

The Trickster
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I was sitting in the bar, on a Tuesday night, it was 11 pm, I was waiting for Paul, and he was supposed to meet me at 9 pm. I was sitting alone at a table in the “The Williams” a famous bar in the center of London. It was cold outside, the news reported a big snow storm for that night. My phone started to ring, it was the police station:

- Louis, we found three bodies, students from Cambridge, the Minister of Education asked for your help to solve the crime.
- Ok, tomorrow I will investigate it.

It was strange that Paul hadn't come to meet me, but instead he was asking for my help to solve a murder. I decided to call him, I wanted to know his motives and a little more about the task.

- Hey Paul how are you? Why didn't you show up for our usual poker night?
- Hey I totally forgot about it, I'm really sorry. I am at home with my family. Did you hear about the murders?
- Yes, I just hang up with the office, tomorrow I will start reviewing the case.
- Ok I will come to help you if you want.
- Yeah come to the office at 9 am.

I went to bed thinking about this case, three murders of students was really unusual, and commonly the climate in the university was really calm.

I woke up, got ready and went to the office. The information about the case was already on my desk, two of the victims were poisoned with arsenic and one was killed by injuries in his body. The main suspect was Harry Stuart the professor of the students. I was going to meet with the forensic doctors later in the scene of the crime so we could start to formulate a theory about the murder. Someone knocked on my door, it was Paul Murray.

- Hey Paul, ready to go to the scene of the crime?
- Sure, let's go to the campus of the University.

So Paul already knew where they were murdered, that was awkward, but maybe he was concerned about the reputation of the University.

We arrived to the bedroom of Meghan Kane, a young lady of 21, the body was laid on the sofa, her skin was pale and her lips had a deep blue color which meant she was poisoned with arsenic. The time of death defined by the forensic doctor was around 8 pm to 10 pm of last night. There were no fingerprints and no sign of violence. Also no door or windows had marks of a forced entree. That could mean two things: she didn't see her killer or wasn't afraid of him.

We started walking to the other bedroom, it was the first time I visited the campus, so I was kind of lost.

- The other two lived in room 1211, I have no idea where it is. Do you?
- It is on the second floor.
- Ok thank you. Let's go!

It feels like Paul was very interested in the case, he knew a lot about it. He had more information than any minister should.

The second corpse belonged to Nathan Riggs, he was skinny and wore glasses, he was found in the living room. The other guy, Axel Mikaelson, a tall, big, strong Nigerian boy, presented injuries in his body, a deep cut in his right arm and bruises. A chair and glass were broken, there were signs of resistance. There was a golden object

under the chair, I got closer and saw it was some kind of breast-pin, I picked it up, it had the form of an owl, I have seen that figure before but I wasn't sure where.

The body of Axel was found in the attic, he wasn't poisoned. The theory of the doctors is that he entered the room while the killer was checking the dead body of his roommate, he didn't expect his appearance and reacted violently.

We sent the bodies to the police station where they would be examined. We were going to interview the first suspect, Harry Stuart, the dean of the university and teacher of the three students. While we were on our way to meet with Harry I couldn't get out of my mind the fact that Paul knew a little too much about the murder, I needed to ask him about that.

- Paul are you kind of interested in the case?

- Yes, I have to protect the image of the public education in London, also it is a very interesting case.

It was just the answer that I expected. Although, I have the feeling that something was wrong. We arrived to the residence of Mr. Stuart, a small apartment in the center of the city. We knocked the door several times before he opened it. He was tall, wore glasses and had a beard that gave him a mysterious look.

- Good morning. We are from the London Police.

- Good morning! How can I help you?

- Can you answer some questions about what you were doing last night?

- Yeah! Sure. Come in!

We sat at a small table next to the wood fire, it was a cold day outside, a typical December morning.

- I spent all night at home checking some tests, and planning the classes of this week.

- Did you have company?

- No, only a neighbor who brought my food around 10 but I was most of the time alone.

- What kind of relationship did you have with Meghan Kane, Nathan Riggs and Axel Mikaelson?

- They were really good students, with good grades and with a good future.

- Did you have some kind of misunderstanding with them lately?

- I had a problem with them, I didn't give them the approval to start an investigation about the contamination of water by an industry in Nigeria, and I thought it was kind of dangerous.

- Well, thank you very much for your time.

We left the apartment. I was very sure he wasn't the murderer, he tried to protect them and didn't have a strong reason for killing them.

We were going to the police station to get some information about the bodies. When we arrived he saw a woman standing at the main door. She was young, had black hair and wore braces.

- Hi, I'm Andy Thompson from the London Daily. I heard you were the detective the detective in charge of the investigation of the murder of three students from the University of Cambridge. Can I ask you some questions in private?

- Yes, Sure. Let's go inside. Paul, can you stay outside?

- Yes.

It was uncommon that the media noticed a murder so quickly, I was really interested about this woman, and she seemed to have other motives aside from a good story.

- Did the police know about the investigation the students were doing?

- Yes, we just talked to the teacher that didn't accept it.... So it isn't common for a journalist to ask direct questions about the case, and even more if it isn't solved yet. Which are your real motives?

- I'm new at the newspaper, I have to prove I am useful, and a story about three murders that may be linked is the perfect way to do it.

If she was new how could she have access to that kind of information?, it didn't make sense. I started to get suspicious.

- I understand.

- Well thank you for your time, I hope we can keep in touch. - She handed me a card with her phone number.

Later in the night I couldn't fall sleep, I wouldn't stop thinking about this case. In the afternoon I talked to a friend of mine who worked in the London Daily, he told me that no one had authorized her to look into the case.

I went to the kitchen, it would be more useful if I started investigating instead of trying to sleep. I found out that she had had some problems with the University of Cambridge, she had denounced them for being unfair for not allowing the execution of the Project. I checked the clock, and it wasn't that late, I called her. I needed to find out more.

- Hi! It's me Louis Stuart, the detective.

- Hi, what do you need so late?

- I kept thinking about you after you left early from the police station. I started to search and a friend of mine told me that no one was sent to interview about the case from the London Daily. So, what are your reasons to be so interested in the case and going on your own?

- It's true that nobody sent me from the London Daily, but I studied in that university and I was interested in the case, it isn't common that 3 students were killed the same night. Can we talk this in person? I have 2 important things to tell you.

I went exactly where she told me to go. It was in a small bar near the University of Cambridge. She was there by the time I arrived. I got closer and said hello.

- Hello again!

- Hi, please sit down.

- What do you need to tell me that is so important?

- First of all, one of my big concerns in this investigations is my half-sister, Meghan Kane, she was one of the dead students, that is one of the reasons I'm so interested in this case.

- I'm so sorry, I didn't know that. - I was really sorry, if that was true, I was incriminating the family of one of the victims, I felt really embarrassed.

- It doesn't matter. Hardly anyone knows that, it is a secret of the family. The other thing, do you really trust Paul Murray, the Minister of Education?

- Yes, why? He is helping with this case.

- Oh, nobody knows that... The thing is that I was investigating about the university and the victims. I found something curious about the three students and what they have in common; if you want to know I could send you the information by e-mail, it is very important not to trust anyone.

- Ok, thank you, you can send me that, I'll keep in mind what you said to me. - It was really awkward that suddenly she knew very much and I didn't, I thought that she was doing better her job than me, I have to strive more.

I went home and I slept some hours, I needed to rest, tomorrow would be a very busy day.

The next day, I was the first in the office; I wanted to arrive early to check the email from Andy. I went to my personal office so nobody would distract me.

In the e-mail came some information about the students and the project that the professor told us in the interview, it was a research about some polluted waters in Nigeria, the project never started to work because the professor didn't give the approval so the university didn't put the money. Besides this, the students began to work outside the university; they were really focused about the situation in Nigeria. I was really focused in my job when suddenly Paul came to my office.

- Hi Louis, I heard that you talked to the journalist yesterday after work, what did she say?

I noticed that he was kind of nervous, he was sweating very much. He came from his other work, and in his shirt, he had a breast-pin, the same that I found in the crime scene, the owl had the same shape, that was very suspicious but I didn't say anything, I kept it to myself.

- Nothing Paul, I thought that she was a suspect; she really fits the profile of the killer. Why don't you go and follow her to see what she is doing?

Clearly, I knew that she was innocent, but I wanted to keep Paul far away from the office, he had become suspect number one.

I realized that Paul was guilty, I knew him since I started at the police, he was a manipulative and ambitious man, who always got what he wanted and reacted in violent ways. In the past he had had problems with his boss because he didn't follow the rules. Lots of money wasn't something he was willing to lose.

Although all the clues pointed at him there was still something missing, I needed to find something that he couldn't deny.

First I called the butler that worked in his house, he confirmed that Paul hadn't been home that night. Then I talked to the manager of the hydroelectric project in Nigeria, he told me that the last time Paul was there he informed him about the damages that the project had caused to the river which was the source of water to the villages nearby, he didn't seem interested, instead he told him to turn it into a secret so it wouldn't be noticed by the police.

With those two testimonies I had the information necessary to formally interrogate him.

I called Paul and told him to come to the police station but didn't give him the real motive. When he arrived I saw he was anxious.

- Paul let's go inside. I have a few questions for you. - We went to my office; I had placed a recorder under my table. - So I heard you have been developing a hydroelectric project in Nigeria, is that true?

- Yes, you are right, it is pretty new but I see a great potential in it.

- And I also know that this project tends to make controversy everywhere. Have you had problems with ecologists in the villages?

- Small ones, I quickly solved them.

- What were you doing on Tuesday night? You usually have good memory and I know from a trustworthy source that you weren't at home.

- I was just handling a problem at work -He started to look around nervously.

- Why lying about it? Come on, I know the truth; you are a business man that won't stand obstacles in his way. But could you go that far? Taking the life of three innocent guys!

- How did you find out? -I know I gained his trust and he would confess quickly. - I invested millions of dollars on this project, my company isn't in a good economic position, and I couldn't just throw it out because some ecologist thought it was making some damage. They will turn it into a scandal and I could lose the permission of the government. It was the easiest way to get rid of those kids...

- Even if I were your friend, there will always be justice in my office, and you have to handle the consequences.

After that, I called the police and told them to arrest him, I had the murderer right in front of me and I didn't notice, the journalist had been really helpful. He was taken to jail.

And that is how I found out who was the real killer of the students, the Minister of Education, Paul Murray. I expect that the trial for him will be fair.

I walked towards Paul, and I said to him:

- It the end it doesn't matter how we keep a secret, the truth will always come out, in everything you do in your life, every secret will be known.

The End