

A CASE OF KIPPERS



Sara Palfrey loved kippered herring and had bought a dozen cans of it at Cronig's Market. She had them with her when she went to clean Casper Pollux's apartment in West Tisbury, as she did every Tuesday, but somehow or other she left them there and forgot all about them until Thursday. Since she had a key to Casper's apartment, she let herself in, only to find a body on the couch. Obviously strangled.

Not having read any mystery novels, Sara failed to scream. All she did was give a small gasp that nobody heard except herself. Then, as she said, she did a little straightening up.

"I like to see things neat," she said, "and she lying there with her dress sopping wet and an old garbage bag with a hole in it on her lap—I couldn't stand it."

After neatly folding the garbage bag and placing it over the arm of the sofa, she called the police and then sat down and opened a can of kippers. She munched contentedly while she stared at the body of Q. T. "Cutie" Buxom (who was neither cute nor buxom, but it was the first corpse Sara had ever seen, and she wanted to make the most of it).

Officer Milly Shooflu answered the call and shooed Sara out of the way. Sam, who had been in Lambert's Cove checking a case of vandalism, arrived as soon as he could. Within a couple of hours he had identified the body as Q.T.'s, learned that she was a loan shark, that Casper owed her \$16,148.09, that last Tuesday he'd gone off-island on a business trip, and that according to the medical examiner, Q.T. had been strangled on Wednesday.

On the face of it, all Sam had to do was find Casper and charge him, but Sam was unable to locate him until Friday, when Casper walked in and expressed surprise at the murder. Since he could prove he'd been off-island on Wednesday, Sam was stymied.

As he always remarked, if you keep thinking hard enough, something happens, and it happened just after he'd passed the Flying Horses Carousel in Oak Bluffs and turned into Circuit Avenue, where he noticed Sara coming out of Mad Martha's with an ice cream cone of dripping Celestial Hash. That was when the idea struck him.

What was it, and how did it solve the mystery of the Case of the Kippered Herring?

Questions

1. Do you think that Q.T. came to Casper's to collect money?
2. Was Casper broke?
3. Did Casper have a motive for killing Q.T.?
4. What is the significance of the puddle?
5. What was Sam's idea, and how did it solve the case?

Solution on page 61.