them to God. She just wanted them dead. And, a woman who would just deal with the truth, unlike Diane. No story of a bushy-haired stranger. She did it. No

bones about it, too. So, there she was, and I'd have to interview her. Find out about her. I researched as much as I could. She was local, part of a very prominent family, there'd be more out there about her than there'd be with most people. She certainly came from money. Richer than any other murderer in this state. Though all the money in the world wouldn't have helped her. Not after she killed her own kids. Now, before she killed her own kids Maggie was a spoiled rich girl. Rebellious, like a lot of them are. She chose a guy who'd pissed her family off. Aren't those the best kind? He did not come from money; he was a commoner in their eyes. But she was going to marry him. She knew her parents well enough that threatening to go to Vegas would get them to pony up for a big wedding. So, she had it all. The veil, church, the flowers, him. She even got her kids' baptism photos in all the papers. Usually, none of them ran those photos. But Maggie was a Corcoran, so they made exceptions.

But Corcoran or no, she wasn't immune, to what men sometimes do. She risked all for him, then what did he do? Fall for a younger woman. Move out on Maggie and sue for full custody of the kids. Her family rather unhelpful, from the looks of it. Maybe they felt, Maggie'd made her bed, she'd better lie in it. Little did they know, Maggie wasn't going to lie anywhere. The kids were alone at his new house, with their new stepmother. Maggie barged over there; her ex had made the mistake of assembling an arsenal. All she needed was one. It was all over in minutes for the victims. Not over for her, though. And it certainly was not going to be over for me, not for a while. not for me. I had to go over and interview her. Along with reps from all the other papers. National and otherwise. I'd be like wholly intimidated. Preparing for it as best I could. But how could I prepare? How do you prepare for someone who did the worst she could have done? I didn't know. Neither did my editors. Which was probably why they just talked at me. Gave me all the particulars. How it would be done. She'd be shackled to a table, I'd be on the opposite side. I'd stay in my chair whilst she was in the room, and not pass anything to her, or touch her. As if I ever would.

Our photographer, like all the photographers on all the other papers, dealt with fewer rules. He'd get to hover around her, apparently, like a bee; whatever helped him get the best

shots. Pretty much, he and the others would get left alone. Us words people would get told what to say and how to say it. Probably because everyone thinks they know about words, but are a little less confident on images. So I'd be prepped, until I felt like a turkey. A turkey about to take on a cage fight. Everyone had an opinion on how to get her to talk, how to verbally punch. So, on that morning, I'd drive to the jail. I'd be the first one scheduled. I'd watch her come into the room. (They might have handled it with a press conference. But who the hell wants to give someone like her a press conference?) I and the photographer would be taken into a room, where we'd wait. Maggie's advance, two people at her side. Her appearance surprised me. I'd seen many pictures of her, but none had brought home how small she was. How – bland-looking. Her hair chopped into what could have been a concentration camp cut. Her body wholly shapeless in the uniform. She was so un-wicked, so uninspiring. She'd done fearsome deeds, yes, but did not look like those deeds at all. So, why would she do them?

She'd let me know. I wouldn't be prepared for it. But she would. Our photographer began to snap first. She glared at him; her hands tightly shackled. But not so tight she couldn't move them. Not so tight she couldn't hold up the middle finger of her right hand.

“For my husband,” she said.

Well. There it was. I started the interview.