



# mini crimes

## Family Matters

### Solution

#### 1. Who killed Mrs. Bingley?

Paul Crawford.

#### 2. What is the motive?

Avoiding the change to the will which would have resulted in Paul's exclusion by naming John McCleary, Paul's illegitimate son, as the new heir.

#### 3. How was she killed?

Mrs. Bingley was poisoned: the odourless poison was put only on the rim of the glass her son handed her, so that he would not poison himself while drinking with her.

### The whole story

By doing the necessary medical tests, the victim had proof that John, her maid's son, with whom she had instinctively bonded over the years, was actually Paul's son and therefore her grandson. Disappointed by the behaviour of her son, who had decided not to take responsibility, she decided to disinherit him, passing her fortune on to her grandson, Miss McCleary's son.

But Paul, after finding out about his mother's tests thanks to a colleague who conducted them at St. Mary's Hospital, sensed her intentions to disinherit him and decided to kill her before she could change her will. He waited until the household left the mansion and showed up with a bottle of expensive wine.

Taking advantage of his medical knowledge he had coated the rim of his mother's glass with an odourless and tasteless poison. The two drank a glass together, then he walked away, taking his own glass with him. After the poison had taken effect, Paul took the documents for the notary so he could get rid of them, but mistakenly forgot the post-it note that was affixed to them. The documents were in a locked drawer, which Paul picked open. While doing so, he injured his hand, and then had to clean out the drawer to avoid leaving any fingerprints or traces of blood.

Before leaving, he placed the poison in a clean apron belonging to the housekeeper, taken from the closet, and placed it at the crime scene to frame her (which is the reason why he lied about hearing her with his mother the night before).

Richard, Mrs. Bingley's brother, had stopped by to see his sister the night before she was poisoned (the cigar butt is his: Mrs. Bingley and Paul smoke cigarettes) to ask her, as usual, to help him cover new gambling debts, which Mrs. Bingley did by means of a cheque. This is something which happens a lot, as evinced by bank documents, but she cannot say no to her 'little brother', who takes advantage of her. Richard would only have something to lose from her death (also because, as a brother, he would inherit nothing).

Miss McCleary went home early and is innocent, not to mention that she is the person who would have the most to lose from Mrs. Bingley's death.

### Trivia

An ancient Roman law promulgated by Emperor Antoninus Pius reads, 'Plus est hominem extinguere veneno, quam occidere gladio' (It is worse to kill a man with poison than with the sword). Indeed, one who killed his enemy with weapons in hand, with bloodletting, showed more courage for the Romans than one who cowardly eliminated his rival by devious means such as poison. Even according to Italian penal code, poison is an aggravating factor in the crime of murder, with a penalty of life imprisonment, since poison is indeed considered an 'insidious means'.

### Credits

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