

Years 9 & 10  
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## Overlooked

Blaring sirens and the disorderly babble of civilians and officers drove me nearly mad before I could snap out of my daze and back into chaotic reality. "So . . . what do you think?" Detective Steven asked bitterly, intrusive as ever as he flipped open his note pad. Only having just regained focus I struggled to muster the words to respond. His displeased gaze met mine, as he searched my face for an answer. His eyes, just as blue as the ocean beside us, glimmered with curiosity. I stared at my own reflection within them, taking in every aspect of my hollow expression. Deep brown eyes stressed by darkened bags beneath them. My hair dishevelled, tucked messily behind my ears. My lips, nervously bitten and chapped, sat tightly pursed and displayed on the canvas of my vague expression.

"What on Earth is that smell?" I asked as I wrinkled my nose in utter disgust. The air around me, once fresh with the aroma of salty sea spray, was now thick with the nauseating musk of tobacco. As I heard the gradual approaching of solid soled shoes against brutally beaten pavement, I knew exactly who was approaching. Sergeant Berkshire.

"Of course," I muttered under my breath through clenched teeth, rolling my eyes back in frustration.

"Don't look so grim doll face" he said arrogantly, taking a puff of his cigarette through a patronizing smirk. While Berkshire well out ranked me within the force, his stature and physical demeanour could have led an individual to believe otherwise. A solidly built figure, broad shoulders and a self-assured stance. Yet years of desk duty had left him rather tubbier than an office ought to be. Stunted in growth he was also, however he only had genetics to blame for that.

As he extended out his hand to me, I reached out and hesitantly shook it. Even through the latex of my gloves I could feel the leathery skin of his hands, causing me to quickly pull away in discomfort.

"So, what do we have here? Murderer must have made quite a . . . splash," he said with a faint chuckle to himself. Ocean puns at a coastal murder, how creative indeed. Pleased by his own wit and creativity, he proceeded to investigate the crime scene. With no evidence at that point discovered, I could have told you then and there it was a lost cause case. But Berkshire underestimated the killer, and well over-estimated his own ability.

"The body was found tied up washed along the shore," Detective Steven began to explain, pursuing Berkshire as he sauntered confidently away. "Little is known about where it washed up from, but the autopsy report shows clear struggle with distressing marks at the neck and arms." Disturbing as the job may be at times I had to admit, the nervous chills that came over me with every case was almost electric. The entire shore was swept with officers, all frantically clawing away to find any means of explanation for the murder or who was behind it.

Yet, as Berkshire flicked through the reports, the gradual curl of his upper lip, slight frowning of his eyebrows and loosening of his stance said it all. He had found

something. At least he thought he had. I prepared myself for whatever arrogant claim of success he intended to parade, internalising a groan and huff of frustration.

“Right here,” he said, tapping the page confidently. “I can’t believe you missed this Detective May,” he chuckled gesturing towards me. If he had known any better, he would have proceeded with caution. But of course, this man knew near nothing at all. With my patience wearing thin I mockingly asked, “Do tell me Sergeant, what of such prominence have I missed?” boldly folding my arms across my chest.

Clearly aggravated by my retaliation he paced slowly towards me, right until his face was mere inches from mine. His eyes were murky brown like the alcohol lingering on his breath. But despite its putrid penetration of my nose, I firmly stood my ground.

Without words he simply passed me the reports, proceeding to maintain eye contact in the process. Pointing one large finger down to a single line, I looked down to see, “*Victim presumed deceased 5:30am morning of discovery.*” The frowning of my eyebrow and shrugging of my shoulders urged him to go on, to provide an explanation.

“This means,” he said with a frustrated sigh, “that the body would have been within close proximity of early morning surfers.” With this, supposedly ground-breaking, discovery he sauntered to the nearest cluster of officers and suspects. Even in his absence, the stench of stale alcohol and musky tobacco lingered, penetrating the air. Thankfully he took the self-righteous misogyny with him, unfortunately however that couldn’t be masked with sprays or perfumes. No, that could only be beaten by something greater, the sweet, tangy smell of a woman’s wit and authority, of which he would encounter soon enough.

Upon his arrival to the mass of agitated surfers and bypassing civilians, he quickly asserted his dominance, causing a hush of silence to fall over the suspects. Before a single word could leave his mouth, he noticed the presence of one particular suspect, his gaze latching onto the young man like a suffocating grip. Berkshire’s slow, sceptical nod beckoned the man to step forward. The suspect, a tall, slender man, standing in dripping swimmers with pale skin, blemished red by the sun’s scorch, stepped forward hesitantly. His articulately carved face was half concealed by dusty brown locks, falling across his eyes in dishevelled curls, weighed heavy with sea water and sand. He looked no older than twenty, maybe twenty-two, and my heart ached to think Berkshire could accuse such kind, young eyes of such a crime. The man fidgeted his palms nervously, beads of sweat quickly building on his forehead as his chest began to rise and fall in anxious hurried breaths.

“So, son tell me what you know about this whole kafuffle?” Berkshire asked, gesturing his pen to the surrounding officers, all now listening intently. Noting every breath, every glance, they were hungry for a clue.

“I was just passing through, honest, sorry to hear what happened to the poor bloke,” the man said darting his gaze nervously from the dozens of eyes staring him down to the ground at his feet.

Sergeant Berkshire looked over his shoulder towards me, cocking his eyebrow obnoxiously, preparing to parade his near success in solving the crime.

“You seem awfully nervous for someone who’s got nothing to hide mate, sure there’s nothing else you want to tell us?” Berkshire persisted. He knew exactly what he was doing. For a suspect in the midst of a crime this serious, every question felt as though you were placed under a microscope, information being pried from your very hands.

“You were one of three civilians claiming to have been in the water at the time, and while we believe this to be true . . . no board of yours is to be found,” Sergeant Berkshire asked apprehensively. As he said this, he took a puff of his cigarette. The movement seemingly choreographed in its casual action. Even through the heavy cloud of cigarette smoke, his condescending eyes pierced through, fuelling an innate yet unexplainable burn within me.

Stuttering and struggling to muster a full sentence the man said, “Yeah . . . ummm . . . well I can explain . . . my friend . . . took my board . . . home?” speaking in hurried and broken words. Whatever this man was trying to sell, Berkshire wasn’t buying it, nor was a single officer at the scene.

Berkshire stood casually for a moment, not a word leaving his mouth. As a hush of anticipation and suspense fell over the crowd the silence became almost deafening, to the point where it was near unbearable. Berkshire made a few slow, confident strides towards the man, intimidating him just as he had attempted with me.

Unfortunately for the man however, he wasn’t quite as stubborn as myself, although I’ve found not many people ever tend to be. His face scrunched unbearably, with his mouth gaping hopelessly as tears flooded his eyes, cascading down his cheeks. He broke down miserably, coiling up in a despairing mound on the floor, pleading at the feet of the now scouring Sergeant. He had no room in his heart for sympathy. For it was too full of self-righteous assurance, valves pumping confidence through every vein, fuelling his fibre and being.

“Get this man out of my sight,” the Sergeant commanded, his voice echoing in a deafening boom above the crash of the ocean.

“It wasn’t me, honest!” the man wailed as the tight grip of surrounding officers clawed at his flailing arms. The gradual fade of the sirens into the distance quickly brought a scurry of hostile news reporters and the invasive shudder of their cameras. I used my hand as a barricade, shielding my eyes from the blinding flash following every picture. Using my shoulders to nudge through the barricade of intrusive reporters and various members of the local news, I finally reached Sergeant Berkshire. Now, more than ever, his putrid stench of smug authority reeked like an off yogurt festering in summers scorching heat. As he caught my eye his smirk slowly faded, becoming no more than a resentful snarl.

“Alright that’s enough questions,” he told the reporters, waving his hands for them to leave. “I need a moment alone with my detective please.” Slowly but surely the scene cleared. I began to make my slow approach to Sergeant Berkshire, pondering my next insult with every gradual step closer.

“Here to apologise for underestimating me?” Berkshire questioned, awaiting my face for a reaction. I, a fully qualified detective, was not about to stand there and receive some colossal lecture. To fight back would be expected, but to hold my tongue, well who’s underestimated now?

With a superficial grin I politely responded, “Yes Sergeant, well done indeed.” Clearly shocked by my remark, Berkshire directed his focus away from lighting another cigarette to examine my expression. With his mouth gaping and his eyebrows raised in shock he attempted to compose a response. While I didn’t expect that kind of reaction from him, he sure did remain consistent with how he responded.

“Well women you see, always tied up in emotions,” he said chuckling to himself.

“You go on now, I’ve got reporters to attend to”.

As I turned away from his patronizing grin, I couldn't help but faintly smile to myself. Couldn't help but smile about how little this man really knew. About the minimal faith he had in female detectives. About how he underestimated the killer, successfully overlooking one prime suspect. You see there's one thing in this world more powerful than an arrogant man on a power trip. That is, of course, a powerful woman with a motive. That surfer had gotten what he deserved. Years of tormenting young women. Young women left unprotected by the legal system. A system built by the restraining hands of oblivious, bigot men. I had no regrets in what I had done. A motive is like fire, it fuels the furnace of one's heart. Unfortunately for Sergeant Berkshire, incineration was mere moments away. As I took a final look over my shoulder to the returning sea of eager reporters, I chuckled quietly to myself, "Amateurs."