
THE AWESOME TREASURE



As kids, they'd always summered at Uncle Victor's, in the great, rambling mansion overlooking Edgartown harbor and the island of Chappaquiddick. The three kids used to play a game they called "Uncle Victor's Awesome Treasure," and the idea was to pretend they were expert harpooners and sail off in a whaling ship, but instead of killing whales, they would find a box of pirate gold.

But that was far away and long ago, and now they were grown up—she a professor of political science, her brothers, a doctor and an engineer. They hadn't seen Uncle Victor in years, but he'd summoned them one weekend in June. At the small Vineyard airport they were met by Bessie Sassado, who was Uncle Victor's housekeeper and perhaps something more.

Bessie told them that their uncle wasn't well, that all he did now was count his money. He kept a lot of it in a safe, in the little room with the stairs leading up to the widow's walk. Bessie didn't think he'd live much longer.

Just before dinner, Victor gave them a quick look inside his safe. They glanced at the stacks of money and certificates, and he told them he was going to make one of them his sole heir and that they were here so that he could look them over and decide who was worthy.

The next morning, Bessie came running down the stairs and screamed out, "The marster's been kilt—oh lordy me—come help!" Which all three did, and they saw what you see.

The doctor, after a brief examination, pronounced Uncle Victor dead, the result of a fractured skull. The doctor then called the police. Sam arrived promptly with Officer Pudge Bartlett and Bartlett's seven-year-old boy, Scoop.

Sam asked a few sharp questions and, together with Pudge, made an exhaustive search of the premises, with negative results. Meanwhile, Scoop was prying into every nook and cranny that he could find, usually with harmless effect, until he found a hammer, after which he went wild. He started with a table in the new gazebo and was banging up the floor when, by accident, he struck a loose plank. It turned out to be a trapdoor that covered a hidden compartment. With a yell, he shrieked "Look what I found!" and scattered a package of fifty-dollar bills.

If you were Sam, what would you conclude, and whom would you arrest?

Questions

1. Had Uncle Victor been killed accidentally?
2. Had he been killed during the course of a burglary?
3. Had the safe been ransacked before he was killed?
4. Who killed Uncle Victor?

Solution on page 60.