

Murder, She Rhymed

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It's a rainy, gray day
Here in Cabot Cove, Maine
And I'm sitting here typing,
Just racking my brain.

I'm writing my newest book
Caught In The Act.
It's not going too well,
And that is a fact.

Should the murder take place
By day or by night?
Should the cook be the killer?
Or maybe, not quite?

I still need the right weapon
To fit to the crime.
And what of the motive?
The reason and rhyme?
And the characters' names?
And the date and the time?
It's a pain in the neck
Trying to meet my deadlines!

I'm just hammering keys
With a click and a clack
When Mort Metzger bursts in
Through the door in the back.

"A dead body washed up
On the beach late last night.
God knows we can't do this
Without your insight,

So come along with us
And make this all right!"

"Now, Mort, that's just silly!
You're going to be fine!
I have to work like a horse
To meet my deadline."

But he motions me up,
And I march to the door.
My innate curiosity's
Won over once more.

"Let's get down to the beach
And examine this death.
We've got no time to lose!
Move your butt, Mrs. F!"

We arrive at the seashore
And what do I see?
A young woman's body,
My next mystery.

And my dearest friend Seth
Has already arrived
To help us determine
How this was contrived.

"How'd she die, Dr. Hazlitt?"
Mort calls out to Seth.
"Have you turned up a weapon
And right time of death?"

"Hold your horses there, Mort!
Ask me one at a time!
Why the heck am I talking
In this blessed rhyme?
It looks like she drowned,
But look here instead:
She suffered blunt trauma
Smack dab in the head.

She washed up on shore
Here in this very spot,
With her watch stopped
At midnight, right on the dot."

Seth then turns to me.
"Whatcha think of this, Jess?
You have any idea
Who started this mess?"

"I haven't a clue, boys,
But give me some time.
Let me nose around town
And I'll wrap up this crime."

Just then, the light catches
A ring on her hand.
The stone has been stolen
Right out of the band.

I just found my first clue.
Could the murder have been
Over precious rare gems
Or some other dark sin?

Whatever the reason,
I have to find out.
Cabot Cove isn't safe
With a killer about.

Without further ado,
I head back into town,
Don my trench coat, and then
I'm off asking around.

Most people are helpful
With what they impart.
And then there are some
In sore need of a heart.

They all call me as nosy
As nosy can be,
But once I get involved,
There is no stopping me.

Mort then calls me up.
He's located the kin
Of the victim, Shawn Casey -
Her sister, Erin.

Erin's distraught,
And she faints and I catch her.
When she wakes, she asks me,
"Can you help, Mrs. Fletcher?
It was Shawn, her husband,
And I on a boat,
And then I saw Evan
Grab Shawn by the throat.
He accused her of cheating
And choked her, you see.
Then he threw her corpse overboard
Far out to sea.
And now he's made off
With her sapphire ring!
She'd promised me that!
You must solve this whole thing!
I just gave you your why
And your when and your how!
You must stop more murders from happening,
Right now!"

I make sure that Erin
Has all that she needs,
And then turn back to Mort,
Who has a new lead.

"We've just picked up a guy
Who's all covered in blood.
Claims to be Evan Casey.
His name will be mud,
'Cause the boys hauled him in,

Did a search and a frisk,
And they found a sapphire
The size of a fist.
Real fancy-dancy,
A nice piece of bling.
And dollars to donuts
It matches Shawn's ring.
We've captured our killer.
Let's call it a night.
Satisfied, Mrs. Fletcher?"
I answer, "Not quite.

"If Evan had choked Shawn
Like Erin supplied,
Marks would have appeared
Long after she died,
And Seth found no bruises
Or marks of the sort.
The killer's still free.
Evan's not your man, Mort."

I then ask to see Evan,
And Mort takes me in
To Evan's jail cell,
Where he sits, looking grim.
I say to him, "Evan,
Did you kill your wife?"
His response is, "No, Jessica!
Not on your life!
Shawn and I were in bed
When the cabin door creaked.
I went to investigate
And somebody sneaked
Up behind me and knocked out my lights.
When I woke, Shawn was gone.
I remembered our fight."

"You didn't choke her
During your little spat?"
Evan frowns at me. "No!

What maroon told you that?
She cheated at poker to beat all the band.
I saw that she had extra cards in her hand.
She sent all my pocket change running for cover,
But it sure as heck wasn't worth choking her over!
Who told you I killed her?
Who had all that gall?"
I reply, "It was Erin,
Your sister-in-law."

Evan shouts, "Erin Whitney?
You're out of your mind!
Shawn and I haven't seen her
For such a long time.
The girl is a stalker!
She kept following me
'Cause she couldn't accept
It was over, you see.
She and I went out once.
For me, that was enough.
I said, 'Let's be friends,'
But she was in love.
She waited outside
For me just to come home.
She called and she called,
Couldn't leave me alone.
Then when I married Shawn,
She went over the edge.
She swore then and there
That she'd get her revenge.
Erin's your killer.
You've gotta go catch her!
I'm counting on you,
Mrs. Jessica Fletcher!"

With this new information,
I head for my house.
It's quiet – no sound,
No proverbial mouse.

I need a hot bath
To relax and unwind,
But a dozen new theories
Pop up in my mind.

We have two major suspects
Who pin the whole crime
On each other. The question is,
Who'll do the time?

There's no obvious answer,
And there is the rub,
I think to myself
As I soak in the tub.
Just like always,
I'll have to rely on my wits.
And no, I don't like this,
Not one little bit.

Next morning, Mort calls
During breakfast with Seth.
"I've got a big break
In this case, Mrs. F.
The jewelry shop called.
They want us to see
An order for someone
Initialed E.C."

So it's off to the jeweler's
For Seth and for me,
And I wonder what this clue
Could possibly be.
And what greets us there
But a wonderful thing!
It's a five-carat, flawless new sapphire ring!

"Here's your proof, Mrs. F,
And I'm telling you why.
E.C.? Evan Casey!
The scumbag's our guy!"

"But why a new ring?
If he were desperate for cash,
He'd have pawned that sapphire
As quick as a flash."
So I turn to the clerk.
"Who ordered the ring?"
He replies, "A young lady,
A pretty young thing.
Said she'd lost her engagement ring
And this one was for
Her husband, to tell her he loved her once more."

And then a big smile
Lights up my whole face.
I thank him profusely,
Then back home I race.
I make a quick phone call
And stay upon task.
It's high time the killer
Was finally unmasked.

It's nighttime when Erin
Walks through the front door.
"Mrs. Fletcher?" she asks.
"What'd you call me here for?"

"I think you know why, Erin.
Stop playing games.
You killed Shawn
And let Evan take all the blame."

"That's ridiculous!" she cries.
"You're imagining things!"
"I don't think so.
What gave you away were the rings.

"You killed Shawn because
She took Evan from you.
But that wasn't enough,
So you took the ring too,
Stole the sapphire to make a new ring.

And why would you do this?
Just one little thing.
You thought that Shawn's ring
Should have been meant for you.
You want Evan still.
Am I right? Is it true?"

Erin shakes her head no.
"No, of course it's not true!
Your imagination's getting
The better of you.
The order was for someone titled E.C.
And I am E.W. – Erin Whitney."

"That's true, but you're hoping you won't be for long.
You had this whole murder planned out all along.
E.C. meant Erin Casey, did it not?
Taking Evan's last name was just part of your plot.
You snuck out to the boat,
Knocked Evan out cold,
And murdered your sister
With a metal boat pole.
How did I know that?
Well, it's easy to say.
They found it washed up on the beach just today."

Some regret that their actions took such a foul course,
But Erin stood rigid, no trace of remorse.
"All right, I confess. I killed Shawn. You got me.
I smashed in her head, threw her corpse out to sea.
She stole Evan from me! That ring should've been mine!
She took my life away; I returned her in kind."

I was shocked at her bluntness.
She just didn't care.
And she looked up and gave me
The filthiest glare.

"The whole plan would've worked
If it weren't for you.
You had to horn in

Like you constantly do.
You're too nosy to live.
I don't need you about!"
Then she reached in her pocket
And pulled a gun out.

"Hold it right there!"
Mort's voice rang out clear.
"Put down the weapon
And step over here.
We heard the whole thing,
And you're under arrest
For Shawn Casey's murder.
Thanks a lot, Mrs. F."

Well, after that, things became normal again –
Normal, that is, for our corner of Maine.
Evan was cleared of all ties to the crime
And thanked all of us for devoting the time
To making sure justice was served and was swift,
And the darling boy gave me a wonderful gift.
"Shawn's sapphire ring! But I don't deserve this!"
"Yes, you do," Evan said as he gave me a kiss.
"Shawn would want you to have it."
"What a lovely surprise!"
"And besides, Jess, it matches your pretty blue eyes."
I shoot Seth a glare, but start laughing instead.
With friends such as these, I have nothing to dread.
Now it's back to the house to hang up my trench coat
And get back to the murder, the murder I wrote!