BLUNT INSTRUMENT CAPER

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Police Lieutenant Arthur Jamison scanned the typewritten verse, verified that each letter was correctly positioned, then glanced up at Sergeant Robert Johnson who stood in front of his desk.

"Relax, Johnson. Sit down. Now review the facts of our present case. I want to be sure of my decision."

"Last Monday morning, we were called in to investigate the death of Vladimir Larson. The maid had found him face down on the carpet when she went in to clean the room. Initial review indicated that Larson's forehead had been fractured by a heavy blunt instrument. We searched the room but did not find anything that could have caused the fatal wound. I checked with the room clerk and other employees of Hotel Grenoble but no one knew who had visited Larson. A waiter of the hotel restaurant recalled Larson had a meal at 9:00 P.M. the previous Sunday evening."

"Yes, Johnson, this fact enabled the coroner to establish time of death as between 11 and 12 P.M. How did you find the names of our three prime suspects?"

"In searching his jacket pocket I found a piece of paper with three names printed thereon. I learned from a private source that Larson was a petty blackmailer. He had no job and lived off his victims."

Johnson continued, "I was with you when you interviewed all three suspects. Melissa Prant, the television reporter, claimed that in addition to being blackmailed that she also had been raped by Larson. However, on that Sunday evening, she had attended a party at a friend's house and had not left until one in the morning. Later I checked with her friend but she could not verify the time when Melissa had left."

"What was your impression of Howard Bauer, the Chief Chemist at Pharmicon?"

"He sounded convincing when he said he did not know how Larson had gotten his name. As for the night in question, he had watched a late television rerun until 1:30 Monday morning. His sister who was present during the interview verified this statement.

"The last suspect was Lavey Travis, the night club comic. He stated he had reason to kill Larson, but on that Sunday evening he had presented

two shows at the Montrose Hotel until midnight. However, there was a gap of 30 minutes between shows, and it was possible to get to Hotel Grenoble and back in that time."

"Very good, Johnson. Everything checks. Though alibis can be disproved, our best case is the blunt instrument. The lab has established its nature. And in my estimation only peculiar to a certain class of people."

"What do we do now?"

"We arrest the killer. Here is the proof I have typed. Now I may not be as ingenious as Guy Orient in the Case of the Acro-Double or as versatile as the blackmailer in the Transposal Murder Mystery. However, you should not have any difficulty in determining who the killer is before we make the arrest."

Crime masquerade caused blackmailer's scrawl in blood: Vie Insight.
Robust inspector observed "Death of Norse male, smashed front blame."
Intense confrere made cryptic claim "Cause, odd heavy blunt frame."
Madam journalist insisted "Though raped, I defied Norse."
Emphatic boorish chemist, though pressed, strongly denied force.

Scoffing nastily puny black comic quipped "I might wail,
Considering cold rat's racket, but I ignored whitemail."
Obscure Sherlock observed depth, measured wound's length with
    hand scope.
Omnipotent shape should be knob, he thought, as sleuth scanned hope.
Pleasantly solve enigma, surely with a sigh invite.

The answer to the mystery can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.

FUTURE MEETINGS

WHIM (Western Humor and Irony Membership) is planning its second stone-soup conference on linguistic humor at Arizona State University. The conference will be held from March 31 to April 2, 1983, and the theme will be "Farfetched Figures: The Humor of Linguistic Deviance". Proposals dealing with any aspect of humorous metaphor should be sent to Don L. F. Nilsen, English Department, Arizona State University, Tempe AZ 85287. A $20 registration fee must accompany each proposal.