

A Perfect Murder

Monday 3 April 10.00.

'Who found the body?' Asked the weary DCI Magellan

'A dog walker, Donna Drake. She said she spotted him at about 0900 she thought he may have tripped and fallen into the ditch. Looks like he may have been out jogging judging by his outfit. She checked if he was breathing and then rang for help. Unfortunately she and the dog trampled over the site.'

'Do we know who he is yet?' 'Not yet, there was no wallet and no phone, just the contents of a small rucksack on the grass. One key, possibly for a house, a hoodie, an empty epipen and a bottle of water. 'I have a strange feeling in my water that this isn't going to be straightforward.' DCI Magellan was not wrong this was probably the most puzzling, infuriating case his 30 year career had seen.

Monday 3 April 15.30. Magellan went to the mortuary to see what the forensic pathologist Angus Crane had discovered.

'What have we got? Murder or misadventure?' 'A middle aged IC1 male, slim build, kept himself in good shape.'

'I can see that for myself'. The DCI moaned 'What about a time of death?'

'This is where it gets interesting either between 0200 and 0800 this morning or, 3 years ago'

DCI Magellan was in no mood for the cheerfulness of the pathologist. He had always found Cranes happy enthusiasm for his work somewhat disturbing.

Seeing the policeman's growing irritation Crane thought better of further cryptic comments.

'Well, I can give you a name. Lazarus here is actually John Darewin. Apparently he disappeared about over 3 years ago in a boating accident – no body was found. His wife is in the process of having him legally declared dead' 'I thought you had to wait 7 years?' questioned Megellan 'Not when it's a death at sea. If there were witnesses of him being on the boat, and wreckage of the craft found then a coroner can say on laws of probability he was dead. And that's what happened here. Then just last month his wife (widow) filed for him to be legally declared dead.'

DCI Megallans lanky body leant over Darewin; his bright blue eyes absorbing all the small details of the lifeless body. Meticulously observing every detail. The dark receding hair, the slight stubble, the gold band on his ring finger, the word REUS tattooed on the right arm. A fading rash on the tanned torso and a slight swelling of the face. 'Any idea what the cause of death might be?' 'Going by the rash, swelling of the face and neck - I would guess anaphylaxis. There was a small pile of vomit at the scene. I'll know more once I open him up.' He said almost beaming in anticipation. 'I've dug out his medical records and he had a severe nut allergy.'

Now back at the station. 'Get all the background on Darewin.' Demanded the DCI. His long suffering sergeant Snow was ahead of his boss. 'He was nearing 50 and was part owner of a small boat yard on the coast.

'We've checked the wife Bella. She seems to live on her own. She did move house recently. Nothing too flashy but has no mortgage. I suppose the insurance money helped there. No new man in her life. Not that we can see. The neighbors say she keeps herself to herself and has hardly any visitors.

No children. She's got a dog. She did come off all socials at the time of husband's disappearance. She carried on working at the boat yard as the accountant until last month. There was a business partner Bill Steptoe. Apparently there was some friction there he wanted to sell up to Celox Holdings and Darewin didn't. It is in the process of going through now with Steptoe promised a place on the board. So he's done quite well out of Darewin's death.

'Bring him in for questioning, see if he has an alibi.'

Tuesday 4 April 11.00.

'Why on earth would I want him dead? We had been friends for years and business partners for 15 of them. I was devastated when he went missing. The takeover would have given him a wad of cash and a continued say in the business. He was just being stubborn and I'm sure I he would have changed his mind given time. The deal would still go ahead whether he was alive or not. Anyway, I've been at a conference all weekend and only came back today. I've have a shed load of witnesses.'

With Steptoe out of the picture, Megellan turned his attention to the wife Bella. After all she's just had an insurance payout. If John reappeared would she have to pay it back? However, she too had an alibi. She helps out at a soup kitchen on the other side of town and was there before 0700 and had plenty of witnesses. Would the money be enough to murder for? And how on earth would she do it?

Megellan muses out loud to no one in particular. 'So what have we got an insurance scam. Did the wife know and why come back from the dead. Did he want his share of the insurance payout? And how the hell did the nuts get into his system?

This is not how the DCI wanted to end his career. He was convinced Darewin was murdered but with no one with a motive to see him die twice. His wife and partner with cast iron alibis. And how on earth did he inhale nuts whilst out on a run early morning. Crane had no evidence of nuts anywhere on Darewins body. The case was going nowhere, perhaps it was misadventure?

Six months later, 29 September 09.00

The dog walker Donna is walking the dog along the same road. Bella is holding her hand tightly. 'I can't believe we did it. Megellan rang me to say they are closing the case. The perfect murder!'

2 April 21.00

John was sitting by the fire with Bella. He had arrived at his wife's new house at 2000 three nights before ensuring he wasn't seen. 'I thought we would be back together sooner than this. I've missed you so much'. Bella hugged her husband and whispered 'So have I. No one knows you here and providing we keep our heads down we should be ok. Its great the insurance money paid out but what about the money from the boat yard? I'd love to be a fly on the wall when Steptoe realizes the company is worthless. Is the money in the off shore account?' 'Yes of course' reassured Bella 'everything is under control. If you're going for your usual run tomorrow then perhaps you should get an early night. I've run a bath for you '

3 April 0700

John was out running and Donna walked towards him with the dog.

John stopped in bewilderment as the dog recognized him and bounded up to greet him. Licking his hands and face in excitement. 'That's my dog.' Donna smiled at him. 'Is it? I'm just walking him for a

friend Bella – do you know her?’ ‘Yes of course, that’s my wife. I don’t understand, she told me he had died a while back’. John could feel his throat tightening his heart pounding, his breathing getting shallower. He ripped open his ruck sack and was frantically searching. He was beginning to feel faint and nauseous, vomiting he fell to the ground. He stabbed his EpiPen into his leg but it had no effect. He stabbed his leg again. Nothing

‘I wouldn’t bother if I were you. Bella swapped it last night for an empty one.’ His eyes staring at her. ‘You thought she would welcome you back you sad pathetic man. After everything you put her through. Your hair brain scheme to fake your own death was ridiculous. Then leaving her on her own for over 2 years. You thought she would just sit and wait for you like a dutiful little housewife. She deserves better than you.’ Donna just stood looking down at the pleading Darewin. The dog was frantically trying to rouse his master.

The silver dog tag Reus and the flea dispenser round his neck shining in the morning sun.

‘Aren’t these collars clever – they omit a fine anti-flea spray? It really didn’t take much to put in some fine nut powder. Fancy being killed by your own dog. Not your best friend after all.

The perfect murder in deed – after all, no one suspects the dog walker – let alone the dog.