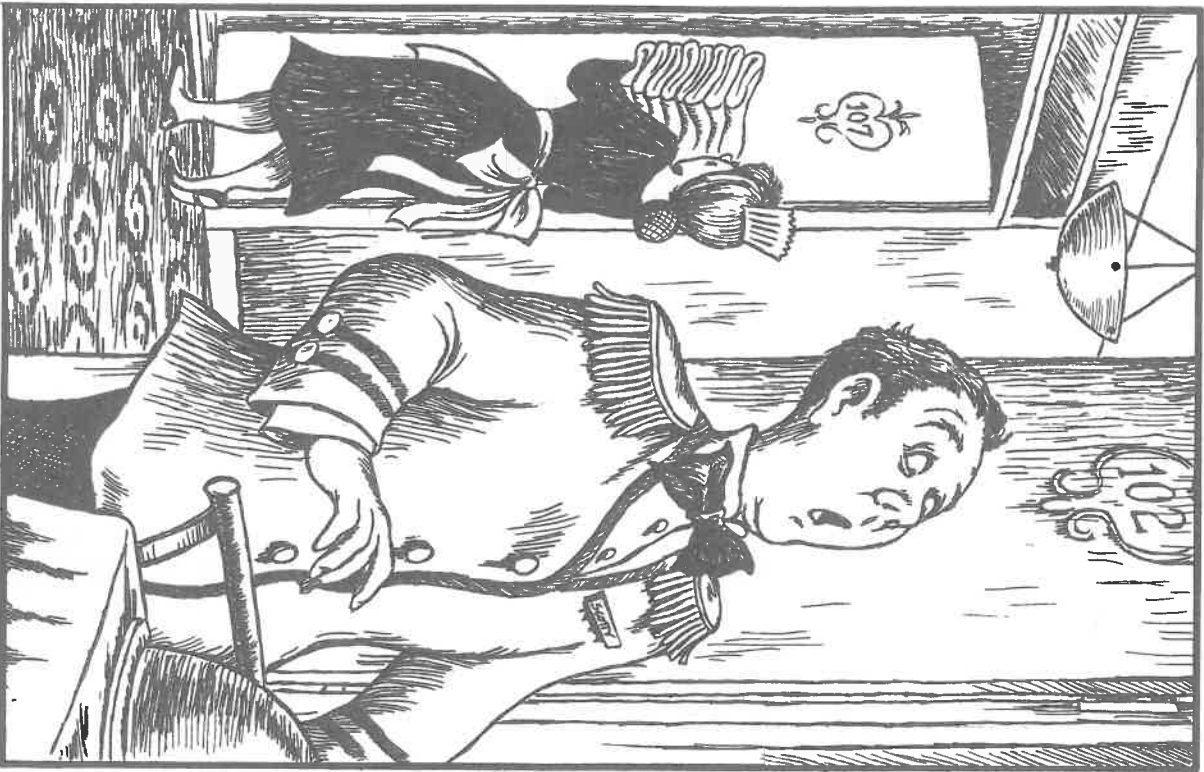


Checking Out



Scotty adjusted his black bow tie, then knocked. "Room service." After his third unanswered knock, Scotty used his pass key to open the hotel room door. "Mr. Williams?"

The waiter had just pushed the cart into the room when he saw the body. It was Mr. Williams, naked except for the blood. A ribbon of red snaked across the carpet, ending by the dresser. In front of the dresser lay the middle-aged guest, his head bashed in. Scotty ran out of the room and straight into a maid who was bringing fresh towels to the room next door.

The Chantel was one of Manhattan's poshest small hotels. But there had been a rash of burglaries here during the past few months. At first the police assumed this was the result of one, a burglary gone fatally wrong. They soon changed their minds. "Nothing was taken," a sergeant pointed out. "His wallet's in plain sight there on the table. And there's jewelry on the dresser, both his and his wife's."

The captain in charge was inspecting the carpet. "Williams must have lived for a few minutes after the attack. He was hit first over here. Bag that telephone, Hopper. Torn out of the wall. Could be our weapon." The captain waited until the sergeant had done so. "Several hard hits. He collapsed by the table. The killer walked out, left him for dead. Then, when he was alone, our Williams recovered enough to drag himself across the room. Not to the phone, which wasn't working, but ... Hmm."

Kneeling down by the dresser, he pried open the corpse's two clenched fists. In the right was a wedding band, the victim's own wedding band. In the left was a tie tack. The captain stood up and glanced around. There was no pen or paper anywhere in sight.

"The man knows he's dying. So he takes off his wedding ring, keeps it in his fist. Then he drags himself across to the dresser, pulls himself up, and grabs a pearl tie tack."

"According to the hotel staff, Mr. Williams's wife is named Pearl." The sergeant looked up from his notes and smiled. "Bingo! Don't you see? The wedding ring? The pearl? He was trying to tell us his attacker's identity—his wife, Pearl."

The sergeant's theory was smashed two minutes later when Pearl herself walked in, having just returned from a Broadway matinee. They sat her down with a brandy and gently questioned her. "You may as well know," Pearl confessed between sobs. "Bob Williams wasn't my husband."

She downed the rest of the drink. "We're both sales reps. Different companies. We first met here in New York a year ago. Bob has a wife in Boston. I have a husband in Philadelphia. Once every few months we arrange to come here on business. We have two or three great days together, then go back to our lives. No one gets hurt. Not until now, I guess."

The police spent the next two days interviewing the principals and taking their statements. At the time of the murder, Pearl Lowe claimed to be at a performance of *Cats* and produced her theater ticket and program as evidence. No one could recall seeing her around the hotel during the time in question.


Dr. Lamar Lowe claimed to know nothing of his wife's infidelity. His alibi? He'd been alone in his Philadelphia office, on the phone, updating his billing system and sending faxes to a few colleagues in California.

Ms. Emma Williams worked as a flight attendant, based in Boston. On the day of her husband's death, she was on call, staying close to her phone in case she was needed for a flight. "None of their alibis is perfect," the captain whined. "So, what we got here is a naked man clutching a ring and a tie tack. What the heck was going on?"

Whodunit? (1) Who killed Bob Williams? (2) Why? (3) What was the meaning of the ring and pearl tie tack?

Evidence *This crime can be solved in 3 clues.*

 Crime Scene Report

 Autopsy Report

 Search for Murder Weapon (Miscellaneous Searches)

 Hotel Closet (Miscellaneous Searches)

 Scotty's Testimony (Affidavit File)