

The Perfect Murder

Alex Rydal the chairman of the Rydal's a property company of which John Moore was a senior manager told him of his plan to surprise his wife Julia. He was taking her to a show in the west end followed by dinner at the Ivy in Covent Garden on their anniversary that day. He had booked a suite at the Savoy for the occasion and was assuming that John would help him out with a small errand. He had bought a bottle of Dom Perignon as a special surprise and wanted John to deliver it to his wife in person at 3pm as he was not going to be able to get there until after 6pm.

How could John say no, after all Alex was his boss but he was perplexed as to why Alex wanted him to deliver the bubbly after all he could have arranged for a courier to deliver it. But he was insistent. He explained it was part of a game he was playing on Julia.

Did he know? How could he?

Furthermore he wanted John to wear thick rimmed glasses and a trilby like his. John although much younger was of similar build, had the same complexion and colour hair. John was to present himself at the reception and show them Alex's business card and get a room key card. At 3pm on the dot he wanted him to knock on the door then enter with the card and present Julia with the champagne then leave after announcing that her husband Alex had been delayed in a meeting but would be there by 6pm.

John and Julia had actually been having a clandestine affair for over a year but they had been very discreet so Alex couldn't possibly know.

Or could he? How could he?

On arrival at the Savoy John presented Alex's business card and picked up the key card from the busy receptionist with no problem. He hoped to have some fun with Julia so rushed to the suite. He was besotted with Julia but didn't want to leave his wife Penny, not because he loved her, not because of the children but because Penny held the purse strings, having inherited a fortune on her father's death.

Julia was indeed surprised to see John. They both knew Alex liked to play elaborate games and although somewhat perplexed at the bizarre situation

neither thought he suspected the affair. John knew that Alex was in an important meeting so couldn't possibly turn up earlier than 6pm, so there was nothing to worry about. Well if he thinks he can keep me hanging around waiting for him he's got another think coming Julia had exclaimed and between gulps of champagne they went on to spend an illicit 2 hours navigating "the garden of pleasure" as the Karma Sutra euphemistically describes the action.

John left at 5pm, not wishing to bump into Alex. He left Julia drawing a bath.

On requesting a card key at reception at 6pm the concierge told Alex that there must be a mistake because it had been signed out to him at 3pm. Alex remonstrated that that was impossible and demanded to be let into the room. There in the presence of the assistant manager they found the body of Julia slumped under water in the bath. The subsequent investigation by the police established that John and Julia had been lovers and the hotel CCTV revealed that John had passed himself off as Alex and had entered the Rydal's suite with a packaged bottle. He had spent nearly 2 hours there before leaving, he didn't make it home before collapsing and dying on the tube.

Alex gave the police access to Julia's email account where they had discovered proof of the affair and significantly the email where she threatened to commit suicide if John didn't leave and divorce Penny. You see Alex had actually accessed Julia's email account earlier and sent an email to John. It simply stated that she was planning on leaving Alex that day and expected him to leave Penny. They would be free to live together and eventually marry. If he didn't agree to marry her that day there was no future for her and she would take her own life. Obviously neither party had sight of the email. Alex had also surreptitiously dropped a glass file with the residue of belladonna, in the suite when he and the assistant manager had discovered Julia's body. He had known the belladonna extract injected through the champagne cork would take a couple of hours to take effect, so knowing Julia would have started polishing off the champagne around 3pm (he knew her so well) Alex was certain she would have lost consciousness by 5pm.

The autopsies revealed significant traces of belladonna in both bodies and given Julia was a horticulturist and had expressed her desire to commit suicide it was concluded that she had poisoned her lover and herself by slipping the poison into the champagne.

Alex decided to cool it with Penny Moore for a while, but planned on setting up home with her in Barbados maybe in a years' time. After all with the proceeds of the sale of Rydal's and her fortune they'd be able to afford it.