

DIANE'S DEMISE

Diane

Diane picked up the pearl earring off the floor of the hallway at the Evergreen Country Club. "Oh," she thought, "this pearl looks real." She loved pearls. She ran it across her teeth. "It is real" she thought, "how lovely". She looked around furtively to see if anyone saw her. No one was there. "Nice", she thought. "I can make this into a lovely necklace—" she hugged herself, delightedly. She loved pearls.

She was at the country club that morning to meet Joe, the golf pro for brunch. She smiled to herself remembering with great pleasure how she had beat him at golf—him a professional player and her just an amateur. The big egomaniac had bet her \$1,000 that she couldn't beat him. She pulled his score card from her pocket to relish the win again. Knowing Joe, he would have altered his score, if she hadn't swiped it off his cart yesterday. Wouldn't he be surprised, when she shoved it under his nose at brunch today and demanded her money. He was so smug, because he'd played professionally and was so handsome—as if she'd swoon at his feet. And he was married. What a jerk. Although his wife, Maude was no prize. She was not pretty or even handsome—ugly, she was ugly and there was no getting around it. He obviously married her for her money. Which was very odd, Diane thought. Maude had practically begged Diane to hire her as the Banquet Manager at the Club. And why would Maude need a job? It made no sense. Maude's family owned the largest Apple Ranch in the state—in the country. The woman dressed very expensively, so she obviously had money. And let's face it, why else would Joe have married her. It made no sense, but what the heck do I care, she thought. Maybe she thinks she can keep an eye on Joe, if she works here. And Maude does make really delicious little bundt cakes. Diane smiled as she noticed icing on her finger from the last cake that she had swiped even though it looked like Joe wanted it. She had just stepped out to use the little girls room before they sat down to brunch and she rubbed his nose in his humiliating loss to a girl. She started to smile at the thought, but suddenly Diane had a very funny feeling. Not funny, haha, funny her insides were suddenly being ripped out. She grasped the nearest door and practically fell in. It was the Men's room. She thought desperately, water, I need water.

Henry

Henry didn't usually work on Sundays. His hours were supposed to be pretty routine, 8 to 4 weekdays. That left him plenty of time to work on his invention. And working as a handy man at the Evergreen Country Club gave him a great opportunity to test his water savings devise that he knew was going to revolutionize the industry—he just needed a little more time. He kicked himself for being so stupid as to declare his undying love for the beautiful Diane, last night. She was so beautiful and in the moonlight... he was so close to being a millionaire from his invention, he could feel it. So he got carried away and told her how he felt. She had laughed at him and not a sympathetic laugh—a really mean laugh. For being so beautiful outside, it was clear it was only skin deep, but he really thought he could change her. And now she was going to recommend to the board that they fire him. This was the perfect place to work to be able to test his invention. And he lived at the country club off the shed and the basement provided a perfect workshop. He had been homeless before and he really didn't want to be homeless

ever again. But all of his funds were tied up in his invention. He just couldn't lose this job. He had to find a way to talk to Diane before Monday. She always came to the brunch on Sunday, so he switched hours with the weekend guy. He had to find her. He was sweating bullets, he was so nervous. He wiped his head with his handkerchief, which fell out of his pocket as he left after cleaning the men's room on his way to the ladies' room. He always felt so odd knocking on the door of the ladies' room to clean it and hearing no response, he rushed in to get it over with.

Joe

Joe was nervously tapping his foot. It made him look impatient, but it was pure nerves. He was so handsome, he could often hide his nerves by looking impervious. You had to use the tools you had, he thought. He must have been nuts to put money on the game yesterday. Diane was so beautiful, but heck, he was pretty darn handsome. Women fell at his feet all the time. She was a tough nut. And she's on the board of the Country Club. If he didn't pay her, it could mean his job. He liked this job. Lots of bored rich women. He just couldn't ask his wife, Maude for the money. She was already peeved because she found lipstick on his collar. How the heck was he supposed to come up with a good excuse for lipstick on his collar. He thought, I'll bet that Mary Ann thought it would be cute to get him in trouble. Maude controlled the purse strings, so he really couldn't afford that kind of trouble, thank you very much. Maybe Mary Ann would loan him \$1,000 to pay off Diane. And well, he wouldn't mind seeing Mary Ann again—he could act all mad that she got him in trouble and get her to suggest that she find a way to make it up to him. Use the tools you have, he thought. Where was Diane? She took the last cake that he liked so much—just how long was he supposed to wait for her...

Maude

Joe thinks he looks so important, Maude thought disgustedly. Washed up old golf pro. How pathetic. How could her parents have thought marrying him would be a good idea—it was a nightmare. She hated him. She hated him with every fiber of her being. She really didn't understand how she didn't explode right then and there.

The Plot Thickens

Joe got up and asked Maude, if she had seen Diane come back from the restroom. Maude said "no." "Well, maybe you should go look for her." Joe said a little exasperated. "She's been in there a long time." Maude went to the ladies room with Joe close behind her and opened the door. Henry was there and looked extremely nervous. "Have you seen Diane?" said Maude. "No." said Henry defensively. Just then, there was a scream.

Old Mr. Snowden screamed like a little girl from the men's room. Maude, Joe and Henry ran to see what was wrong. Diane was sprawled out on the floor just inside the door. She looked horrible and Maude screamed and became hysterical. It was clear that Diane was dead. More people from the brunch filled the hallway to see what was wrong. Maude collapsed outside the door and Joe clumsily patted her hand. Henry ran to call 911. Henry tried to feel badly that the beautiful Diane was dead, but instead he felt relief—all of his problems were solved.

Detective Jen

Detective Jen Cleary thought, what a posh place this is, as she drove up to the Evergreen Country Club. Must be nice to be surrounded by beauty like this all the time. The valet came toward her, but she flashed her badge and parked in the red. The perk of being a cop, she thought. Too bad her Sunday was shot. And too bad that she had spent all day Saturday into the late evening finishing paperwork. Funny how the only woman detective on the squad got stuck with the most paperwork, but the good news was that since she had finished it all, there was no excuse not to put her at the top of the list to catch the next body. But did it have to be on a Sunday, she groaned internally.

The coroner had beat her there—probably trying to get brownie points from the rich posh crowd, she thought—he does have to get elected. “Poison,” he said, when she entered the room. The body looked pretty awful, but at least it didn’t stink yet—well, much. “Any idea what?” she asked. “Not yet. I’ll have to do labs—open her up. I’ll try to get you a report first thing tomorrow.” He said. Jen turned to the officer at the door and asked, “who found the body?” He pointed her toward an elderly man sitting on a chair leaning heavily on a cane. “Does anyone know who she is?” she asked. A good looking man stepped forward and said, “She’s Diane Lambert. She’s on the board of Directors for the Evergreen Country Club.” “And you are?” Jen asked. “I’m Joe Jenkins. I’m the golf pro at Evergreen. I was having brunch with Diane this morning.” He said. “Joe Jenkins? My dad watched you play in the pros. You were his favorite player. So you work here at Evergreen Country Club?” Jen, all but gushed. Her dad was going to get such a kick out of her meeting one of his favorite players. Then she remembered why she was there and dimmed her smile down. “Well, what happened this morning?” she asked trying to regain her professionalism. “I arrived early for brunch—my wife runs the banquet and I wanted to see her first. Diane arrived right on time, but stepped out to go to the restroom, before we sat down. When she was taking so long, I asked my wife to check on her, but Diane wasn’t in the ladies room. Then we heard a scream—from the men’s room and we found her there dead.” “And why were you meeting with the victim this morning?” “As I said, she’s a board member and I work here. It was usual for us to eat brunch together.” “Ok. Oh, by the way, did you see if she ate or drank anything, before she went to the restroom?” Jennifer narrowed her eyes as it seemed that Joe Jenkins seemed to hesitate and smile kind of weirdly, “Cake,” he said. “Diane grabbed the last little bundt cake off the table and ate it right there, before she excused herself.” “Cake?” asked Detective Jen. “Yes,” said Joe. “My wife, Maude makes the best Cakes and Diane got the last one.” “Ok, thank you. Please give the officer your contact information, in case I need to speak with you again.”

Cake, she thought. That’ll be weird if the Cake was poison. Best not to jump to conclusions. Lots of ways to poison a body. It’s just a process of elimination.

Detective Jen turned back to the body as the coroner was putting it onto a gurney. “What’s that in her hand?” she asked. The coroner loosened a pearl earring from her hand. They both looked at her ears, but she had both her diamond studs in her ears. Then Detective Jen noticed a piece of paper next to the body. It looked like some kind of a score sheet. She turned to the officer at the door and directed that the evidence around the body be bagged up and asked that forensics dust the place. She looked at the crowd of people in the hallway and thought, it’s going to be a long day.

More Questions, then Answers

Detective Jen sighed. It had been a very long day and she was no farther along than when she started. She had interviewed the receptionist at the club, Trudy, who said that Diane was very nice and had no enemies. She described Diane as having great taste and that she was responsible for the beautiful flower arrangements they had in the lobby. Trudy was really going to miss her. Detective Jen showed Trudy the pearl earring—did she recognize it? Nope. Dead end.

The handyman said something a little odd—he said that Diane was very beautiful, but a little mean. When Jen asked for more specifics, he said, he didn't want to speak ill of the dead. Jen asked if he knew anyone who would want to kill Diane and he said, no, no one. And again, he repeated that she was very beautiful. Funny guy, the handyman—Henry, Henry Johnson. He looked like a professor, more than a handyman—he was dressed in handyman coveralls, but there was real intelligence in his eyes—like he had a lot of big ideas. It was kind of spooky, but Jen felt a little goosebumpy speaking to him. There was something intense about him, but it didn't seem to have anything to do with the murder. Oh well, weird.

The interviews with the other board members didn't yield anything—none of them even knew where Diane lived or how she made her living. Bunch of clueless men. The banquet manager was so distraught over finding the body, she was sedated and taken away in an ambulance. Since she made the cake, Detective Jen, thought, 'I really need to talk to her. Hopefully, she'll know who had access to it. No stone left unturned' she thought.

Back at the station, Detective Jen asked Sargent Will to run a background check on everyone who worked at the Evergreen Country Club—you never knew what might turn up. Forensics' preliminary report said that there were no finger prints found inside the men's room—it seemed that it had just been cleaned prior to Diane going in. And what the heck was she doing in the men's room. The finger prints on the door handle were just Diane's and Mr. Snowden's. Oh well, Jen thought, file it away and move on. There was nothing more to do tonight, but try to salvage the day and have a nice dinner, but no cake.

It's a Monday

Jen overslept. She hated being late, but it's not like she could just roll out of bed and get to the office. It took time to get ready in the morning, no matter how she tried to streamline it. And she'd had no weekend—workday number eight. 'I hate Mondays,' she thought. Captain Maxwell tapped his watch and raised his eyebrows when she got into the office an hour late. He asked her for an update on the Lambert murder. It was poison was all she had to report. 'I hate Mondays,' she thought again as he dismissed her curtly.

The preliminary autopsy report was on her desk. That was lighting fast, she thought—the coroner must really be under a lot of pressure. Arsenic. They were doing more tests to try to pinpoint the type. A trace amount of arsenic was found in the icing on the victim's fingers, but not enough to kill her. The coroner suggested that the icing came into contact with the source of the Arsenic, which was ingested—a large quantity was released into the victim's stomach. He described that the victim could have been fine for a few minutes after ingesting the poison, but that when it was released in her stomach, it was very fast acting. It killed her very fast. 'I hate Mondays,' Jen thought.

Sargent Will stopped by her desk and said, "Everyone at the club is squeaky clean, although the Handyman, Henry Johnson has a few misdemeanors for loitering." "Loitering, where was he loitering?" Jen asked incredulously. Sargent Will looked at the report he held and said, "oh, I know what this is. These are the tickets that we give out to the homeless to move them along from public bathrooms." "Henry Johnson was homeless?" Jen couldn't see it. "It was several years ago—it looks like it was before he got his job as a handyman at Evergreen." "Okay, thanks. Let's call him in for a second interview, just to cover all the bases."

"Hey," said Sargent Will, "did you know that Joe Jenkins works at Evergreen? Isn't he some kind of famous tennis player or something?" "Golf," said Jen, "he's a famous golfer. My dad loves him. You meet all kinds in this job." "Cool," said Will as he wondered away

Detective Jen had still not found a next of kin. Bunch of worthless men at Evergreen Country Club. They seemed to know nothing about Diane, except that she was beautiful and seemed rich. It was time to check out her residence that they found on her DMV records. The address was a modest, but pretty apartment building in a nice part of town. Diane drove a five year old Mercedes. Nice but not ostentatious. She lived alone, but looking through her address book, there were several other Lamberts listed. And one entry for "Mom". 'I hate this part,' thought Jen. "Mom" lived in Washington State, so Jen called her to make the notification. Mrs. Ethel Lambert was shocked and not much help once the crying started. She didn't know anyone who would want to harm her beautiful daughter. She said that Diane's father had died many years ago and left Diane a very nice Trust fund that she lived off. She wasn't seeing anyone that Mrs. Lambert knew of. Diane had never worked, but seemed rather devoted to her Club. Mrs. Lambert said that she thinks Diane was on the board there. Diane loved to play golf. She could have been a professional, but she didn't stick with it. Jen let her go—the crying was getting more intense. 'I hate Mondays,' Jen thought.

There was nothing in her apartment to give her any clues. There was not a match for the pearl earring they found in her hand. There were other pearl jewelry, though. It was clear she liked pearls, but this was just another dead end. File it away.

When she got back to the office, she was told that Henry Johnson was in interview room number 6. She glanced over and could tell that Interview room number 1—the best interview room, was empty, but no, the girl gets interview room 6. 'I hate Mondays,' she thought. With a sigh, she went into the interview room six and turned on the recorder.

"Thank you for coming in, Mr. Johnson. I just have a few more questions." Jen said. "No problem. I have today off, since I worked on Sunday this week." Said Henry. "You don't normally work on Sundays?" asked Jen. "No. I work 8 to 4 Monday through Friday, but I switched with Jason, the weekend guy on Sunday this week." Said Henry just a little nervously. "Why?" asked Jen. "I guess Jason had something to do yesterday." Henry said still nervously. "It was sure awful for me finding Diane's body like that. I think that Maude is still in the hospital, she was so upset." And Henry continued nervously, "of course, its' much worse for poor Diane." Jen looked at him a bit suspiciously, but she couldn't pinpoint anything he'd said. She sighed, maybe the guy just didn't like police stations. She'd ask him a few easy questions to put him at ease. "So when did you start working at Evergreen Country Club?" "Oh, about four years ago. It is a really nice place to work." Henry volunteered smiling. "They let me use the basement area for my experiments." Henry seemed much more at ease talking about himself. "Experiments?" Jen asked. "Yes, I'm developing a revolutionary water saving system. I'm

testing it out at Evergreen on the golf course and the results are very promising. It's really very exciting. 'Patent pending.' It won't be long now." Henry's excitement was palpable. Jen found herself drawn in, forgetting why they were there. Out of the corner of her eye, Jen saw the recorder and straightened up professionally. "So where were you on Sunday morning before Diane was found dead?" she asked a little more harshly than she had intended. Henry was taken a back at the change in direction and answered slowly. "Well, I didn't start until 9, because it was Sunday. The first thing that I did was to clean the Men's room." "Did you see anyone in the hallway or did you go into the banquet room?" "No, I didn't see anyone that morning—well, I saw Trudy at reception, when I first came in. But no one was in the Men's room when I went in to clean it and no one was in the Ladies room that I went to clean next." "How long was it from the time that you finished cleaning the men's room until Diane was discovered there?" "I don't know exactly. The ladies room needed a lot of work, so I was in there at least a good fifteen minutes before Maude came in looking for Diane." "Did Maude tell you why she was looking for her?" "Well she didn't say, but Joe was right behind her." "And can you think of anything else that seemed out of place or that was unusual that morning?" "No. It's just awful. Diane was so beautiful" Henry said wistfully. Jen lost herself for a moment, struck by the clear devotion that Henry expressed about Diane. "Is that all?" Henry asked, bringing Jen out of her trance. "Yep. Yes, thank you for coming in. If you think of anything else, please give us a call." Jen said regaining her professionalism. 'I hate Mondays,' Jen thought as she watched him leave. She was no further along than 'it was poison'. Mondays suck.

Tuesday's Charm

On Tuesday morning, Jen was right on time. There was a note that Captain Maxwell wanted to see her as soon as she came in. She knocked on his door and was immediately beckoned in. "Why is there no Murder Board up on the Lambert case? What are you doing?" Captain Maxwell fired questions at her like a machine gun. "Do you have any suspects? What progress have you made? Do you know how many influential people are members of the Evergreen Club? State Senator Sally Watson's husband was on the board with Diane Lambert. She calls me every ten minutes to get an update. These rich people don't like it when one of their own gets poisoned at their club. Have you pinpointed how the victim ingested the poison? Have you figured out who had a motive? Have you identified who had access? Have you done anything?" His voice raised higher and higher with each question, until Jen was sure he was moments away from having a heart attack. "No," she meekly said. "I'll get the Murder board set up right away." She said as she backed out of the room. The Captain was right—she had nothing. Back to the drawing board—or murder board as it were.

Ok, victim, Diane Lambert, single, trust fund baby, good golfer, on the board of directors at Evergreen Country Club, beautiful, but just a little mean (Henry said).

Method of death: Arsenic poison, probably from the cake

Timeline: Trudy the receptionist said that Diane arrived alone about 9:10 a.m. and waved at her cheerfully. Joe, the golf pro, said that she was meeting him for brunch and that she came into the banquet room, grabbed the last cake and ate it standing at the buffet, then she excused herself to go to the restroom. He said that he waited for a while and then got concerned that she didn't return, so he asked his wife, Maude to check on her in the ladies room. Meanwhile, Mr. Snowden went to the men's room about the same time. Maude and Joe saw Henry cleaning the ladies room and the three of them

heard Mr. Snowden scream when he opened the men's room door and found the body. The 911 call came in at 9:30 a.m.

Motive: Big fat zero

Evidence: Diane had a pearl earring clasp in her hand—did it come from the murderer? There was a golf score card next to the body. It was from a game the day before between Joe Jenkins and Diane Lambert, who apparently had beat him. Interesting, but what could it mean. Also, forensics found a dirty handkerchief in the bathroom. They were running DNA testing, but it doesn't look like she was poisoned in the bathroom. It was the Cake.

Jen thought, I have to speak to Maude. She made the cake, so she has to know who had access. No one else got sick, so maybe someone planted that last small bundt cake, but how on earth would they have known that Diane was going to pick it up and eat it off the buffet line. Maybe this was just a ploy to tarnish the reputation of the country club. But so far nothing had come out about anyone having any motive to harm Diane or the Country Club. This crime makes no sense.

Maude has to be the key. But should she meet her at her home or have her come into the station. Captain Maxwell wanted results and Maude had the best opportunity. No motive, no reasonable reason, but heck, Jen had nothing. It will look like she's making progress if she pulls a "suspect" in. Jen called the Jenkins home to ask Maude to come into the station. Joe answered the phone and said that Maude was resting and that she was still very upset. Jen insisted. Maude has to come into the station. Does Joe want her to send a squad car for Maude? "No, no," said Joe. "I'll get her to come in this afternoon, ok?" "Yes, 2 p.m. will be fine." After she hung up with Joe, Jen sighed. She had nothing. The crows were circling—she knew that Captain Maxwell was inches away from pulling this case away from her. If that happened, it would be a long time before she'd be given this much autonomy again. Jen went to the pub across the road for lunch and nursed a beer to commiserate her life. Diane had just been skipping along in life and she ate cake and died. Life was too short. Let them take this loser case away from her, she just didn't care anymore.

When she got back to the squad, she was informed that Maude Jenkins was in interview room 1. She saw Captain Maxwell and several of the other detectives go into the viewing room for interview room 1. Showtime, she thought. With a big sigh, she squared her shoulders and went into the room. Joe and Maude Jenkins were there. Maude seemed listless and completely out of it. Jen asked "is she on medication?" "Yes," Joe said. "The doctors gave her something for her nerves. She's been a wreck ever since we saw Diane dead." Maude started to moan and mumbled, "no, no, not Diane." Jen moved closer to Maude and asked her "Do you understand where you are? Will you be able to answer some of my questions?" She looked up at Jen and then sideways at Joe. "Tell him to leave," she said harshly. "Joe, your husband, you want him to leave?" Jen asked. "Yes" said Maude decisively. Well this is a twist Jen thought. "Could you please wait outside Joe?" Jen asked him. Joe got defensive and said "Maude, why do you want me to leave. You are not well. I should stay." "Leave," Maude said forcefully coming to life. "Leave!" Joe huffed out of the room. It was quiet for a long moment and then Jen said, "I'm going to record this, ok?" "Yes," said Maude meekly. Jen looked up at the two way glass and remembered that she had a large audience and she said, "and I have to read you your rights, Ok?" "Yes," Maude said meekly. "You have the right to remain silent, anything you say may be used against you in a court of law. You have the right to an attorney. If you cannot afford an attorney, one will be provided for you. Have you heard these rights and understood them?" "Yes," said Maude resignedly.

“Do you want an attorney?” Jen asked and just as quickly kicked herself—all those people watching her and she’s trying to shut down the interview, just when it’s getting good. But Maude just said, “No.”

“Can you tell me why you said, ‘no, no, not Diane’ a minute ago?” Jen asked gently. Maude smiled sadly and started her tale. “I married Joe when I was eighteen. I wanted to go to Paris to study culinary arts. I was always a wonderful baker. But no,” Maude said a little bitterly, “my parents wanted me to get married. Joe was a famous golf pro. My Dad was so impressed. My parents are very rich—they can buy anything.” Maude got a dreamy look in her eyes as she continued her soliloquy. “So they bought me a handsome, famous husband.” Maude continued bitterly, “Only I’m too embarrassed to admit to them that he cheats on me.” Maude almost spit. “I’m too embarrassed to admit how much I loath him. Well they’ll all know now.” Maude took a deep breath and said strongly “I poisoned the cake. It was Joe’s favorite. When I saw him approach the buffet, I moved the other cakes off the table so that there was just one—just one gorgeous perfect poison cake for him to eat. He loved my cakes.” Maude said gloating bitterly. Then Maude got distressed, “But while my back was turned, Diane came into the room and she snatched the cake and ate it right there. It all happened so fast, that I though maybe I dreamed it. I just stood there. Diane stepped out of the room and Joe went to sit at his table. He looked so cocky sitting there. I thought about getting a knife to finish the job, but I guess I was kind of paralyzed.” Maude ran out of steam then and slumped over. Jen glanced over at the two way glass and could feel all of the mouths hanging open.

Epilogue

Jen saw in the papers that Henry Johnson’s water saving system was a big deal. The paper said that it was going to revolutionize saving water around the globe. He looked really handsome and impressive in the picture. Jen was happy for him. Jen had told her dad that she met Joe Jenkins, the famous golf pro, but her dad was not impressed. “He’s an old has been,” her dad said. Maude had the best lawyers money could buy. She was pleading insanity. Jen thought, ‘she’s got a shot.’ And Joe is sticking with her, Jen saw in the papers. ‘I guess he thinks she won’t try to kill him, while she’s in the insane asylum’, Jen thought. Good luck with that.