

NEW YORK is a high-pressure town and being CEO of Yungun Best Advertising was a high-pressure job. The agency's founder, George Yungun, had died of a massive coronary at the age of fifty-three. His replacement, Keith Best, was barely on the job a week when he followed in his partner's footsteps. A suicide, or so it seemed at first.

It was on a Monday morning when Bonny Lou discovered the body. Keith Best's longtime assistant and occasional fiancée, Bonny Lou arrived at the Madison Avenue offices early that day, getting off the elevator on the executive floor and putting on coffee. As the percolator hummed, she glanced into Keith's office and immediately noticed something different. Her boss was dangling from the room's tasteful chandelier, supported only by a stylishly strong necktie. A suicide note on his desk cited the usual litany of depression and regret. By that evening, New York's finest had labeled it murder. Keith's suicide note did not quite match his handwriting, and a severe contusion on the crown of his head showed that he'd been knocked unconscious before being strung up.

As shocking as the murder was, it took a backseat to the nastier world of office politics. The wrangling for the job of CEO had been intense before Keith Best's promotion. After his death it became doubly intense. The top two contenders for the vacant position were the creative director, Robert Godenov, and the chief financial officer, Betina Anderson. Both were in their midthirties and ruthlessly ambitious.

Two days before the board of directors was scheduled to choose, Herb Anderson, Betina's father, was at his post on the night desk in the Yungun Best lobby. At 8:06 P.M., his intercom buzzed. Someone was calling from the executive floor. Right away Herb recognized the voice. "Mr. Godenov? Hello? What's wrong? You sound . . ."

"Herb, call an ambulance! 911! I've been poisoned. Blast her sneaky, interfering . . . Hurry, man! It's an emergency!"

Less than a minute after arriving on the executive floor, the paramedics discovered Robert Godenov in the founding chairman's office, crumpled in front of George Yungun's massive

desk. He had died just moments earlier. A preliminary autopsy confirmed that death had been caused by potassium cyanide. A hundred feet away, in Robert Godenov's office, lay a suicide note. But once again, the police weren't buying suicide.

Days later, Betina Anderson was arrested on two counts of first-degree murder. Patty Yungun, the late founder's daughter, was appointed as acting CEO.

In the prosecution's opening statement, the district attorney outlined three pieces of evidence: two forged suicide notes and a letter to Robert Godenov, luring him to a secret meeting that evening at eight.

"Betina Anderson will tell you that she was at home at the time, alone. Her father, the office security guard, will show you the sign-in log and tell you that his daughter never returned to the building. Well, who can blame a father for protecting his child? But this time, Ms. Anderson left us some clues.

"First," the district attorney held up an evidence bag, "a typed letter found in Mr. Godenov's bottom drawer in which Ms. Anderson set up their last fatal appointment. And then, even more damning . . ." A second evidence bag. "This so-called suicide note, written on the same paper and with the same pen as Keith Best's forged suicide note. It all fits together. Betina Anderson lured Robert Godenov back to the office, poisoned his coffee with cyanide, then made her escape, planting a suicide note on his desk.

"But Robert Godenov did not die as quickly as he was supposed to. His recorded call down to the security desk reveals a diabolical plot engineered by a 'sneaky, interfering' woman, the victim's own words. Ladies and gentlemen, that woman is Betina Anderson."

Whodunit? (1) Who killed Keith Best? (2) Who killed Robert Godenov? (3) How did Robert Godenov ingest the cyanide?