

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone/Email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Security Public Library's Mini Mystery #2

HAPPY DEATHDAY

By Barbara Fox

Connie Hamilton, heiress to the Hamilton Perfume Company, was turning twenty-one, and she invited dozens of friends to celebrate with her at a cocktail party at the very fashionable Oranges Nightclub. The guests included Connie's fiancé, Peter Jennings; her best friend, Tammy Lynn; her devoted housekeeper, Mary Phillips (who insisted on going into the kitchen to help prepare the special birthday cake); and her uncle, Martin Hamilton. Connie's parents had died in a plane crash three years earlier, and Uncle Martin was her only living relative; he was her court-appointed guardian and executor of her estate.

He stood up to make a toast. "It's been my privilege to care for my lovely niece and now, it's my privilege to turn her company and her inheritance over to her." Connie stood up to thank him. Suddenly, the lights went out; there was a gun shot and, when the lights came back on, Connie was lying on the floor, dead. Detective A.R., who arrived on the scene quickly, found that someone had put a timer on the lights to make them go out. He questioned the guests and allowed most of them to leave, but he asked Martin Hamilton, Peter, Tammy, and Mary Phillips to remain in the room. He began questioning them.

"I'm looking for motives, and it seems to me, sir, he stared at Martin Hamilton, "that you had a pretty good reason to murder Connie. You didn't want to lose control of the company and the family fortune, so you shot her. You shot your own niece.

"That's not true!" Martin said angrily. "Connie just broke her engagement to that good-for-nothing actor, Peter Jennings. He thought Connie should support him while he tried to make it in the theater. I heard them arguing tonight. Peter was very angry.

"That's right," said Mary Phillips, the gray-haired lady in a chef's apron who had been sobbing quietly while she listened. "I've been Miss Connie's housekeeper since her parents died three years ago. She told me that she changed her mind about Peter. 'He's nothing but a gold-digger,' is what she said. 'Tammy can have him back, have him back with my blessings.'

Tammy, who was curled up on a corner of a sofa, handkerchief clutched in her fingers. "Peter and I are just friends. We're both in show business. We work at the same dinner theater. He's an actor, he's in all of the shows this season, and I work backstage; I'm an assistant stage manager." She started to cry.

"Connie was one of my best friends," Tammy continued. "We were roommates in college till my scholarship ran out and I had to drop out. As a matter of fact, I introduced her to Peter."

"That's right," Peter interrupted. "Tammy and I went out a few times, but it wasn't serious. She never meant anything to me, but Connie and I were in love; we were going to get married. I loved her, not her money. If anyone is a gold-digger, it's that Mary Phillips. Connie told me how she padded the household expenses. You've been stealing from her for years, haven't you, Ms. Phillips? Connie knew it and was going to fire you."

"That's not true," Mary answered hotly. "I'll tell you who was stealing from Miss Connie. It was Martin Hamilton! He's the one who was stealing money, and Miss Connie found out. She's been checking the books, and she was going to prosecute him."

Detective A.R. shook his head. "Everybody has a motive," he said. "Someone was very clever. That someone fixed the lights to go out and fired the gun in the dark, and I think I know who that someone is."

Who did Detective A.R. suspect fixed the lights?

Why was Connie murdered?