



mini crimes

—The Drowned King—

Solution

1. Who is the culprit?

Pier Paolo Faraone.

2. What was the motive?

The coach discovered Marco Maccarone's decision to play for the American team.

3. How did the events pan out?

After the discovery, the coach had a violent outburst and **hit Marco with the lamp**. The coach undressed Marco and put his clothes on the chair (except for the bloodstained shirt), then he **plunged him into the bathtub**, leaving false clues to simulate an accident. He cleaned the floor and **misplaced the lamp**. Finally, he left, **taking the bloodstained shirt with him**, then he got rid of it.

The whole story

This wasn't an accident, but a clumsy attempt to make a homicide look like one. The bloodstain is not consistent with a slip (there is no impact spatter, it looks almost like a brushstroke. Moreover, the bathtub is too large for Marco to have hit his head there, not to mention that the victim's wound is on the temple and not on the nape). Furthermore, the edge of the bathtub isn't wet enough to justify the puddle. Finally, if Marco really had really slipped on the bar of soap, it would have shot forward.

The real culprit is the coach, Pier Paolo Faraone, who went to the room of his pupil on the evening of the semifinal to congratulate him. However, on that occasion he discovered that Marco had applied for American citizenship. Marco would have soon competed for the USA, changing coach and flag.

The coach put all of his hopes in Marco and had built his career on him, not to mention his strong sense of national pride. This made him furious with Marco and in a fit of rage (something that he was no stranger to, as the article notes) he struck him with the first thing within his reach, the lamp. He killed him instantly.

In a panic, the coach tried to stage a bathroom accident, undressing Marco and placing his clothes on the chair. However, he had to get rid of the shirt, since it was stained with blood. Marco's jacket wasn't stained, because he had removed it as soon as he had entered the room.

Pier Paolo Faraone wiped away the traces of blood from the floor of the room, then submerged the victim into the bathtub. He smeared the wall with blood using the stained shirt (hence the brushstroke effect), then threw some water on the floor and placed down a bar of soap. Lastly, he cleaned the lamp (forgetting in his haste to put it back in the correct place) and fled the room with the shirt, which he then discarded.

Trivia

The author of this case rediscovered his passion for chess during the 2020 lockdown. He has always been fascinated by the "smothered mate" ("matto affogato" in Italian), a checkmate in which the king is put in check by the opponent's knight and is "smothered" (or, in the Italian version, "drowned") between its own allied pieces. This particular endgame inspired him to write this case, in which a skilled player decides to betray his own national team and ends up drowned by his own coach. Even the knight on the bed is a reference to this particular kind of checkmate.

The author is keen to point out that, in the more than 2000 games that he has played online, he managed to execute the smothered mate only once.

Credits

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