

0. THINGS LOOK BAD FOR LIZZIE - Story Preface

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Why was Lizzie Borden charged with the murders? Was she the one who brutalized her father so badly that his eye was practically out of its socket?

Borden's head was bent slightly to the right, but his face was almost unrecognizable as human; one eye had been cut in half and protruded in a ghastly manner, his nose had been severed, and there were eleven distinct cuts within a relatively small area extending from the eye and nose to the ears. Fresh blood was still seeping from the wounds, which were so severe that the first of the eleven blows must have killed him. (Robert Sullivan, *Goodbye Lizzie Borden*, page 30.)

And, if Lizzie really did commit the murders, why wasn't there blood all over her and her clothes?

During the inquest, Lizzie gave different answers to simple questions. Was it because she was confused? Is it likely she was confused by direct direct questions such as:

Where were you when your father came home?

Here are the various answers she gave to that straightforward question.

I was down in the kitchen. Reading an old magazine that had been left in the cupboard, an old Harper's Magazine. (Inquest testimony, Part I, page 60 [17].)

A few seconds later, the District Attorney asked if she was "sure you were in the kitchen when your father returned?" Lizzie responded:

I am not sure whether I was there or in the dining room.

A few minutes later the question was put in a slightly different way:

Q: Where were you when the bell rang? [Her father couldn't get into the house because the door lock was bolted.]

A: I think in my room up stairs.

Q: Then you were up stairs when your father came home?

A: I don't know sure, but I think I was.

A split second later she said:

I was on the stairs when she [the maid] let him [her father] in...I had only been upstairs long enough to take the clothes up and baste the little loop on the sleeve. I don't think I had been up there over five minutes. [Remember Abby had been killed in the guest bedroom which was upstairs.]

Within two pages of testimony Lizzie had given completely different answers to a simple question. Was she reading a magazine in the kitchen; sewing upstairs; or walking down the stairs when her father came home?

Trying to get a straight answer, District Attorney [Hosea Knowlton](#) finally asked:

...You remember, that you told me several times that you were downstairs, and not upstairs, when your father came home? You have forgotten, perhaps?

Lizzie responded:

I don't know what I have said. I have answered so many questions and I am so confused I don't know one thing from another. I am telling you just as nearly as I know.

Frustrated at Lizzie's apparent lack of truthfulness, Knowlton tried again:

Q: ...Which now is your recollection of the true statement, of the matter, that you were down stairs when the bell rang and your father came?

A: I think I was down stairs in the kitchen.

Q: And then you were not upstairs?

A: I think I was not; because I went up almost immediately, as soon as I went down, and then came down again and stayed down.

Lizzie had to be downstairs if she wanted to avoid being charged with Abby's murder. Her stepmom was dead upstairs. If Lizzie had been upstairs for more than a few minutes, she would be a murder suspect.

During the next part of the inquest, Lizzie harmed herself even more.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THINGS-LOOK-BAD-FOR-LIZZIE-Lizzie-Borden>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THINGS-LOOK-BAD-FOR-LIZZIE-Lizzie-Borden>

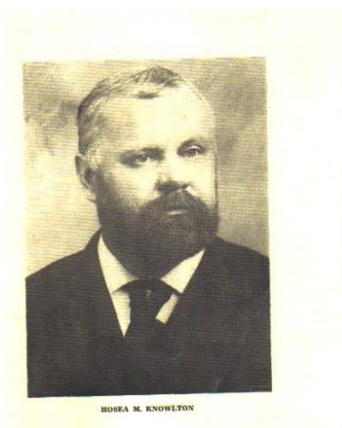
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Goodbye Lizzie Borden

Image online, courtesy Amazon.

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Hosea Knowlton

Image online, courtesy Fall River police department.

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Lizzie Borden - Contradictory Testimony at the Inquest

From *The Legend of Lizzie Borden*, with Elizabeth Montgomery in the title role.

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