

## **Murder At the Fountain**

by Kathleen Bauer

### Cast of Characters

RILEY MONTGOMERY, a detective

LARRY SMITH, a policeman with a secret

Various OTHER CHARACTERS:

- the VOICE of a “recording”
- a STUDENT
- a BARISTA
- a POLICE OFFICER

## Scene 1

*The DETECTIVE enters, walks to center stage, and faces the audience somberly.*

DETECTIVE MONTGOMERY

Good evening. It is with a heavy heart that I must bear the most unfortunate news. Just today, around 5:30 p.m., your mascot, Benny the River Hawk, was found murdered en route from his dinner in the Evert Dining Room to his home at Garrett Sports Complex.

*(A brief pause.)*

The weapon is unknown. The motive is unclear. The suspects are many. And now, I, Detective Riley Montgomery of the Selinsgrove Police Department, have been tasked by your university with catching the perpetrator of this horrendous crime - or else risk the danger of more incidents on this campus.

*DETECTIVE MONTGOMERY exits the stage.*

## Scene 2

*Kurtz Lane - Susquehanna University. The DETECTIVE enters stage right, humming a tune, looking around aimlessly. A few seconds later, OFFICER LARRY SMITH enters stage left, walking purposefully towards Montgomery. They crash into each other, causing Montgomery to stumble to the ground.*

OFFICER SMITH

*(grabbing the notebook and reaching out a hand)*

Here, let me help you up.

DETECTIVE MONTGOMERY

Thank you. And who are you?

OFFICER SMITH

Officer Larry Smith, Sunbury Police Department. I heard y'all had a little fright tonight, eh?

Thought I'd come over and check it out.

*DETECTIVE MONTGOMERY gives him a questioning glance.*

MONTGOMERY

This is my assignment.

SMITH

Hey, hey! Listen. I'm just trying to help you here, is all. Heard some rumors going around on the strip tonight. Somebody talking about celebrating because "they got that guy for good." Thought maybe between your experience and my knowledge, we could track down who's responsible.

*MONTGOMERY, wide-eyed, pulls Smith in closer.*

MONTGOMERY

Tell me everything you know, and tell it right now, do you understand?

SMITH

How about this... we get something to eat and talk it out, then we solve this case together?

*MONTGOMERY dramatically releases Smith, crosses his arms, and turns and pouts in the direction of the audience.*

SMITH

Detective-

MONTGOMERY

*(turning his head to face Smith)*

I was assigned this case. Not you. I have twenty years of experience in detective work. Twenty!

And what are you, a tiny little college student yourself? You can't be older than twenty-five!

Hah, why should I let you into my official business? For all I know, you're lying to me, and you go here!

*SMITH smirks, briefly and quietly, so that Montgomery can't see it, but the audience can.*

SMITH

*(begging)*

What if I pay for your food? What if I told you I've got a recording of what I heard, but I'll only let you hear it if you let me help you? Please, I'm a new officer just trying to get in good with my higher-ups. This would mean so much to me!

MONTGOMERY

Fine. You have a deal.

*Both exit stage right as the "recording" begins:*

*(laughter from offstage)*

VOICE (OFFSTAGE)

And he got 'em! Just like that! Got that guy for good this time. All it took was a little run-in with Benny, he didn't suspect a thing! Busy fixing his t-shirt, and bam.... attack!

*(chuckles)*

Oh, the poor guy.

### Scene 3

*Benny's lounge - Susquehanna University. MONTGOMERY and SMITH sit at a table, brown paper bags of food in front of them.*

MONTGOMERY

Absolutely atrocious! I swear to every God, this chicken died of a fever before it could be butchered. And to be given such a sad existence on a rudimentary sandwich I waited an entire hour for!

SMITH

Detective...

MONTGOMERY

*(hastily pulling out a notebook and pen)*

Oh, yes! You were saying?

SMITH

*(whispering)*

I was saying, between your notes and mine, we have two major suspects. The groundskeeper-

MONTGOMERY

He did it.

SMITH

-the groundskeeper on the mower, who you said was Greg Pulaski, and the Starbucks barista with the name tag Cameron.

MONTGOMERY

I told you: Greg Pulaski did it. There was no weapon left on the body, but he drove the lawnmower: the perfect getaway. Hit and run! His license plate was even tracked to the Walmart where you captured the recording!

*(slaps table)*

Case closed. Now, we find the evidence to prove it to my terribly distrusting superiors. When one works backwards, how easy it is! Smarter, not harder.

SMITH

*(bewildered)*

You can't say that! I might have just graduated from the academy, but come on. Even I know you need to consider all the possibilities. This dude you talk about, Pulaski - he had no motive. Case closed, you idiot?

MONTGOMERY

I knew you were nothing but a sassy little boy. What do you say we call it a night? You had your fun. Now, please, get out of my way so I can move on to more official matters.

*(A pause, waiting for Smith to move)*

Go on!

*Dejectedly, SMITH begins walking stage left. MONTGOMERY exits stage right, walking angrily.*

SMITH

*(aside)*

Nothing but a sassy little boy, huh? What does that amateur think he is, eh? Well, I'll come back. I'll show him! I'll show him a detective like that's worth nothing in this world. Nothing!

*SMITH pumps a fist into the air, then exits.*

#### Scene 4

*The next morning, Evert dining room, Susquehanna University. MONTGOMERY sits at a table, looking through his notebook. SMITH enters and sits down at the table.*

*MONTGOMERY startles dramatically, again causing him to knock his notebook onto the floor.*

MONTGOMERY

Ahh! I told you to go, did I not?

SMITH

You can't get rid of me that quick, Riley. There's been a development overnight.

*At the mention of a development, MONTGOMERY visually perks up. This is new to him.*

*SMITH slaps a piece of notebook paper onto the table.*

SMITH

Scream-like sounds heard near the river in Sunbury last night. Blood all over the road. The neighbors I talked to said it was the most terrible thing they'd ever heard, then they came out and saw the ground was red under the streetlights. Sir, I might be new to this officer thing, but I think we've got a serial killer on our hands.

*A STUDENT enters downstage left, holding a bowl of cereal so that the audience can see what it is. The STUDENT vigorously jabs a spoon into the bowl. MONTGOMERY and SMITH watch.*

STUDENT

Die! Die!

*MONTGOMERY approaches the student, grabbing onto the spoon and tug-of-warring with it.*

MONTGOMERY

Hey! You there! By order of the Selinsgrove Police Department, you're under suspicion!

*The STUDENT flails angrily.*

STUDENT

Give me back my spoon! I gotta kill the bug in here!

SMITH

Montgomery, let her go.

*MONTGOMERY releases the spoon. The STUDENT exits stage left, maintaining eye contact with the detective.*

SMITH

What was that all about? You can't just act like you're arresting someone! You're just a detective, for goodness' sake, and a lousy one at that!

MONTGOMERY

Be careful in how you speak to your elders, son. Let's get going. We have a groundskeeper to catch before he strikes again.

*MONTGOMERY and SMITH walk stage right. A BARISTA enters, walking fast and not looking where they're going. They crash into MONTGOMERY, who falls down, and whose notebook once again ends up on the floor.*

SMITH

Oh God, not again.

MONTGOMERY

If you'll just... excuse that... would you be so kind as to lend me a hand? No, forget that. I don't want your meddling, nosy hand.

*(turns to the startled BARISTA)*

Would you mind helping me up?

*The BARISTA helps MONTGOMERY up.*

SMITH

*(to the barista)*



You're Cameron, aren't you?

BARISTA

Yeah, that's what my name tag says. Why?

SMITH

Did you happen to see Benny the River Hawk last night?

BARISTA

Heck, I wish I didn't. I heard him scream, then by the time I ran out of Deg to see what was going on, he was already facefirst in the fountain.

*(shudders)*

MONTGOMERY

Let's not make you relive your trauma. Smith, let's go. Cameron, justice will be found when we track down the old man who killed your mascot.

BARISTA

But... an old man didn't kill my mascot...

*The BARISTA exits stage right. SMITH follows. MONTGOMERY picks up his notebook and flips through it, pacing around the stage.*

MONTGOMERY

Not an old man, not an old man... Groundskeeper Pulaski is old. Cameron is an innocent bystander. So that means... Hmm, hmm, body found by fountain, no weapon... Would require the skill of a trained professional or real psycho... Not an old man...

*SMITH pokes his head out from stage right.*

SMITH

Detective, are you coming?

*MONTGOMERY grabs SMITH's wrist and drags him to center stage.*

MONTGOMERY

Aha! You dirty, filthy liar, you! You traitor! This entire time, you said you would help me, making that Cameron a suspect, Cameron this, Cameron that, telling me to think your way! I should have known only a true killer would deny the credibility of a detective like you did! Oh, the betrayal! My heart! I cannot take it, just when I began to think I might find a glimmer of trust in you!

*MONTGOMERY wilts, slowly falling to the ground. He ends up in a pile on the floor, where he sobs over-dramatically.*

SMITH

Sir! Detective, it's not what you think! I promise, it's not what you think! I can explain! I-

*He is cut off when MONTGOMERY stands up and puts his hands on Smith's shoulders.*

MONTGOMERY

Murderer! Serial killer! Somebody arrest him!

SMITH

Your case isn't all that valid without any evidence, sir. No fingerprints. No DNA. Just your dumb little brain.

*SMITH pulls himself out of Montgomery's grasp. He takes off his "police" uniform pieces to reveal civilian clothes.*

SMITH

*(facing the audience)*

My name is Alex Callahan. You may know me from the last major case your police department was involved in: owner of Callahan Mink Farm, trader of furs, provider of the highest fashions.

You may know that a couple weeks ago, someone bore a hole into my fence that set my dearest minks free into the wild. Now, if you were to be at the center of this issue, already at such a dreadful economic loss, and then the very last of your escaped animals were to attack a local celebrity so harshly as to cause a death, wouldn't you do what you had to to avoid getting the lawsuit? Now, say you had security camera footage of someone with a particular face-

*(points to Montgomery)*

-cutting open a hole in your fence, wouldn't you track them down? He is an agent of the law, and he has broken it! He set my minks loose, and so he is the reason the dear, wonderful Benny is dead! Oh, and the recording? That was my friends talking about that Pulaski man taking care of the mink!

MONTGOMERY

Egregious! False! I am no murderer! I am an agent of the law! I-

*A siren sounds. A POLICE OFFICER escorts Montgomery offstage. SMITH, the only one onstage, snickers and smirks.*

SMITH

And that, my friends, is how you get away with murder. Let your minks do it for you. Ciao!

*SMITH strolls to exit the stage.*