

POETIC JUSTICE

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Police Lieutenant Arthur Jamison was not pleased with Sergeant Johnson. Despite seventeen years on the force, his black and gray hair needed a haircut, while a paunch was evident behind the unpressed uniform.

"Sit down, Robert. Please give me all you have on the Tracy Glitter murder."

"Monday morning, September 9th, Melanie Knight, the maid, called us. She cried that her mistress had been killed. We went to the Parkland Arms where the dead night-club singer had an apartment. We found her nude body on the bed. There was a lot of blood. Her throat had been slashed. We searched the apartment but we could not find the murder weapon.

"After the ambulance took away the dead body, I questioned the other tenants. Sophie Horowitz, a widow and next door neighbor, said she had been awakened by loud voices having an argument. Then the voices stopped. She had looked at the radiant numerals on her digital clock before she went back to sleep. The numerals read 12:58. I later checked with the coroner. He verified that time as the time of the murder. From the angle of the slash, he was sure it had been done by a right arm.

"I questioned the maid about Tracy's men friends. She showed me a photograph taken of her dead mistress and three men seated around a table. I went to the Last Rites Night Club and talked to Barney Hutchkiss, the owner. He named the three men. Frazil Azman, an oil sheik; Keith Hopeland, a rich playboy; and Mark Kline, an airplane pilot. All three had designs on Tracy. In fact, Azman and Kline had been in the night club Sunday evening. They had been disappointed because she had taken the night off. Words led to an argument and Hutchkiss made them leave about 11:20 P.M. I drove back to the Parkland Arms. Traffic was light yet it still took 35 minutes.

"I went to the Sheffield Suites and talked to Hopeland in his penthouse. He was drunk. Hutchkiss had called him. He was opening a new bottle of Scotch to further drown his sorrow. As he did so, the bottle slipped out of his right hand and fell to the carpet. He explained that he had sprained his wrist the previous Thursday and couldn't hold anything heavy. On Sunday evening, he had been home alone. He could be the prime suspect, but I don't think we have enough to make a case."

"So, Robert, you have come to a dead end."

"Correct."

"Do you believe in coincidences, Robert? Coincidences so amazing they stretch the bounds of credulity? I believe these coincidences have solved this case."

"Explain."

"Two days ago, Mr. Ross Eckler, the editor of Word Ways, visited me. He had read about the murder in the Times-Sentinel. Something about the facts disturbed him. He said it was like a form of *deja vu*, like he had read about the murder before in an old issue of Word Ways. It took him some time but when he found it, he said it was like a prophecy of Nostradamus. Here is a typed copy of the item. Look it over, Robert, and see how it relates to the present case."

Scene: wild slayer slashes beauty with strange blade.

Upshot: old erratic sergeant assigned case.

Stray cast: restless playboy, Moslem sheik, flight ace.

Prime clue: groans heard by neighbor at 1:00 that night.

Exact time: elegant sheik and ace in fight.

Nasty fact: arthritis crippled playboy's hand.

Sad ending: negatives showed her fourth brand.

Enigma why? taunted lover on downgrade.

"Unbelievable, Lieutenant. I agree that there are a number of coincidences, but what does it have to do with the Tracy Glitter murder?"

"It made me think. Why didn't the killer leave the murder weapon? Could it be the 'strange blade' mentioned in the poem? Was the killer afraid someone would recognize it? Perhaps someone knew about the killer's odd collection of weapons? From your years of experience, how well can you clean off all the blood? Isn't it possible that microscopic flecks still can be found? Now from your years of experience, what would be the most irrefutable bit of evidence?"

The voice was low. "That the blood type of the fleck would match the blood type of the murdered woman."

"Correct, Robert. Don't you think we have sufficient evidence to charge the 'fourth brand'?"

The voice was sad and resigned. "Yes, Lieutenant."

ANACHUTTLERY

This is the name of a new mini-magazine devoted to the most outrageous form of verse, the Anachuttle. The first issue is free; write to Walter Shedlofsky, 7923 Lafon Place, St. Louis MO 63130.