

# LAST MAN CIRCUIT: CIRCUMSTANTIAL

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IN CASE OF MY DEATH, PLEASE DELIVER TO POLICE Leonard Fromken

Police Lieutenant Arthur Jamison turned his gaze from the message on the front of the sealed envelope to the man seated across from him.

"My name is Lemuel Carter. I am a lawyer. I would have come in sooner but I was at a retreat conducted by the Victory Baptist Church over the weekend. When I returned home last night, Monday, I received a telephone call from Mr. Powell. He told me Mr. Fromken had died Saturday morning. I went to my office early this morning so I could bring you that envelope. Please tell me how Mr. Fromken died."

"He was found dead, face down in a flower bed in Moreland Park. We contacted his doctor who advised us that Mr. Fromken had had a heart condition and had been scheduled for a coronary bypass in the near future. An autopsy verified the diagnosis. Apparently Mr. Fromken had been jogging and had suffered a heart attack. Any reason why it should be more than an ordinary heart attack?" Lieutenant Jamison slit open the envelope, withdrew the single sheet of paper, and read the following verse:

Lethal tontine chills as six friends (?) sign - whom will contract pick?  
Adverse notion insane predicts mad greedy liar, misdeed.  
Sanguine deeds rattle survivors as false clues dire mislead.  
Tempered steel curtly ends night's tryst - did voice of fencer call?

Midnight tower upsets swain - did betrayed for censor fall?  
Acrid mushroom megrim chokes - was smorgasbord Mormon's fare?  
Neighing mount slides when spurred - why did clown ride foreman's mare?

Cunning shadow treads lightly - could tight force be lawyer (sash)?  
Insured trusts ally - was sad betrayal that of sawyer (lash)?  
Rascal reviles nausea wry - did victims see foe glower?  
Compulsion odd tyrant becomes - why leave clue: sego flower?  
Urbane manners incite crimes, death springs from infernal tact.  
Intense sleuth amends course - is glaring clue internal fact?  
Thwarted irate last survivor receives not compact trick.

"Lieutenant, Mr. Fromken visited me last Friday afternoon. He said that he had been suspicious about the death of Henry Scott. If something happened to him, I was to give you that envelope. He didn't tell me what he had written."

"Here is what he wrote. Did Scott's death have anything to do with the agreement Mr. Fromken referred to?"

"Yes. Four months ago, Mr. Fromken asked me to draw up an agreement between him and five other men. Each man would put up \$20,000 which would be placed in a joint bank account. The last man alive would receive \$120,000 plus interest. However, if death would occur other than by accident or by natural causes, then, at time of such proof, the agreement would be terminated and money plus interest would be divided equally among the remaining innocent survivors. A month after the six men signed the agreement, I received a call in my office from Mr. Scott. His voice was slurred. I gathered that he had been drinking. He said the agreement should be cancelled and that he was coming to my office. I was standing by my window overlooking the street. I saw a car speed around the corner. The driver couldn't make the proper turn and the car bumper smashed against a concrete light pole. I called the police and rushed downstairs. The front door had jammed and the firemen had to pry open the door before they could extricate Scott. But it was too late. He hadn't worn his seat belt and he had died when his head had slammed against the metal dashboard. Strangely I still recall the smell of liquor and the flower in his lapel. Here are the names of the remaining four survivors: Maurice Powell, Jonathon Young, James Carpenter and Montague April."

"Mr. Powell, I am Lieutenant Jamison. I called."

"Come in. Please excuse the smoke. My doctor tells me I should quit, but what have I got besides smoking and playing cards every Wednesday night? Sit down, please."

"Under ordinary circumstances, I wouldn't be here. But here is a poem Mr. Fromken gave to his lawyer the day before Mr. Fromken died."

"I wish Fromken had never brought up the idea. For six years we have no sickness. Now after we sign, two men are dead."

"Why did you sign?"

"My wife, Sarah, God rest her soul, died in Auschwitz. I managed to survive. Money is not that important anymore. They sign, I sign. As for the poem, the first letter of each line reads "Last Man Circuit". Does that mean I should watch my step?"

"Good afternoon, Mr. Young. Nice spread you have here."

"Just big enough, Lieutenant, to breed a few horses for the race tracks. One of my stallions, Whitney's Boy, won the Preakness last year. I gather you want to talk about the deaths of Scott and Fromken. Anything out of the ordinary?"

"Here is a poem Mr. Fromken gave to his lawyer the day before he died. Why did you sign the agreement?"

"Business, Lieutenant. I don't drink. I don't smoke and I don't womanize. I'm sure I can outlive the others. The only one I was concerned about was Scott. When he signed the agreement, he boasted that his grandmother had died at age 102. The poem means

nothing to me. No names are mentioned but then Fromken was devious."

"Good evening, Mr. Carpenter. The bartender said you liked martinis."

"Thanks. Will this take long? I have a date."

"It concerns the agreement you signed and the two deaths that occurred afterwards. Mr. Fromken must have had a foreboding for here is a poem he gave to his lawyer. Why did you sign the agreement?"

"Though I'm not a religious person, I believe in fate. That is why I took the gamble. Is there anything in this poem that says I won't be the sole survivor?"

"Good afternoon, Mr. April. My name is Police Lieutenant Arthur Jamison. I enjoyed your class and your views on Chaucer."

"Getting students, whose IQ is comparable to that of the soap opera, to appreciate English literature is a thankless chore. Pardon me while I wash away the feeling of hopelessness with a shot of rye. Does your visit have to do with the untimely deaths of Scott and Fromken?"

"The day before he died, Mr. Fromken gave this poem to Lemuel Carter, the lawyer who drew up the agreement you and five others signed. Why did you sign?"

"It intrigued my Celtic heritage. Being an English professor is a boring existence. Pondering on what intelligence that might have caused the deaths of Scott and Fromken gave life a dangerous fillip. Now, Lieutenant, the poem has punctured that feeling of apprehension. Now that the poem has warned me, I don't need my Cymric Gods to protect me."

"Anything definite on the case you are working on, Jamison?"

"Nothing that we can go to court with, Chief. Without this poem of Leonard Fromken, there was nothing in the deaths of Scott and Fromken to warrant further investigation. If one of the four remaining survivors contrived the two deaths, the poem indicates who that person might be."

"I see no name in the poem. Explain."

Note to reader: The solution to the mystery can be found in Answers and Solutions at the end of this issue.