

AT THE FAIR



During the annual Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Fair, it never rains and the fair grounds in West Tisbury are bathed in a carnival atmosphere. Food booths, carousels, and a Ferris wheel crowd the midway, while the old Grange Hall bursts at the seams with competing exhibits of almost anything that can either grow or be made by hand, from quinces to quilts and artichokes to art. Not the least of all these entries is a Martha's Vineyard specialty—beach plum jelly.

Before her untimely death, Alice Tilton Freebooter's jellies had pulled in all the beach plum blue ribbons, but she would have been desolated to hear what had happened since. Because of the danger of botulism in home-prepared preserves, state regulations had prohibited actual tasting of any of the jellies. Instead, appearance—including color, clarity, and consistency—was now the only criterion for the award.

Colonel Freebooter, Alice's widower and a traditional head of the fair, was criticizing this procedure when he heard the shocking news that Scratchy Sonnenbaum, a second-rate carpenter, had won first prize for his beach plum entry. Worse than that, Sonnenbaum had insulted all the judges by grabbing his jar and blue ribbon and running off. The Colonel, aghast at this break with precedent and swearing to avenge the honor of the fair as well as the memory of his spouse, went looking for Scratchy.

Ten minutes later, Weary Willy, security officer for the fair, found Scratchy's body in the little-used area behind his wife Zinnia's "Hole in the Donut" snackery. On seeing what you see in the sketch, he called for Sam. Sam arrived forthwith, identified the body as Scratchy's, and cited a blow to the head as the cause of death. It took Sam only a few minutes to find out from some kids who had been playing nearby that, except for some of the booth-holders stepping out to deposit garbage, only two people had been in the area. Sam was able to prove that they were a pickpocket known as Fast-Finger Flanagan and the Colonel.

Sam studied the terrain carefully, and then on the basis of the above account plus what you see in the sketch, he decided who had killed Scratchy.

Questions

1. Had there been a fight?
2. Did the jelly jar break because it was dropped?
3. Why was no jelly spilled?
4. Why was Scratchy's money not taken?
5. What was the probable murder weapon?
6. Who killed Scratchy?

Solution on page 65.