

MURDER AS WRITTEN

There will be time to murder and create. T.S. Eliot

Every murderer is probably somebody's old friend. Agatha Christie

An honorable murderer, if you will; For naught I did in hate, but all in honor. Shakespeare

And Then There Were None. Agatha Christie

I am a great foe of favoritism in public life, in private life, and even in the delicate relationship of an author to his works. Joseph Conrad

When you steal from one author, it's plagiarism; if you steal from many, it's research.

Wilson Mizner

This is a posthumous declaration. As I am sure most of you appreciate, I was a very popular murder mystery author. I will now pose perhaps the greatest mystery I have ever been privy to. If you are reading this brief note of mine then you must be made aware that I have been murdered and I put it to you that together we shall attempt to determine who was responsible for my demise. You might think that since I know that I have been put to death criminally then I would also know who was responsible. Actually I suspect that I do but I want you to solve it. Do not fret. I will unravel the mystery at the end of this tale; or will I?

All I can say is that it was so cleverly conceived that even I, the victim, could not fathom exactly who the culprit was, although I am pretty sure I know how the deed was accomplished. I will get to that shortly.

One of the problems is that I had a host of enemies, all with excellent motives for doing me in. As a matter of fact I cannot think of one individual whom I could consider a true friend. Examples are: all my wives, whom I abused while committing adultery; my agent, lawyer, accountant, and publisher all of whom were under my thumb because I had incriminating evidence that would have destroyed them and their families; my numerous off-springs, both legitimate and illegitimate whom I disowned because I did not wish to be burdened with them, so that they that received no assistance from me; and finally my mistresses who were also the victims of my cruel and sadistic nature. It is evident that there are plenty of intimates with abundant motives for hastening my departure from this life. Yet all of them, without exception, have unshakeable alibis. In any case they are too obvious as suspects.

I find the homicidal method employed quite ingenious and ironic. After all it was an exact copy of one used in one of my mystery novels. I have a chamber in my home that only I can enter. It requires the use of a code known only to me; voice recognition; an examination of the irises in my eyes; and the sampling of my DNA. Further, once in that room I am the only one who knew how to exit it. Also, in case I had a heart attack or fell seriously ill or fainted while in the room there were sensors that would sound an alarm and open the door. That was the only way my body could be and was discovered. I had been shot yet there was no trace of the gun nor of the murderer. You, the reader, might wonder why I did not have closed circuit television monitoring everything happening in my very private enclave. I simply did not think that it was necessary. No one besides me was ever supposed to be in that chamber. It had been designed to offer the ultimate in privacy. It had never occurred to me that I might need protection. In any case I did have closed circuit television allowing me to view any part of my home from anywhere within it, with the exception of my private facility.

Somehow my slayer had become part of my household staff. He was smart enough to make sure that no one ever paid him much attention while learning everything he could about my personal habits. Unfortunately I was a creature with a fixed routine. I would escape to my private room everyday, usually to contemplate my next murder mystery opus. To assist my creative thoughts I found that quaffing a glass of my favorite sherry was of enormous benefit. It was not very difficult for him to spike my drink with a sedative that would act after about twenty minutes. He patiently waited while hovering near the door of my private room and as soon as the alarm sounded, he opened the door, committed his foul deed and left. The alarm had not been heard because it was always briefly preceded by a red light. He chose a day when the staff was mostly outside and the sound ceased immediately after he entered the room and shot me.

Now this is supposed to be a 'Who Dunit'. So, who did it? As another famous fictional detective once put it, "When all the possibilities except one have been eliminated, that one is the only possible explanation. As stated earlier this homicide was an exact replica of a murder that I had created for one of my murder mysteries. Upon reflection the only possibility is that this was a collective murder and that you, the reader, whoever you are, is implicated in my murder. First of all, and most telling, the victim in my story was also an author who had ingeniously concocted his own murder. Second, and of equal import, is the enormous success I have had with the literary trash that a most gullible public has consumed with a voracious appetite for the books, which also generated equally horrible movies and a TV series. There is no doubt that I am a literary snob. I think that the great literary works originally written in English can be counted on our fingers. The market, as a democratic ideal, is adequate in determining price, but not intrinsic value. In any case, if my 'junk' stories had not been so successful, no one would have gotten the bright idea of how to do me in.

The only question that remains, is whether the preceding is another work of fiction or did it actually occur? If it is the former, how many more murders will be induced?

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