

Who Dunn It? An Unsolved Crime at the Maynard School

Holly Trusted

'Why is teaching always so unexpected?' asked Cynthia Jewel, the geography teacher. Her sense of the unexpected was justified. As she stepped into the Lower IV classroom at 2.05 pm that Friday afternoon she felt a sharp sickening pain, not the dread of another geography lesson, but the point of a dagger being thrust into the small of her back. She was in intolerable agony, and warm red blood was starting to seep into her comfortable blue cardigan. The agony was brief. Her life blood leaked onto the floorboards.

'Why is police work always so unexpected?' asked Inspector Pooter, as he stood outside the Headmistress's office. Pooter had been called in immediately to investigate. Having questioned as many of the staff as he could find (some had left early for the weekend), and interrogated the girls from the Lower IV, he was now preparing to find out about Miss Jewel's inner life from the headmistress, Miss Dunstable.

'Why is running a girls' school always so unexpected?' asked Miss Dunstable, as she rang a bell to indicate to her secretary that Inspector Pooter could be admitted to her office. Miss Dunstable was naturally deeply distressed that a death had taken place at the school. It seemed not to be an accident or suicide; murder was quite definitely the second least desirable incident that any headmistress would wish upon her institution, after a school inspection. Sighing she stood up to greet Inspector Pooter as he walked through the door.

'Why is gardening always so tedious?' asked Jim Potter, as he pulled up some more weeds from the rose bed beneath the headmistress's window. Jim, in his mid-fifties, had been working at the Maynard for five years or so, having previously had a variety of jobs, as well as a spell in prison for offences which the Maynard authorities were assured were minor ones. He could hear voices from Miss Dunstable's office, including mention of his own name. They had found out then.

'Why is making tea always so tedious?' Miss Dunstable's secretary, Alice Jenkins, asked herself, as she brought in two mugs of tea for the headmistress and Inspector Pooter. Miss Dunstable turned towards her, 'Alice, didn't you go to Turkey last summer, and bring back a selection of weaponry?' Alice paled, spilling some of the tea.

'Why is being a prison officer always so tedious?' asked Janice Turner, the jailer who looked after women prisoners in B Wing. Pooter had solved the crime. Alice and Jim Potter had confessed to the plotting and murder of Cynthia Jewel. They had been having an illicit affair, having found secretarial work and gardening tedious (both had wanted to be teachers, but had failed the requisite exams), and were being blackmailed by Cynthia Jewel. In order to evade exposure they had ruthlessly killed her, using a dagger Alice had brought back from Istanbul the year before.

Miss Dunstable breathed again, though she had now to set about the tedious task of appointing a new gardener, school secretary and geography teacher.