

Murder by Pheasant

a murder most fowl



Whodunnit!

The Answers: did you get it right?



Well, I hope you had as much fun investigating the murder mystery as I had writing it. The answer to who committed the heinous crime is, of course ... but hold on a minute ... did you get the clues (there was a deliberate lie by one of the characters) moreover did you discover red herrings? Every murder mystery has to have a few of these, did you get ours? Okay, let have a look at some smelly fish. Or, if you can't be bothered reading just skips to the end to find out whodunit!

The Love Affair: The only reason we know about any affair is through gossip and hearsay. Now I expect any good detective to take gossip with a pinch of salt – never excluding it, but always questioning it. Passionate love affairs are always a great motive for murder, but a “fling” with the butler, even if there actually was one, would be quite different. Lady Anna quite boldly declared she was in the marriage for money and position; running away with someone as lowly as a butler just doesn't fit with her desires in life. That's not to say she couldn't have convinced Smithy, if he was her plaything, to do the deed for her if she thought she might lose out in the Will!

The Will: Being written out of a Will is also a top motive to commit a murder. Now, Sutherland claimed he was there on business to change Sir Harold's Will in which all the characters would lose out – except one. I expect investigators to look at, and question, everything! So, ask yourself this: everyone knew that Sir Harold was going to fire his lawyer, everyone, that is, except Sutherland himself. If Sir Harold was going to fire his lawyer, why would he have him conducting personal business immediately prior to sacking him? None of the other characters appeared to have heard about a new Will.

The murder itself was a strange one, stuffing a pheasant leg down someone's throat? A good detective would know that this was a crime of rage; committed by someone who was very angry. Of course, it could have been made to look like that, but that would indicated malice aforethought. Did any likely motive indicate that? Okay, so considering all this, what would be each character's motive for “doing in” Sir Harold?

Graeme: Lost all his money – he was so blasé about it that it is possible this was not the first time he had lost his dosh – he really didn't appear too upset by it. This could indicate that he had been bailed out previously by the family if so, what would be his motive for killing his father? Was he the murderer? No!

Felicity: Even if the Will was changed Felicity has her own money. All she really ever wanted was approval from her father, not much of a motive there. She was a bit angry at him, though. Was she the murderer? No!

Lady Anna: Frequently heard disparaging her husband; wishing he would shuffle off his mortal coil, but she did not appear to know about any change to his Will. In, fact she seemed quite shocked when Burke told her of it. Sir Harold was old and in ill-health and would, most likely, have died sooner rather than later. It is possible Lady Anna is having “relations” with the handsome young butler, but it not likely to be serious. Did she have any real motive to kill Sir Harold? No, it wasn't her!

Smithy: May or may not have been having an affair with Lady Anna. He seemed taken aback when accused of it. His only motive would have been to assure Lady Anna did not lose out. However, he only had motive if: a) he was indeed having an affair and b) there was a new Will. Neither of which is conclusive. He was seen leaving the Dining Room just a few moments after the nurse; did he have time to murder Sir Harold? Yes, but he didn't!

Mr. Sutherland: Did the family lawyer know he was there to be fired? It was not beyond Sir Harold, a cruel bully, to use business as a guise to lure the lawyer into a sense of false security so he could surprise him when he fired him. He appears to have an alibi in that he was seen by a number of people going into the Study. Could he have

committed the murder in the 10 minutes since he was seen going in there and the body was found? Yes he could have, but it seems he may well have twigged about getting the heave-ho, but it would have been more in his interest to throw a cat among the pigeons to cause a bit of infighting to detract from himself rather than killing the Old Boy. It looks like he may have thrown in a tiger rather than a pussycat. Old Suthers didn't do it.

The Nurse, Isobel McGuire: Found Sir Harold dead. She did have opportunity, but did she have motive? She says she was a confidant of Sir Harold; indeed he appeared to treat her better than most. If the Will was a ruse to make Sutherland's suffering greater, she would have known about it. However, if the new Will was indeed a possibility and she was motivated to kill him, was stuffing a pheasant leg down his throat the best way to avoid suspicion? No, she could easily have snuffed him out in less suspicious circumstances. It wasn't The Nurse!

Of course, it was Alexander Comfort what did it. He was bullied by his big brother most of his life. He relied on his brother for his income and was reminded of it often, especially when other people were around – just to humiliate him further.

A life of bullying and humiliation is a powerful motivation for murder, yes? Well, maybe, but Alexander had put up with it for over fifty years, why now? He had an alibi, hadn't he?

Clue: *Alexander lied about when he got to the house, saying he arrived just in time for dinner, yet, in the next breath he did not deny talking to Sutherland earlier.*

Clue: *Smithy also claimed he saw Alexander arguing with Sir Harold earlier. So, he was in the house before he said he was. Why would he lie? (He didn't want Burke to know he had discovered the truth about his father's Will which gave him a real motive for killing his brother).*

Clue: *Sutherland told DCI Burke that Alexander was given the stipend by his father, NOT his brother who pretended otherwise and tormented him about it for over fifty years. The stipend was Alexander's by right. In fact, in certain circumstances, the family fortune may well have gone to Alexander.*

Clue: *It is obvious that Alexander did not know of this as he was not present when father's Will was read – he was incommunicado in Rhodesia at the time, He had simply accepted his brother's version of it. As the family lawyers, the Sutherlands must have known Sir Harold had kept the whole truth from his brother.*

Clue: *Sutherland said he joked with Alexander about his father's Will. It takes little stretch of the imagination to accept that, for his own benefit, Sutherland told Alexander more than he let on to DCI Burke to try and cause a family argument to distract Sir Harold from sacking him. In spilling the beans to Alexander (tossing the moggie among the doos), he let him know he had suffered fifty-odd years of unnecessary humiliation.*

Clue: *Smithy highlights how Alexander could easily access the dining room from his apartment with little chance of being seen.*

Clue: *In Alexander's room, the missing box of cigars.*

*After over fifty years of humiliation when the money was his by right,
an angry man committed a very angry murder.*

The Winner will be announced Shortly

Now you know how my fevered little mind works,
I challenge you to crack it next time.
Till then,

Joe