



The Defective Detective : Murder on the Links

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*For Eve
who thought I should change the title*

The Defective Detective : Murder on the Links

It's amazing how easy it is to get hold of a powerful laxative if you're motivated enough. And between you and me I was highly motivated.

I'm not entirely sure that was what Dean had in mind when he planned the stag do and in the end he was just collateral damage. I mean it had all started quite amicably. People started arriving at the appointed hour talking loudly on their expensive mobile iTwats rather than to each other. It was before lunch but we were all men of the world so that didn't matter, we could handle our drink on an empty stomach. Oh yes.

Then the rivalry began. Initially between the old friends and the new friends, not knowing each other, everyone wanted to appear more important, more successful than the rest. No one backing down until Mitch Van Doren (or Mitch VD as he was known at school) rolls up his sleeves to reveal his Rolex, throws a roll of cash onto the table and the conversation is over.

The ponce.

Tells everyone he's just been promoted. I mean that in itself was laxative-worthy as far as I'm concerned but this wasn't what triggered my jaunt to the pharmacy down the street.

Okay, maybe it helped.

It didn't take long, maybe not even as long as it took to drink the first round before the whispering started. In amongst the conversations about the cars and wives and girlfriends. I'd like to say I didn't join in the conversations by choice but I'd be lying.

And you know when you can just tell people are whispering about you?

Well maybe you don't but you will soon. I tell you what they weren't doing. They weren't whispering about how I had more GCSE's than them and they weren't whispering about how I had more A Levels than them or how when they were sitting the former I was already studying for the latter. What they were whispering about was summed up in what I could see out of the corner of my eye and that was them miming that action where they tip their head back, mouth wide open, eyes closed.

Watching this game of charades taking place between old friends and new and knowing they were bonding over a shared mockery of me just boiled my piss. I didn't even want to be there. I wouldn't have been if I hadn't signed up to bloody Facebook. Dean found me on there, told me

he was coming home to have his stag do in Kilchester. We hadn't seen each other for ten years. Longer. And I mean he was alright but all these arseholes in suits that cost more than the rent for my flat taking the piss out of me...

Because that's when the jokes start. So bloody funny. They say they're feeling sleepy, been up all night, can hardly keep their eyes open and I can feel it getting to me, feel the tiredness coming towards me but I fight it. I'm not going to give them the satisfaction. For the first time since school Mitch doesn't join in, just looks uncomfortably, patronisingly at me, waiting for the inevitable as my head starts to drop forward but I catch myself then I tell them I've got to pop outside for a minute, get some fresh air.

Well what would you do?

I tell you what you'd do – you'd say, "Know what? I reckon we need cocktails." And you would walk to the bar. Then you would order the biggest pitcher of glow in the dark puke-juice you can find, wait the eternity it takes the barman to make it, all the while secretly rummaging in your pockets, tearing open the sachets in anticipation for that moment when he turns his back on you to punch it into the till. When he does you would look over to make sure no-one's looking then empty the whole lot into the jug and stir.

And stir and stir and stir. Then you would take it over to your new found friends and watch the fun really start. We were supposed to be going to play golf in half an hour but with a bit of luck by then most of these pricks will be shitting themselves inside out.

Of course for this round you, like me, would order yourself a coke, just in case and then you would watch as most of them drink the foul liquid down and down. But not Mitch, he's still sipping at his lager-shandy and he comes over to talk to me puts his hand on my shoulder and

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Waking up in the bunker of the first hole of a golf course with an ear full of sand pretty much drove home to me that golf was never really going to be my game. A crudely scrawled note was shoved in my pocket. I knew what it would say before I even read it.

Clint – we couldn't be arsed to carry you any further so when you wake up we'll be in the bar getting shitfaced. Hope you managed to avoid getting hit.
Dean.

Narcolepsy has its drawbacks. Dropping off to sleep without a moment's notice can be considered problematic but other times it can help you escape the clutches of a group of thunderous morons. I smiled as I stood up, the laxatives obviously hadn't kicked in. But they would. I couldn't decide whether to go and watch the consequences or just bugger off home. The freedom of the choice felt really good.

A breeze caught me and sent sand blowing from my hair and clothes, a yellow cloud billowed gracefully towards the fairway before the wind changed and hurled the tiny stony grains into my open eyes. My hands shot up instinctively to rub them but it just made it worse.

"Shit!" screamed a voice on the wind. "Duck!"

A tiny projectile thudded into my left shoulder, knocking me off balance and sending me backwards into the bunker once more. A miniature sand avalanche came down, covering the right hand side of my body and I lay still, eyes closed for a second trying to work out if the searing pain in my shoulder meant that it was broken and whether I was still sand-blind.

"I think I've killed him," the voice was shaking as it came closer. It was probably best to play along.

"Bloody hell, Smith," said another. "With a slice like yours I'm amazed you haven't hospitalised more."

I breathed deeply and instantly regretted it as sand whirled up my nostrils causing me to cough, gasping for breath and struggling to stand. My assailant screamed from a few metres away as I snapped to my feet and sent clouds of bunker sand into the air.

I worked the last of the sand from my eyes and stared coldly at him.

"Ah- are you alright?" he stammered. "I mean – are you hurt? Can I help you? Wha-what were you doing in there?"

"A bit. No. And sleeping," I deadpanned. "Is this yours?" I motioned to the golf cart that was parked on the edge of the bunker.

He just stared, his mouth hanging open gormlessly.

"Don't mind me, I'm not dead."

The inept golfer tapped his friend on the shoulder and pointed as I commandeered the golf cart.

“Wait! Look out!” he shouted.

My exit was not destined to be as cool and Bond-like as I’d hoped. The cart lurched into reverse slamming into a bag full of clubs, cannoning them down into the rough where the majority of them came to rest on top of what they had been pointing at. It was, and this was obvious even to my untrained eye, a real dead body. I caught a glimpse of it and then

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Waking up in public with subtlety is something that's difficult to achieve. Even with the amount of practise I get, the place that exists where your body wakes up and your mind is still dreaming can produce some mortifying consequences. And, of course, the reverse is true when the cataplexy kicks in the mind is active, the ears are listening, the nose is working but the eyes and the rest of the body refuse resolutely to co-operate.

And so I sat with a half-heard conversation assailing my ears and the faint smell of burnt hair and cigar smoke wafting into my nasal passages. For around a minute. And then it all came back, my leg twitched and the golf cart jerked forward knocking me back to full consciousness and causing everyone to stare.

"Clint! Is that you?" Mitch Van Doren stood over the body, the expensive shoes that matched his expensive suit being slowly ruined by a malfunctioning sprinkler that intermittently squirted a jet of water at him like some sort of evil underground clown.

"No."

"Haha," he actually laughed. "Good one."

Good one? Who says that? No-one, that's who.

"They told me there were two dead bodies. Glad to see it's just the one."

"They? Who's they?"

"Well, that's to say, erm, well I'm not glad there's a dead body obviously."

"Mitch what are you doing here are you drunk?"

"It's just that, well, what with your condition. Erm, you can see why they made the mistake can't you. Drunk? What, er, no. Just had the one."

"Well then," I said, climbing out of the golf cart and coming a little closer to him. "If you're not drunk and you aren't here for me why are you here?"

His brow furrowed and he stared back.

"Because I'm pretty sure," I said as I stepped a little further towards the body, careful to stay out of the radius of the sprinkler. "There are rules around when there are dead folks involved."

He stared the stare of a man with little intelligence and no sense of humour. I waited for his brain to re-engage and, momentarily, it did.

"Ah, right, yes. Thing is that I can. I'm a private detective, the dead person clearly isn't you and, erm, I've been asked to look into it by the Agency."

“Right. Very good.”

I stared at the body. It was the first time I'd ever seen someone properly dead before. He lay, his eyes ridiculously wide, his mouth pulled into a silent scream. What little hair he had stood straight out. It was like something from a cartoon. I laughed accidentally and then the wave started to come towards me, my eyes getting heavier and heavier.

Fighting the urge to sleep I bent over, putting my hands on my knees and breathing deeply.

“First time you've seen one? Erm, I mean a dead body.”

I nodded and stared at the golf clubs scattered on top of him and all around, the discarded cigar butt on his chest but mostly the smoke rising from his hair. I could feel the sleep rolling away from me again. I stood upright. I had to do something, keep moving, keep focussed.

“So what's this agency then?” I said, walked over to the golf bag and tried to lift it onto its three-wheeled transporter-thingy. It was heavy. Really heavy and inside there was some sort of electrical contraption. Home made. Like a bomb only not. “Have you seen this?”

It's amazing how much information you can glean from an idiot with a personality bypass. Once he'd stopped me from trying to tidy up the scene of a murder he told me some quite interesting things that seemed, for a man of his limited creative means, impossible to make up. The Agency was just that – no adjective, just 'Agency'. He was a detective, though God knows how. I also found out that it was extremely well paid, had high profile clients, often dealt with murders, that he was a senior investigator and that he once kissed a man called Kevin and never told his wife. Mitch's wife, that is, I didn't ask about Kevin.

As we talked several police men and women of varying ranks had begun to arrive. The closest one to Mitch and I was talking to a tubby middle aged man who turned to us for a second to blow a plume of cigar smoke before continuing whatever it was he was saying.

The policeman's face contorted into a frown and he opened his mouth to speak, paused, looking like he might not bother and then decided to go for it anyway. “Are you with him?”

He gestured towards Mitch who was walking towards a tall woman she instantly began to throw her arms in the air and apparently pull faces at Mitch. I grunted in the affirmative and he gave a tiny shake of his head.

“Don't. Touch. Anything.”

It seemed to me that the act of speaking was causing him physical pain.

"Right," I nodded and flashed him a big grin. "Message received."

"Just because I have to put up with him doesn't mean I have to entertain his sidekick. Alright?"

"Mitch, what the hell's going on?" I hissed.

"Err, interviewing suspects mate," he winked mock-conspiratorially. "Think I've got this one wrapped up to be honest."

"Good show. How do you figure that?"

"Er, well, actually it was a mixture of good old detective skills and the... well, the fact that that tall woman wandering off towards the clubhouse kept repeatedly claiming to have – err - killed this poor sod."

Mitch nudged the corpse with his foot.

"Oi," said the policeman.

Mitch looked down, avoiding eye contact with him and continued, "Seems pretty straightforward."

"Sounds good," I said, giving him a little pat on the back. "So how did she do it?"

"Oh, well, she didn't say."

"Really?"

"Erm, yeah."

"And did she say why she did it?"

"No, actually. That did strike me as odd at the time."

"So there's a good possibility that she didn't do it."

"Ah, well when you put it like that..."

"So who was the lanky bird then Mitch?"

And Mitch broke down the little he actually knew. The dead man was some sort of banking high-flyer who got out before the bubble burst and everyone started lynching bankers. Since then he'd got into dealing high end art, the kind bought by corporations as investments. He'd been golfing with his lawyer (the tall, dark, mentalist) and a rival dealer (the cigar smoker). Some other bloke who was an accountant had been tagging along to make up the numbers but that was it.

That was all he knew.

I carefully explained to my investigatively-challenged partner that perhaps Miss Tall didn't murder anyone. At first he wasn't having any of it but when I explained more slowly and put some more emphasis on the fact that she was a lawyer Mitch began to catch up.

"So let me get this straight. You, erm, you think she's just so cocky that she doesn't care what she says to me because she knows she'll get off?" Mitch asked.

"I knew we'd get there in the end. Anyway what's she got to gain? Of course it's possible she just thinks you're a buffoon."

"Ah, well, it's possible."

"It is," I said. "It really is."

Mitch stared at the corpse for a minute.

"Still, bollocks to it, eh?" he smiled. "My boss wanted this one wrapped up quick and if she's prepared to admit to it then we might as well just leave it."

"What are you talking about, there's some sort of weird electrical thing in the golf bag you know?"

"Well, er, she probably put it there. These things are usually connected you know, Clint."

There was a noise in the trees, a horrible, guttural scream of a noise that started way back in the throat and gradually transformed from a growl to a scream. Everyone turned around to see where it was coming from.

"What the hell was that?" I said.

"Probably the lads," said Mitch, nodding calmly. "I had a couple of texts. Someone slipped a bunch of them laxatives and it looks like they figured out it was you."

"What?"

"Well, it was, wasn't it?"

"Yeah, but..." I began.

"Dean shit himself on the fairway, then a bunch of them, you know, the new lot?"

"Yeah."

"A bunch of them didn't make it to the toilets. They had to close the, err, you know, the lounge part of the bar."

Out of the trees four men I vaguely recognised were staggering towards me like something out of a zombie movie.

"I better get out of here," I said and sprinted towards the golf cart once more.

"Mind if I tag along?" the fat, Tweeded, cigar smoker asked. "I've had it with this little prick."

He gestured towards the policeman and hauled himself into the passenger seat. Mitch looked at the approaching zombies then back to us before clambering in the back.

"Be my guest," I said and turned the cart around.

"You the comedy turn then?"

"Something like that," I flicked on and off my best fake smile. "Clint."

“Bartholomew Travers. Come on then, step on it.”

I stepped on it and the golf cart groaned under our collective weight, gradually coming to life and moving us away from the scene of the crime and the approaching attackers. They were shouting something I couldn't quite make out but it wasn't nice, I was certain of that.

“First time you've seen a corpse is it lad?”

I nodded, “Yeah. First time.”

He sucked on his cigar.

“Don't know why the bloody police are here. Poor bugger just had a heart attack.”

“Err, murdered actually,” Mitch piped up from behind. “He was murdered. And Clint, I think they're going to catch us.”

Travers turned and glared at Mitch. Then he turned to look at the four blokes chasing the golf cart.

“We're never going to outrun them with all this extra weight are we?” he said.

“Do you, erm, sorry to ask and all but do you stand to profit from the murder?” Mitch asked.

“Shut up, man. I am, or at least I was, one of his greatest rivals. That much is certainly true but it doesn't follow that I will gain anything from his passing,” Travers turned back to me, leaning in until I could smell the ashtray of his mouth. “Is he housebroken?”

I laughed my best fake laugh but the lads had practically caught up, coming towards us like a stinking cloud of obscenities. You could actually smell them gaining ground. My head tipped forward as I started to lose consciousness, the cart swerved but I pulled it together, steering back on track.

“So, erm, do you or not? Sorry to be a pest, it's just my job you see.”

“Hang on,” said Travers, twisting in his seat, screwing his cigar firmly into his mouth then pushing Mitch off the back of the cart with his not inconsiderable strength.

Mitch rolled onto the fairway and into my pursuers, knocking them to the floor.

“You need to be more resourceful, son,” said Travers

The cart picked up speed.

Slightly.

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"So how do you fit into this *murder*?" said Travers, the cigar wag-
gling up and down in his mouth as he spoke.

"Oh I don't know," I said. "I suppose, it's like you said, I'm just the
comedy turn. And besides Mitch says he's got it all sewn up."

"Does he now?"

I nodded, "Yeah, that lawyer confessed to him and that's enough as
far as he's concerned."

"Avelina killed Damien? Bwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!" the last syllable burst-
ing out of his mouth like the cry of an enormous karate-chicken. "And
what do you think?"

I shouldn't think anything but Mitch was such a dick. No pun inten-
ded. He had always been like this and he always bloody got away with
it.

I shook my head.

"Nah. She's a lawyer. She's just pissing with him because she knows
she can."

Travers exploded with laughter again.

"So, sonny," he continued. "If it's not her then who?"

I shrugged, "Dunno, you probably."

Then that laugh again.

"Very good!" he said and slapped me on the back. The golf cart
swerved.

"Which way are we supposed to be going?"

"For years and years."

"What? No, I mean which way is it to the clubhouse?"

"Oh right," Travers pointed behind us. "Back there I think. Sorry,
hearing not what it was."

"What's for years and years?"

"Well that's how long I've know Zelnick. Damien. Poor man."

"Oh, right, sorry I asked."

"Poor, poor man."

It seemed rude to interrupt him any further, he stared straight ahead
in silence as the golf cart moved across the fairway.

"I'm sorry," I said eventually. "Were you two close?"

"Not particularly. It just reminds one of one's own mortality."

He took another drag on his cigar, exhaled and then began to pick up
pace, telling me about the dead man and how they were both going into
business together, gradually gathering momentum until he seemed to
have regained his earlier and sunnier disposition.

"You see he had a lot of money at one time but then he lost a great deal. There was a terrible business with his accountant."

"Smith?"

"No," said Travers. "Never seen him before in my life. We were supposed to be golfing with another friend of ours but he couldn't make it. Smith was just there to make up the numbers. Pity really, he wasn't the friendliest type."

"Really?"

"Yes, Damien's accountant was using his business to launder money for Big Terry."

"Smith?"

"No, not that fool. He seemed to take against us the moment Damien joined us. I'm talking about Damien's original accountant. He was using Damien's business to launder money for Big Terry."

"The gangster?"

"That's the one. Bloody nasty piece of work. You always expect dwarfs to be friendly don't you, like on telly, but Big Terry..." he trailed off. "Anyway Damien didn't know anything about it. When he did find out his accountant was carted off but had a heart attack and died before it went to trial. Damage was already done."

"But you two were rivals?" I said.

"Quite right, yes. Until then. Thing is he needed some capital after what had happened so we started to set up a deal negotiating to work together to get this sculpture."

"Sculpture?"

"Oh yes. Wildly expensive, wonderfully beautiful. It would have been the start of a fantastic partnership. And of course a boatload of money. But it was not to be."

"Not for him at least, but presumably you still stand to make a killing from the deal? That is – er – I mean..."

"Absolutely. That goes without saying. An absolute schooner of it. No more or less than if he were still alive. And think of the long term..."

"So did anyone else know about his involvement apart from you?"

"No. No-one. He insisted upon complete secrecy. Pride I suppose."

Travers turned away slightly and drew the cigar out of his mouth, looking at the end he continued, "Gone out. Blast it. Here..."

He reached into his pocket and took out a lighter.

"You couldn't light it for me could you? Damned arthritis, I can hold a golf club but can't light a bloody cigar. My wife says it's for the best."

“Yeah, of course,” I took the lighter with my left hand, doing my best to keep the cart steady with my right.

“Hey! Watch

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The voices came back first. People shouting, the sound of running and then Travers voice trampling up into my consciousness. My eyes snapped open.

“...the bloody golf cart NOW!” he screamed.

The side wall of the clubhouse was metres in front of us. I slammed on the brakes and came to a stop in the same way a cloud would if it had slowly hit a pillow.

“Don’t panic,” I said.

“Are you allowed to drive?” he retorted.

“Not exactly, no.”

He nodded then smiled and let out another *Bwaaaaaaaaaaaaah!*

“You know,” he added. “It was worth risking life and limb to watch you run over that fool Smith.”

“What?” I said. “What do you mean run over?”

“Just that, you caught him good and proper, knocked him into the rough.”

“Is he alright?”

“Hey!” said a voice.

I didn’t like the tone of that ‘hey’ and I liked it even less when its owner came into view bearing all the hallmarks of being a policeman.

“Clint, is it?” he panted as he came to a stop.

“I’m arresting you on suspicion of murder...”

“Hang on a minute there’s no way I could have killed Smith – not with a golf cart.”

“Smith? Golf cart?” he looked genuinely confused. I wasn’t sure if that was a good thing or a bad thing. “I am arresting you for the murder of Damien Zelnick. Anything you

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"I 'll tell you who is guilty of this murder, officers," Mitch was standing in a room in the clubhouse and I was lying on the floor with my cheek on the carpet and my arm cuffed to a table leg.

I pushed myself up quickly and surveyed the scene. Travers was present. There were two policemen. An older bloke I hadn't seen before. The lawyer and a paramedic tending to Smith, who looked pretty shook up. I had the horrible feeling that Mitch was just going to let them cart me away. This was even easier than a confession, he didn't need to convince the police.

I thought for a second about making a run for it and then noticed that one of the attendant lawmen had handcuffed me to the table leg.

"Not too late am I?" I asked.

"You finished your post-hit-and-run nap then have you?" Smith shouted. "You could have bloody killed me!"

I winced a smile at him and he stared blankly back.

"This murder was committed by..." Mitch began.

"Can I just stop you for a minute there, Mitch?" I interjected.

"Er."

"Just before you get into the cut and thrust of it all I would like to say," I lifted the table slightly and slid the attached cuff off the leg. "It's just that there's no way I could have committed this murder."

"Erm, of course there isn't," said Mitch.

"Because at the time of the murder I was... What did you say?"

Mitch stared at me, frowning.

"Well of course you didn't do it, you were... well, you know..."

"Sleeping?"

"Sleeping. Exactly."

"Oh, right, well then, can someone have a look at this please?" I stood up and lifted my arm in the air, jangling the attached cuff in the direction of the police in attendance.

"Hang on," said one of the policemen. "I'm not convinced about this. I mean..."

"As I was saying officer," said Mitch. "The murder was committed by Avelina Mergen."

The policeman started to walk towards me.

"The lawyer?" I asked.

Mitch nodded.

"He's right," she said. "It was me."

I looked over to her sitting at a table by the bar, relaxed, sipping a white wine.

"It wasn't her," I said.

The policeman stopped walking towards me.

"It wasn't?" said Mitch. He let out a small sigh. "Come on Clint, I'm trying to help you here."

"It was," she said again. "I killed him."

"See?" said Mitch. "What more do you need?"

He nodded towards the officer who started to walk towards her.

"I thought we already talked about this, Mitch. What about evidence?" I said.

The policeman stopped and stared at Mitch again.

"Ah, yes, I know but she's admitted to it. Now, erm, shut up will you?"

The policeman hovered in the middle of the room for a second then began to speak. "Alright," he said deliberately. "If she didn't do it then it was definitely you."

He pointed at me.

"Hang on, officer," said Mitch. "This murder was committed by Mr Bartholomew Travers. Take him away."

"What?" barked Travers.

"Listen," said Smith, rubbing his damaged limb. "I just need to go to the toilet, can I pop out for a second?"

"Oh I wouldn't mate," said the policeman. "There's been some sort of, I don't know, outbreak or something. It looks like a septic tank has exploded in there and there's people lying around..."

The corners of his mouth turned down and he swallowed.

"There's... well, there's excrement up the walls and... well, to be honest with all that's going on here," he said. "I just locked them in there."

"Erm, Officer?" Mitch tried to re-establish control of the room.

"Hang on a minute Mitch," I said. "I don't think it was him. There's no way those fingers could have wired up the device that electrocuted him. He hasn't got the dexterity."

"Electrocuted?"

"Yeah. Wide eyes, hair standing on end, smell of burning. It's a dead giveaway isn't it?"

"Is it?"

"Yeah. That and the massive bloody battery and wires in the golf cart thingy."

"And he was soaking. Conducts the electricity a treat. Sprinklers mysteriously came on before it happened did they?" I looked over to the lawyer who nodded dutifully.

"Device?"

"Yeah. Arthritis. Didn't do it."

Not one to take this lying down. Mitch rounded on the lawyer.

"Well one of you two *must* have done it. I don't care what the evidence says!" he said, his eyes darting from the lawyer to Travers and back again. "You. You *did* do it didn't you?"

"I told you I did," said the lawyer. "Now prove it or piss off."

"Right," said Mitch. "Well then."

He wagged his finger at the lawyer.

"Ah," he said, turning back to Travers. "But I did find a cigar butt on the corpse. There!"

He beamed at Travers. He turned around and beamed at me.

I shook my head. He stopped beaming.

"No?"

"Nope," I said. "Different brand isn't it?"

Mitch stamped across the room and snatched the cigar Travers was holding.

"Shit," he said and gave it back. Mitch turned around to look at me, "Where are you getting this from Clint?"

I shrugged.

"Oh bollocks to it," said Mitch. "If you're so clever you work it out then smart arse."

The policeman who had been hovering in the centre of the room finally snapped into action.

"Right," he said. "So we're happy it's not the lady lawyer. Which I'm quite glad about. Mr Travers here appears to have been unable to set up such an elaborate trap."

"Steady on," said Travers.

"Sorry," he continued. "So that means we're back to you then, doesn't it. You were there before anyone else. Apparently asleep although frankly I have my doubts so let's stop messing about, come on, I'm taking you down the station."

The other policeman put his hand up to speak. I nodded eagerly at him.

"He said he'd never met any of these gentlemen before today. Said they asked him to make up the numbers."

I laughed, "That's good – make up the numbers? Get it?"

Everyone stared. That happened a lot.

"Never mind. You," I said pointing to the accountant. "You did it. I know you did it."

"Eh?" he replied.

"Officers, take *this* man into custody. He's the murderer and I have the evidence here."

I snatched a bunch of papers from a nearby desk and waved them comically at the bewildered accountant. I looked around at everyone and waited for someone to move, to say something but everyone was staring at me as if I was Miss bloody Marple. This was going to be difficult because I was just making it up as I went along. I needed time to think but the officers started to move forward and all I could think was shit, shit, SHIT I need to think. Please just

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“Bah!” I said, my body making a strange involuntary noise just to make the room go quiet and stare at me. “How long was I out for?”

Mitch bent down to help me up. I reached up and touched my left elbow. I must have fallen on it as I went down.

“Erm, just a couple of minutes. Not long. Clint,” Mitch said quietly in my ear as I began to stand. “You’re on to something. He just tried to make a break for it so don’t screw this up, tell them how he did it.”

I cleared my throat. Everyone stared.

I breathed deeply and tried not to think about sleep.

“Craig Smith,” I began slowly. “Why don’t you tell everyone here what you had against Mr Zelnick?”

“Nothing,” he said quickly. “I’d never met him before today.”

“We both know that’s not true.”

“No we don’t.”

Dammit, for a moment there I thought it was actually going to be that easy.

“Why then, if you two had never met, did you have such a dislike for him?”

“What?”

“The other members of your party commented on it.”

“I’m not putting up with this a moment longer,” Smith stood up, picked up his coat and began striding towards the door but Mitch was ready for him and stepped forward knocking into Smith’s damaged arm.

Smith screamed and dropped his coat on the wooden floor. Out of one of the pockets slid a small homemade electronic device with two distinct buttons. I lunged forward and grabbed it and held it out for the assembled masses. If this was the switch that opened his garage door I was screwed.

“Let me spell it out for you,” I said, trying hard to fight back the tiredness.

And that’s exactly what I did. Told everyone how it all fitted together, how Smith had found out Facebook that the dead man would be playing today. I told them about how he had arrived early and got rid of the fourth player, how he had rigged up not just the sprinkler system but also the electrical charge in the golf bag. I told everyone how he had activated both with his remote and how he had watched as Zelnick had died.

“That’s just the remote that opens my garage,” said Smith.

I was furious and pressed the buttons hard. There was a loud *bang* in the corner of the room and smoke started rising out of the golf bag which sat next to the other police officer.

And that was it, the room exploded with voices and movement and Smith hurled himself at me, knocking me down and

*

“...for the last ten years,” said Mr Smith. “But no-one knew.
... There’s no way anyone could have known.”

“Well?” said one of the officers. “Can we arrest him now?”

Mitch nodded then turned around to look at me. “Yes. Take him away.”

“Hang on a second,” I said, jangling my loose handcuff once more at the officers.

“Oh yes,” one replied and removed the offending bracelet.

“Well done, lad,” said Travers, coming up behind me and slapping me hard on the back. “I didn’t think you had it in you.”

“Thanks, I think,” I said. “So what did I miss?”

Travers let out a *bwaaaaaaaaah!*

“Remember the accountant, the one who Zelnick sent down? The one I told you about, had a heart attack?”

“Yeah.”

“Smith was his son. Blamed Zelnick for his death.”

And then the other occupant of the room, an older man with swept back white hair, stood up and approached us.

“Clint is it?” he said in a way that was a statement rather than a question.

I nodded dutifully and he looked to Mitch and raised an eyebrow.

“Erm, Clint, this is Mr Forsyth,” said Mitch deferentially. “My boss.”

“Well done, lad,” said Forsyth. “That was pure cabaret. Brilliant lunacy. I loved it.”

“Blind luck if you ask me,” said the other officer as he dragged the still smoking golf bag out of the bar. “There’s no way he could have known the accountant was related to any of this.”

“Blind luck?” said Forsyth. “What do you have to say about that Clint?”

“I don’t know about that, there were, well... clues I suppose you’d call them and, well people told me stuff and...”

Mitch opened his mouth to speak but thought better of it.

“So, Clint,” Forsyth continued. “Blind luck was it?”

“Course not,” I said, reassured. “Just seemed obvious really.”

“Whatever it was you got a confession from someone who, until minutes ago would have gone free.”

He nodded and looked at me for a second without speaking.

“Well it appears we have an opening for a man of your talents at the Agency.”

I waited for him to stop, to backtrack on the offer but it appeared he was serious. I looked over to Mitch who just nodded ever so slightly.

“So, my little defective detective. What do you say?”

“Erm. Okay.”

*

Credits

About The Author

Adam Maxwell was born in 1976 and spends a great deal of his time in the loft on his own cultivating a fear of crowds. He has a Masters Degree in Creative Writing from Northumbria University, and lives in the wilds of Northumberland. Sometimes he throws things at passers-by.

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From the same author on Feedbacks

Dial M For Monkey (2006)

Adam Maxwell's first collection of short stories is inventive, funny, dark, and hugely entertaining. Effortlessly fusing pop culture, gunplay, and simians, *Dial M For Monkey* contains a vibrant mixture of short stories - and short-short stories including 'Happiness is a Warm Gun' which featured in McSweeney's *Internet Tendency*.

The Night Before The Christmas Before I Was Married & other festive tales (2009)

Charles Dickens has dominated the Christmas short story market for too long and he's so bloody depressing... wouldn't you rather read something that was funny, had comedy misunderstandings, people accidentally getting engaged and generally was a lot more entertaining and less depressing? Then you're in luck...

Let's be honest, Christmas can be a pain in the arse (or a pain in the 'ass' if you're from the other side of the pond) and this collection features some stories that I think we can all relate to...

Whether it's becoming accidentally engaged to your ex when your fiancée is coming home for Christmas...

Or perhaps you're spending Christmas with the in-laws, your wife is stupifyingly drunk and you destroy the presents...

No?

In that case you'll want to see what happens when two master hypnotists clash over an argument concerning a Christmas tree... All these things and literally two others are dealt with in this collection of Adam Maxwell's Christmas stories.

He has asked me to tell you that he hopes these things don't happen to you this Christmas. And he also hopes they don't happen to him.

The Defective Detective : Cat Chaser (2010)

It's the first case for Clint, probably the world's only narcoleptic detective, and everything should be going really well. To be brutal, it probably would be going a lot better if he'd managed to stay awake when he was briefed.

With four suspects and clues flying will he be able to find out who's guilty? Or even what they're guilty of?

Chills, Kills & Snowflakes (2010)

Four tales of terror to send icy chills through your blood. These stories will scare you senseless this winter season.

When banker Alec takes shelter from a snow storm in a peculiar old shop, the shopkeeper is less than impressed by the lengths he has gone to secure to a last minute present.

He decides an education of sorts must be meted out and begins to tell Alec three stories to convince him the error of his ways.

A chef digests more than he bargained for in a dish served extremely cold.

A man is in for an unpleasant surprise when he tries to turn a curse to his own advantage.

And, when ghosts are awakened in a suburban house, a diary appears to show Alec the truth behind the spectres.

But with the cold snow storm closing in Alec is not as safe as he thinks in the back room of Venkman's Emporium of Curiosities.

The Defective Detective : The Curious Case of the Kilchester Courier (2012)

Chasing a parcel delivered to a neighbour, Clint is sucked into a remarkably civilised but mildly deranged crime scene. There he encounters almost-blackmail, not-actually prostitution, probable-sex scandals, genuine-imposters and the very real theft of something incredibly important.

Twice.

Will Clint be able to stay awake long enough to restore what has been stolen to its rightful owner and will he need to resort to his new book 'The Agency's Foundation in Private Investigation : Home Study Edition' in order to solve the case?

These and literally three other questions are answered in the third Defective Detective outing 'The Curious Case of the Kilchester Courier'.



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