



BAY CITY BRIDGE MURDER*

by

B. K. Barry

A Charles Earl Short Mystery, Featuring the Earl Family Brain Trust

(For an interactive reading experience, please read with a smartphone equipped with a QR code reader in hand—you might even read it with a child or grandchild and have a fine interactive, intergenerational, reading experience together!)

***“Double, double, toil, and trouble;
Fire burn, and cauldron bubble.”***

Macbeth, William Shakespeare

Arrival in Bay City

“Oh, Charles,” Judy Earl purred to her husband, “this setting is even better than you said. The Saginaw River is spectacular, and so are the parks on either side with their adjacent river walks.” “And hence,” Charles noted in his even-toned mathematical logic, “the name of our hotel, the ‘DoublePark’, reflecting the presence of parks on the river floodplain as a double on either side of the river. It’s a national chain that works in conjunction with state-level departments of natural resources to promote environmentally-responsive urban development. I hope the folks running the bridge tournament at the DoublePark are able to capitalize in their decorative materials on the coincidence of the term ‘double’ both in the dual hotel and bridge contexts.” Charles then deftly maneuvered their car into a parking space with a view of the river and Judy and Charles Earl got out and went into the new hotel at the edge of the Saginaw River floodplain.

The couple crossed the immaculate lobby and headed to the registration desk when a smiling young woman gave them a 2-dollar bill (a ‘double’) and offered them hot, freshly-baked cookies. “Judy, you go sit down over there where you can watch the bellhop unload the car and I’ll make sure the room is as we reserved it—with a view of the river—it’s almost noon so we might well be able to check in,” Charles commented. Judy got comfortable and noted to herself that apparently the hotel does allow, true to its name, double parking under the porte cochère (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Porte-coch%C3%A8re>). Soon, Charles returned, and the couple sat on a lobby sofa, as they awaited the bellhop with their luggage, enjoying the warm chocolate and walnut cookies while they watched a swarm of bridge players enter the lobby.

“Well, well, well, if it isn’t my dear friend, Charles” clucked a woman carrying two dogs, one beagle under each arm. “Oh, Charles, you act as if you don’t remember me! You know, we met in the Presidential Suite at one of the national tournaments of the American Bridge Congress (ABC) last year.” “Hmmm,” Charles noted apologetically, “the voice is familiar and no doubt we did meet, but I really can’t place a name...” “I’m Elise,” the

woman said, “and I’m sure you must remember my husband, Jeremy...probably when you see him, it will all click.” “No doubt, I’m sure it is all as you say,” Charles said politely while at the same time thinking to himself that his memory was excellent and that he knew a ‘Jeremy’ but ‘Elise’ did not ring a bell. Even though he met hundreds of different people at each ABC, in his role on the national Board of Directors, he was certain he remembered all of them.

“No matter,” Elise said with a dismissive wave of her carefully manicured hand, “you must meet the boys here; this is ‘Snookums’, and this is ‘Sweetums’...now you boys sit down here on this love seat while Mommykins goes to check us in.” “Good grief, Charles,” Judy whispered, “do you really know her?” “I’m clueless,” Charles noted carefully, “let’s see what happens next.”

Lobby Action

Elise strode over to the registration desk and told the friendly young woman that she and her husband Jeremy would be staying for the entire bridge tournament and wanted two rooms, one with a river view and the other across the hall. The woman appeared happy to oblige the requests, pushed a couple of keys in her direction, and then caught sight of the furry couple on the lobby love seat. “Eeeek, what are those...they can’t come in here,” shrieked the woman behind the desk, “we do not allow pets or tobacco products in this fine hotel. Please remove them immediately, Ma’am!” At that, Elise grabbed the woman by her corporate uniform and shook her by the lapels until her clip-on necktie fell off. “You listen to me, you two-bit pencil pusher,” snarled Elise, “these dogs go anywhere I want them to go; they are service dogs, and I have papers to prove it. Furthermore, they are probably cleaner than you are.”

At that, Elise whirled around and scooped up Sweetums from the love seat and put him on the front desk. “Now take a look,” Elise continued, “the pads on his feet are as clean as the day he was born; when he walks on pavement or dirty hotel floors, he wears little shoes—here, smell his foot!

Nothing but nice clean soap smell.” “Really, ma’am,” sputtered the woman. At that Elise shoved the dog’s paw into the woman’s face.

Soon, other bridge players arrived in the lobby and were waiting in line for registration. Undeterred, Elise continued with her dog’s physical examination “now in addition to the feet, you will see also that his tongue and teeth are immaculate....they get brushed three times a day...open wide, Sweetums, and show the nice lady, no doggy breath...furthermore, his anus is clean...see, it’s pink and does not smell, and his private parts, although he is not fixed, are also clean.” Elise pulled back the dog’s foreskin to prove the point and the dog began to shudder in apparent delight. “Not now, Sweetums,” Elise cooed, “Daddykins will take care of you later.” At that the woman behind the desk fainted. Elise scooped up room keys and the dogs and headed toward her rooms. Meanwhile pandemonium reigned in the lobby and Judy was somehow reminded of her colleague, Dr. Fred, whose number one rule of life was ‘stick with your own species’.

Charles walked around, shook hands, and made casual chit-chat with the many bridge players whom he already knew in an effort to restore some semblance of order within the shocked crowd coming to the regional bridge tournament in Bay City. Meanwhile Clara, a long-time friend of the Earls, came and sat down with Judy. “You know,” Clara commented, “I don’t know that woman, but she does remind me of someone. If I can piece together where I know her from, I’ll let you know. But, I think the memory is from way back. The dogs are new to me.” “Yes, DoubleDogs and DoubleTrouble at the DoublePark,” mused Charles as he thought about a doubled double as a redouble.

‘Double, Double...’

“What a terrific view!” exclaimed Judy, “and look, that bridge that spans the river is one that opens up to let large ships come through. Oh, Charles, I hope we can see a Great Lakes Freighter come through.” Judy so loved to see all the fascinating things the world had to offer, and Charles so loved to

show them to her. In almost 50 years of marriage, that excitement had never waned; nor had their love for each other.



“Charles,” Judy asked, “with whom are you playing bridge?” “Primarily with Dewey, you remember him,” noted Charles, “he’s a linguist (professor), and he always wears a dashiki. He has quite a collection of them; formal as well as informal including a simple gray-scale one that he wears to the

gym. Many of them have really beautiful and colorful patterns—a West African sort of shirt. You have old photos of some of his from the last time you saw him. Indeed, they are quite distinctive.” “Oh Yes, I’ll look forward to seeing which ones he brought with him here,” said Judy.



“Anyway, it’s time for me to meet Dewey at the game,” Charles said, “do you want to come with me and say ‘hi’ for yourself, Judy? He will have been to the gym earlier, but by now should be wearing a colorful dashiki.” “Nope,” Judy said, “not now. I am going to look around the DoublePark and then go to the gym to work out. Later...”

Outside the DoublePark...

Judy left the hotel and headed across the vast stretch of lawn to the river walk. As she walked along the fenced, attractively laid-out sidewalk, she could see oil slicks in the river from various ships. When she leaned over the fence and looked more closely, she saw giant carp slurping down the oily water. “Interesting,” she thought, “wonder if the oil fattens them up. In any event, hope no one eats them!” Farther along the walk, she came to a tall ship anchored at a mooring on the river walk. “Well, I guess the water must be fairly deep even right here next to the land,” she said to herself as she admired the handsome ship. It was a beautiful day, and the clear blue skies of the Lake Huron watershed reflected appealingly in the Saginaw River. Scenes such as these were stress-defeaters! She hoped she might see the tall ship sail on the river.



Bay City Bridge Murder

As she contemplated the sailing tall ship picture in her mind's eye, a long blast came from farther downstream. Soon a magnificent Great Lakes Freighter came into view. It was riding high in the water and its girth left little room in the river for much else. Tug boats helped with navigation through the channel, pushing and pulling the boat upstream, perhaps to pick up a load of sand or gravel mined from some moraine or other glacial feature; or maybe to haul cement made locally to some distant port of call; or perhaps to fill up on lumber, the root historical industry of this region. Judy wished that Charles could be there to enjoy the splendor of these ships and to participate in imagining useful or exotic local cargoes that might fill the ship on its return trip up the Saginaw River, into the Saginaw Bay of Lake Huron and thence into the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Seaway. But Charles enjoyed adventures of the mind, alone.

Suddenly, the beautiful sunny day became overcast with thick, gray clouds, snapping Judy back into reality. She rushed to get back to the DoublePark in advance of any possible storm.

Toil...

The location of the gym inside the DoublePark had clearly been carefully planned. One set of elevators, in the center of the building, took guests to the guest rooms. In addition, there was a freight elevator at the south end of the building, large enough to accommodate a cleaning cart of the sort the staff uses when cleaning guest rooms. To find the gym, one was required to use the freight elevator and take it to the first floor (lobby level). Exit from the freight elevator on the first floor was to a staff area and the gym; NOT to the lobby itself. There was no guest connection between the gym and the lobby. While this might initially have been confusing to guests, a little reflection showed that sweaty guests, or guests in swimming suits, never appeared in the lobby—a win-win situation for regular guests who might not enjoy having sweaty guests near the restaurant and for modest guests who wished to minimize their public exposure in a swimming suit. Judy thought about all of this as she removed her outdoor clothes and donned her gym suit. Then, she headed to the freight elevator and the gym.

As Judy shuffled back and forth on the elliptical cross-trainer, her mind tended to wander. This elliptical was right next to a bank of three treadmills. In the past, Judy had been known to break out in raucous laughter as she imagined the treadmills as giant conveyor belts in the supermarket. A long-legged scrawny woman wearing chartreuse tight pants became a bunch of celery riding toward the cashier; a portly woman with large thighs wearing pink tights became a ham on its way to be checked out. But, Judy decided that she would work hard today to restrain her often over-active imagination.

TV sets in the gym were enjoyed by some; Judy found them unexciting. She preferred to look out the window. Just on the other side of the bridge that she could see easily from her perch was the outline of an underutilized pergola.



What a wonderful spot for an Alma Mater TeaGarten, she thought, as she looked through the door to an exterior ground-level patio. The Earls owned a chain of restaurants, named to honor Judy's mother Alma and also to honor the long-standing connection of both Charles's and Judy's family associations with the academic world. She would have to mention it to Charles and see if he thought there was sufficient market appeal in the area to make a go of it.

From the restaurant possibility, her mind drifted to looking at cloud formations. The puffy white fair weather cumulus clouds had given way to a bank of gray clouds, which had driven her indoors, of various degrees of

darkness and shapes. The multiple layers were really quite beautiful as they tapered off toward a lighter horizon. At the edge of the cloud bank, in the distance, she saw a waterspout that had perhaps drifted onshore from Lake Huron. It dissipated quickly.



Judy was drawn sharply back to reality when she heard the whirring noise of a keycard in the entry system. “Well, hello Judy! Nice to see you; we’ve just been enjoying a bit of a view from the patio” said Jeremy. “Hi Jeremy, long-time-no-see,” replied Judy, “and what are you doing with those dogs?” “They belong to my wife, Elise; all this is probably new to you since the last time we saw each other at a national tournament several years ago,” Jeremy noted. “I gather that Elise made quite a scene in the lobby this morning,” he continued, “she goes over the edge if anyone insults, or if she thinks someone insults, her precious pooches/service dogs; anyway, apologies on behalf of our little ‘family’ here. I need to exercise the dogs a bit more; it’s getting too nasty outside, so we’ll just use the treadmills as we did before we went out to the patio.” Jeremy then lifted each dog, outfitted with small sneakers on each paw, onto a treadmill, tied it to the rail with the leash, and set it on a low speed. Then ‘Daddykins’ got up on the third treadmill and the apparently happy group exercised.

Judy’s mind now drifted to watching Saturday morning cartoons on TV with their son Ed, many years ago when he was quite young. Ed would roll on the floor laughing as the cartoon dog, ‘Astro,’ went faster and faster on a treadmill and was soon pitched off by the ever-increasing acceleration.

Judy thought to herself that she had better leave this happy little situation lest she not be able to keep her promise to control her imagination and her response to it! “See you around, Jeremy; say ‘hi’ to Elise,” Judy commented as she left the gym and left this cul-de-sac in the bowels of the DoublePark.

Trouble...

Back in the hotel room, Judy once again changed her outfit; she wanted to look nice for Charles and his friend, Dewey. Until time to meet them for dinner, she sat down at her computer and began to work on three dimensional building files while she listened to Mozart, Symphony Number 40 in G Minor, K. 550. She had built the basic building for the DoublePark, and geo-referenced it properly; now, what remained was to adjust the surface detail: windows, bricks, doors, rooftop elements, and so forth. Buildings, as well as people, could be clad in beautiful fabric. Adjustments in textures were relatively easy to do but a bit time-consuming. One needed to focus tightly on the effort: do perspective cropping to convert trapezoidal images into rectangular textures to apply to the sides and top of the rectilinear building, remove the foreground from photos and get free-standing trees, and a host of other small issues to make the model look ‘real’.





As she became absorbed in constructing detail on her 3D model of the DoublePark, a faint noise seemed to penetrate her intensity. “Aha,” she exclaimed, “it’s a knock on the door! Yes, who’s there?” “Room service,” said the voice in the hallway. Judy opened the door, “Madame, here is your order,” said the handsome young Frenchman whose nametag read ‘Jean-Pierre’, “you will see that the boeuf is exactly as you ordered it, one

pound of raw ground tenderloin with two separate cereal bowls.” “But, but, but...” sputtered Judy, “Jean-Pierre, I ordered nothing from room service. Here, let me take a look at the tag...this is room 318 and the tag says it is to go to room 318/2...perhaps it is to go to rooms 381 and 382, where someone rented out two rooms across the hall from each other for some reason (we do that with sleeping compartments on long train trips so we have a view of the scenery on both sides of the train)? “Oh, Madame, merci mille fois, you have my deepest apologies for the confusion; your logic makes parfait sense. Again, thank you,” gushed Jean-Pierre.

Then the anxious waiter covered the raw beef with the silver dome and pushed the cart down the long hallway. Judy watched as he went. Soon, she saw a door open at the far end of the hall. The waiter pushed the cart into a room. About a minute later, she heard him shriek and then saw Jean-Pierre run down the hall to the elevators as he muttered an explosive string of French. She was able to pick out a few words here and there: ‘cochon,’ ‘merde alors,’ and a few others. Although her French was really quite good, with a Parisian accent coming from having gone to French private schools in Paris for three years as a child, her knowledge of adult swear words was really quite limited; they were not part of the standard curriculum of those fancy prep schools.

Judy thought about following up with Jean-Pierre but decided perhaps it was not her place to do so. He had seemed like such a nice young man. However, it was now time to go to meet Charles, Dewey, and others and go to dinner. Judy hoped they might eat out on the hotel patio, overlooking the river and a glorious sunset following the rainy afternoon.

Dinner on the DoublePark Patio

As soon as Judy saw Dewey in his colorful black and red dashiki, she remembered him immediately. The fabric was gorgeous and certainly made a handsome shirt.



The patio was packed with bridge players, but Charles, Judy, Dewey, and their mutual friends, a couple from Texas—Don and Davida, were able to get a table for five at the far end of the patio adjacent to a line of arbor vitae. “The view of the river is terrific from here,” Judy told Charles, “and look at that—there is another patio on the other side of the arbor vitae—it’s empty. Charles, it’s the patio that one can access directly from the gym.”

Judy then related the events of the afternoon to Charles while the others ordered drinks and discussed bridge hands.

Dinner was outstanding—the daily wine/food special; homemade soups of various kinds, local walleye with white wine, fresh home-baked breads, salads with locally grown produce, and the special DoublePark dessert of a chocolate-walnut lava cake topped with fresh strawberries and whipped cream. All were nicely paired with appropriate wines. Service was impeccable as was the set-up: fine bone china with paper-thin wine glasses. Toward the end of the meal, Judy heard some commotion from behind the arbor vitae. “Charles,” she said, “look, there’s Elise with the dogs, wearing little sneakers and sweaters, leaving through the door from the gym to the patio; she’s able to take advantage of the separation to conceal the dogs—they never have to go through the lobby as long as they use that entrance.” “Clever,” noted Charles, “not nice, but clever.”

Fire Burn...

After an excellent meal in an extraordinary setting, the group decided to take a walk to get rid of some of the excess from dinner. Don and Davida headed north along the river walk to check out a public concert in front of the tall ship, while Charles, Judy, and Dewey headed to the south, toward the bridge. Judy wanted to walk under the big bridge and show Charles the pergola on the other side with an eye to using the adjacent vacant lot as a site for a future Alma Mater TeaGarten. Dewey came along because he enjoyed conversation and worried that concert music might interfere with discourse.

Soon, Charles and his group caught up to Elise and the dogs. “Hi Elise, lovely evening...hello Sweetums; how handsome you look in your sweater, Snookums,” said Judy, as she wished things to remain on an even keel with Elise. “Oh, thank you Judy, you are so kind,” Elise gushed, “yes, they are handsome...actually, I knitted the sweaters so that we would have a good fit!” Charles’ group continued on to the pergola on the south side of the bridge, leaving Elise and the dogs on the north side.

“Hey, Dude, you got a buck for a f*^kin’ cup of coffee?” demanded a guy lying in the pergola, next to a fire where he was roasting a carp. Charles and Judy ignored him as they looked at the adjacent vacant lot as a site for a business proposition. Dewey, however, as linguist-extraordinaire, engaged him in a philosophical conversation as to what it might mean for a cup of coffee to be able to engage in such an activity. Charles marveled at how suitable Dewey’s name was, given his penchant for organization of thought and language; one might envision a ‘decimal’ system within Dewey’s brain.

After about 20 minutes of lecture/questioning, the bum looked as if he were sorry he had asked...”look, Dude,” he said, “you gonna cough up a buck or not?” “Aha,” commented Dewey, “you raise yet another interesting idea; were I able to ‘cough up’ money, would that be a violation of federal law? Indeed, if all humans were able to do so, what would become of the value of money...would it become worthless? Would I be asking you for funds?” At this point, the guy stoked his bonfire and turned over the carp that he had apparently netted from the river. “Alls I know,” responded the man, “is that coffee would be good with carp; maybe now I’d be better off with a shot or three of booze!” The encounter continued. Charles and Judy admired some colorful skyrockets being launched from the park on the other side of the river and then headed back toward the bridge, the river walk, and the DoublePark, leaving Dewey to his own entertainment with the street person.

Cauldron Bubble...

“Look, Charles,” said Judy, “there are some kids fishing under the bridge. I’m going to talk to them.” “How do you guys know where to drop your lines?” queried Judy. “Well, ma’am, in the daytime we can see the fish, and we scoop ‘em out with a net. But, the best ones feed at dusk; you can see where they are by the bubbles...bigger bubbles mean bigger mouths and so bigger fish! We walk along and look for bubbles.” “Sounds like fun,” exclaimed Judy, “mind if I join you? You can keep any fish I find.” “OK,” the kids said, “you can use our net if you want but fishin’ poles are personal.” “Does the noise from the concert or from the fireworks bother

the fish?” asked Judy. “Naw, they are mostly underwater...but WE do try to keep quiet.” “Oh, yes, pardon me, not another word,” noted Judy apologetically.

Charles wondered about his little group; first his friend takes up linguistic debate with a street person, and then his wife runs off with some kids looking for bubbles in the river. He headed off to look for Don and Davida.

Judy and the kids began to notice bubbles that were quite a bit larger than what they had seen previously. In fact, the farther north they moved, the larger the bubbles became. “But, I don’t see no fish,” one kid proclaimed. “Watch out for those dogs tied to the fence down there....they might bite,” the other one noted. “No, no,” said Judy, “they are friendly dogs, I know them.” By the time they got to the dogs, the bubbles were at least ten times larger than they had been under the bridge. Judy walked over to the dogs. “Sweetums, where is Mommykins?” Judy asked the dog although she felt more than a bit silly doing so. Sweetums moaned and bayed; then he turned and poked his head through the partially open gate in the fence. “Oh, no...” howled Judy. “Charles,” she screamed, “come here, something terrible has happened”—and at that she fainted on the sidewalk.

Charles ran back to where Judy was, and pulled with him his friend Dr. Bob, a retired emergency room doctor whom Don and Davida had been talking to at the concert. Soon, the group of four arrived to revive Judy and then they looked over the edge to see that Elise, aka Mommykins, was lying partially submerged in the river. Dr. Bob took charge: “Judy, call 911 on your smartphone; guys, help me pull her out of the water, it’s deep here; Davida, try to keep a crowd from forming and you and Judy help to calm the dogs.”



After they got Elise out, Dr. Bob went to work on her. “It’s no use,” he said, “she appears to have been shot—may have been shot dead just before being shoved into the deep water—but, we will await a coroner’s report on that. We need to keep this quiet; it’s VERY peculiar, I assure you. We need the police here. Look, the gate in the fencing is, in fact, ajar.”

Activating the Earl Family Brain Trust

Charles and Judy returned to their room. “Well, I think we need to get to work and see how we might be helpful,” Charles said to Judy. “Oh, yes, I agree,” replied Judy, “it’s time to trot out the boys and see what they think, too.” Charles and Judy reverted into their abstract world, using their collection of teddy animals to reveal various aspects of their respective human personalities: a strategy especially useful in times of high stress.

Earl Family Brain Trust		
		<p>Theodore E. Bear: A sedentary philosophically-inclined bear. Kind and thoughtful. A clear-thinker interested in the balance between pragmatics and abstraction. He worries about personal issues, such as being made into the bed, as well as broad-ranging issues involving world peace and global politics among all creatures, real and imaginary. He views himself as a dignified and proper teddy bear wearing a tuxedo—NOT as a panda. He is a native of Detroit, MI.</p>
		<p>Binker Bear: Named after Christopher Robin's [A. A. Milne, <i>When We Were Very Young</i>] "imaginary" friend Binker, as in "you can't see Binker." He lives largely in the realm of the imaginary, in the world of abstraction. In his "bear" persona he is physically quite large; he has a number of other personae he has been known to adopt. He is known to keep his cards close to his chest. Binker is originally from Paris, France, and was born at Galeries Lafayette.</p>
		<p>Tine E. Bear: Named for his diminutive stature. Tine focuses on the pragmatics of life. He feels he has to do so...as a small creature in the world of giants. He enjoys playing duplicate bridge, as an equalizer, and has a fine partnership with Binker who is large enough to use a bidding box. Tine emigrated from Paris with Binker, but is originally from a US Zone in Germany (as his tag says). His genealogy is rooted in the Vintage (mohair) Branch of the prestigious Steiff Family.</p>

"Theodore," Judy queried, "what do you think about all this?" "What do I think about what? I cannot answer questions like that one; I need a noun after the word 'this'" replied the pensive Theodore. "Theodore," Charles

intervened, “what we need here is action...something terrible has happened and we need to move forward...PLEASE!” “Well, all right,” the reflective bear replied, “I agree that we need immediate action. There have been a few strange events we detected and I expect there may be more beneath the surface. We need to uncover them. Binker, Tine, do you agree?” “I always agree with that sort of approach,” commented Binker—a part-time mystery writer himself. “Yes,” replied Tine, “so do I and I think we need a team of special agents to be deployed immediately.” “Here is my thinking on the matter,” the diminutive bear continued, “there are things that people still outside will have seen that we did not—we need to listen in, right now, while the topic is hot and shocking:



1. On the patio downstairs there are statues of owls mounted on perches attached to the light poles at the edge of the patio. They were brought in from Florida; their heads swivel in the breezes and the idea is that they are to scare away the seagulls that prey on patio food. Naturally the seagulls are too smart for that and just walk onto the patio; in fact, I have even seen a seagull sitting on top of a scare-owl’s head! The point is, though, that Oscar would fit in easily; no one would think his presence on a perch above the patio as out of place or otherwise strange. I recommend sending Oscar down there immediately.

2. Many people are congregating along the river walk. Again, there will be a lot of gossip and speculation; maybe even some facts that we could pick up. Send Im out there to ‘hang around’. He will not be out of place. People think it’s charming to find giant carp in the river; they don’t know what to expect. If they notice Im hanging from a light pole, they will simply

think that is more of the charm of native urban wildlife. Again, immediate deployment to capture as much information as possible is critical.

3. Something weird happened up here late this afternoon involving Judy and this French room-service guy. Send Guillaume down to the kitchen to talk to Jean-Pierre when he comes on duty tomorrow morning. We need to find out why he shrieked and went running down the hall muttering to himself in a string of emotional French. Guillaume is bilingual (at least, as Guillaume is fond of noting).

4. Charles is an expert bridge player. He needs to hang out at the tournament tomorrow morning and be ready to respond to any situation that might arise.

5. Also, Charles needs to follow up with some particular conversations tomorrow. He needs to talk to Clara and see if she remembers whatever it was that was bugging her when she talked to Judy in the lobby. He also needs to follow up with Dr. Bob and find out what was so strange about this particular corpse. We are fortunate to have such wonderful friends, including a world-class medical expert here in our midst.

Those are Tine E. Bear's thoughts, group!"

"OK," announced Charles, "that's it. Fine, Tine. Let's go. Oscar and Im, please leave now for your respective posts. Guillaume and I need to go to bed to be ready for action early tomorrow morning. Judy, please stay up and take care of anything else that arises and also keep your eye on things out of the window—we need a central command post, here, from our room. That's you, Judy. If you see something that needs attention, call Im or Oscar on their smartphones. Explain where you would like them to move. This situation is most likely to arise with Im; the river walk is quite long and we have a good view of a broad expanse of it from our room. Im's view will be more localized. Oscar's territory is more compact; he should be able to gauge what is going on in all of it, directly, from a single vantage point. Now, I'm off to bed."

Special Agents Assigned to Bay City



Guillaume R. Squirrel: A linguist who is the Master Teacher of all languages to all teddy-type creatures in the Earl world. Guillaume is highly articulate and will chatter endlessly on a vast array of topics—some of greater interest than others. He claims to possess a copyright and trademark on his unique pronunciation of the word “hmmmmph!!” which he uses to express a variety of feelings. Guillaume’s gray coloration, along with his natural athletic talent and structural engineering background, make him an ideal undercover agent in a variety of environments. Guillaume, a world traveler like some of the others, emigrated from Toronto, Ontario, but was born in North Korea.



Im Possumble: A native of Ann Arbor, Michigan, where he was handmade by a specialist. Im is an expert at both “hanging around” and at dealing with situations which might otherwise appear impossible to handle. He has been known to hang out at Alma Mater restaurants although that fact is often discovered only afterwards. He serves as a consultant in matters involving corporate restaurant spying and has even had a role on a mass media production that shows hidden cameras revealing restaurant and server inadequacies. He has experience in parallel situations, centered on a view from above, as well.



Oscar Owl: A native of Detroit, Michigan. Oscar is an expert at observation from high platforms, especially at night. He has been known to frequent wooded areas, as well as other outdoor locales, and to report back on nocturnal activities in these areas. Some of his friends refer to him, in jest, as a “hooter.”

At the Bridge Tournament

“Charles,” whispered Eric, the ABC Director-in-Charge of the Tournament, “I must speak to you immediately. See that guy over there? His name is Harold. He is having an absolute fit. His partner didn’t show up, so I found him someone else. Now Harold refuses to play with the guy...says he isn’t good enough. Harold keeps muttering something about his partner Jeremy and says Jeremy’s wife died last night but that that’s no excuse for not showing up and not giving a call. Anyway, this guy is disrupting the whole place. Got any suggestions?” “How about,” Charles offered, “if I play with him. I know what kind of a player Jeremy is; he’s a fine player to be sure, but I have a better reputation (and am a better player) than Jeremy. I can keep Harold quiet.” “Thanks, Buddy,” said a relieved Eric, “I owe you a beer.” “And since you won’t drink it,” giggled Eric, “I’ll drink it for you.”

“Hi Harold,” said Charles with an engaging smile, “I’m looking forward to playing with you; I hope I will be at least a somewhat reasonable fill-in until Jeremy arrives. I haven’t seen him in a few years, but of course do know him and know of him.” “Oh, Charles, how delightful,” countered Harold, “it is an honor to have you play with me, even if only for a few boards. You know, Jeremy and I were regular partners for a number of years, then he had a situation that kept him away from bridge, and now we had decided to renew our, ah, friendship. I am just so looking forward to that. So sorry to hear about his wife; I had not known he was married. I gather that is something that is relatively recent, as are the dogs—I saw them on the treadmills in their adorable little running shoes when Jeremy was exercising them—really over the top!” “Yes,” replied Charles, “I saw him at a distance, yesterday. My wife saw the group in the gym, too.”

Charles and Harold sat down and began to duplicate the boards. “You know, Charles,” commented Harold, while engaging in casual chit-chat, “I hope I am not taking you away from a game you already had planned...” “No, it’s fine,” countered Charles, “I am playing most sessions with Dewey but we do also take time off periodically to regroup a bit.” “I don’t believe I know Dewey,” said Harold. “Actually, you probably do—you just don’t know his name—he always wears a dashiki,” Charles explained. “Oh, yes,

now I know," Harold remarked thoughtfully. Soon, the two men were engrossed in the play of the cards.

On the very first hand, Charles and Harold reached 4S (Harold as declarer) with Charles holding

♠ A J 4 2
♥ J
♦ K 6 5 4
♣ K Q 5 3

and Harold holding

♠ 9 8 6 5
♥ A 8 2
♦ J 8
♣ A J T 4

After winning the heart lead with the ace, Harold led a low spade, and the next hand played the K. Harold won the A and surprisingly continued a low spade. The hand with the K had started with K Q 10. He won the 10, cashed the Q, and now Harold had to lose a heart, two spades, and the diamond A. Down one on a hand everyone else made.

Later, the opponents played 3NT on the following cards

	♠ A T 3 2	
	♥ Q 8	
	♦ A 9 5 4	
	♣ Q T 3	
♠ 4		♠ K Q J 6
♥ J 8 7 6 2		♥ T 5 3
♦ Q T 8		♦ K J 8 3
♣ 7 6 5 4 2		♣ K 8
	♠ 9 8 7 5	
	♥ A K 5	
	♦ T 7 3	
	♣ A J 9	

<u>North</u>	<u>Harold</u> <u>East</u>	<u>South</u>	<u>Charles</u> <u>West</u>
1C	X	XX	1H
1S	P	3NT	P
P	P		

Declarer won the opening H lead with the A. He then led the 9 of S, losing to the J. A heart return was won on dummy. The club Q was covered with the king and A. Now declarer led the 8S, and W discarded a club. In the end, declarer only had 8 tricks, because spades broke badly. But declarer ducked two rounds of diamonds, cashed the A of spades, and discarded a spade on his long H. Declarer's last card was the 5 of spades. Harold had to discard one of the KD or KS. Remarkably, he discarded the KS, even though declarer was known to hold another spade.

Charles found Harold's careless plays surprising.

Investigative reports of the special agents.



Report of Special Agent Guillaume.

Well, I can certainly see why Jean-Pierre was shocked! When he took raw meat to room 381 a guy answered the door. The man was wearing a black lace bra, apparently padded with some sort of soft foamy material, and black lace, see-through panties with padding in the back, only! He had Jean-Pierre bring in the meat, scooped it out into the two cereal bowls and put them on the floor. Naturally, the dogs came running (each had little leather bedroom slippers on). The bra, panties, slippared dog combination set Jean-Pierre running down the hall. He is still upset.

While I was talking to Jean-Pierre, I asked him more about his job. He said that his function as a room-service person is in addition to his regular job in the gym, handling the towels, water, and related supplies. He also monitors the condition of the equipment. He showed me around the gym. I tested the treadmill and I must say it is in excellent condition; it was able to sense my weight of about one pound!

Jean-Pierre said that in the late morning before the murder a guy came in wearing a black and white dashiki and took it off (had a T-shirt under it). He worked out for a while and then left. But he forgot his dashiki. Shortly thereafter, Jean-Pierre left to respond to a flood of room service calls; when he returned late yesterday afternoon, the dashiki was gone, so he assumed the guy came back to get it.



Report of Special Agent Im.

The smartphone, with Judy's assistance sure helped me to navigate through the crowd on the river walk! I went up a pole near where the body was found and hung from the cross-piece. There was a lot of wild gossip that I overheard but the most consistent piece was that a man wearing a dashiki was hanging around this area. I texted this to Judy and she sent me back some photos she had taken of some of Dewey's dashikis—one of a red and black fabric and the other of a black and white fabric as well as a few others.



I climbed down and showed the images to one young man who seemed a bit more rational than most of the others. When many of the folks heard the word 'dashiki' they thought immediately of Dewey. It seemed to me as if a lynch mob mentality were forming. Anyway, this guy was quite certain that the dashiki he had seen was the black and white one of Dewey's.



Report of Special Agent Oscar.

The patio was filled with people when I got there. I overheard the same pattern as Im had with regard to the dashiki, and yes, the same assumption about Dewey. Judy also sent me the photos. When I showed them around, I got the same identification consistently—the black and white one. Again, I was alarmed as to what the mob-mentality might do to Dewey. I thought we needed to protect him. So late last night, I sent Special Agent Dewey Bear to stick like glue to Dewey (the human); he has experience with security ‘cover’. They apparently debated about the merits of the decimal system versus the Library of Congress classification and any number of other academic topics. They are a Dewey Double!



Dewey Bear: A native of Ann Arbor, MI. The source of Dewey’s name may be seen in his University of Michigan football jersey. From his vantage point the number on it looks like ‘10’—the base of the decimal system. Despite the football jersey and the stadium security blanket, he is truly a scholar—a bibliophile of the first rank and an ardent proponent of the Dewey Decimal system for library classification.

Report of Special Agent Dewey Bear.

I stayed with my human counterpart as you recommended, beginning late last night and into the rest of the day today. Really, he was quite easy to shadow. We did, indeed, debate the merits and drawbacks of different library classification systems. We also talked about movies and discussed various aspects of political correctness. His approach there is quite different from mine, but that difference made for engaging conversation.

Eventually, I was able to move the discussion to dashikis—he was pleased to show me his whole collection. He has them catalogued according to his Dewey Dashiki System. The fabrics are quite beautiful, as Judy had noted earlier. He was, however, horrified to find that his gym dashiki, which apparently he wears to the gym as others might wear a sweatshirt, was missing!

So, we went down to the gym to see if it were there. No dashiki. We talked to Jean-Pierre who noted that it had been there the morning before Elise was murdered. He said that he took a bunch of room service calls and returned to the gym in the late afternoon, at which time the dashiki was no longer there.

Charles's Report

Bridge with Harold

Harold certainly seemed distracted, as is illustrated by the two extremely careless errors he made. He kept muttering about Jeremy's standing him up.

A Conversation with Clara

I was quite interested to hear Guillaume's account. You see, our friend Clara recalls the following situation from about 20 years ago. She said she was at a national tournament, and, while she was sitting in the lobby of the hotel, a sexy-looking woman came in and started flirting with young men in the lobby, apparently trying to pick someone up. She went up behind the woman and said gently, "Jeremy?" He whirled around and grabbed her—

“shut up, Clara—go away—you are interfering.” So you see, that was Jeremy dressed in drag, trying to pick up young men for the evening—imagine the surprise the pickup was to get later! Elise reminded Clara of that woman from many years ago...older, of course, but somehow reminiscent. But, that was 20 years ago, when gays needed to resort to different behavior patterns; now society was more tolerant of openness.

A Conversation with Dr. Bob

So, I asked Dr. Bob what was so peculiar about this corpse; he must have seen plenty as an Emergency Room physician. He said it was obvious she was wearing a wig—nothing terribly unusual about that—but, when he began to feel the body to get a sense of how much earlier death might have occurred, he said it was quite clear that Elise had male genitals. He knew that news would inflame the gossip and so wanted to keep this extra fact out of that limelight at least until the police and coroner had had a chance to look at everything.

Charles’s Theory--Putting It All Together

You have all done an absolutely outstanding job of bringing in relevant pieces to this puzzle. Here is a chain of logic that would sew them all together in a plausible manner. Of course, I do not know if it is actually correct, but if you all think it plausible as well, then I will turn it over to the police for their consideration and action.

As I think I have noted on previous occasions, people do not engage in actions of extreme risk, such as murder, unless they feel that that risk is justified...that the benefit the murder will bring outweighs the risk of being caught and losing their life. In essence, they need to feel as if their life is over if the person remains alive.

So, let’s look at all the accumulated wisdom in that context and see how we can fit it all together and consider what inferences we might make and what conclusions we might draw.

We don’t have ‘proof’, but when we combine observations from Guillaume’s interview of Jean-Pierre with my interviews of Clara and Dr. Bob, it appears

that Elise and Jeremy were one person—a double identity—in fact, Jean-Pierre apparently saw ‘Jeremy’ becoming ‘Elise’ when he took the raw meat to one of their rooms. One might speculate that Jeremy was gay; perhaps even engaging in inappropriate relations with the dogs, and that Elise was his cover for his dog fetish. While all of that is bizarre, it is hardly grounds for murder.

Dewey is the clear suspect to whom everyone is pointing. There is, however, no logic there—just the coincidence that perhaps whoever committed the murder was wearing one of Dewey’s dashikis—‘double dashikis’. What motive would Dewey have had? I think there is no motive there, so I assume Dewey did not commit the murder.

In fact, I do not believe that he had the opportunity in terms of timing, either. He was with me and Judy on the river walk. We did pass Elise and the dogs, but we were beyond her on the other side of the bridge. We left Dewey at the pergola debating with a street person. When Judy and I came back past Elise, she was already dead.

I went back to the street person and showed him Judy’s photos of the dashikis. He positively identified the red and black dashiki, and not the black and white one, as the dashiki Dewey was wearing that night. I was certain the guy would remember; it’s probably not every day that he gets engaged in philosophical discussion with a linguist! I think we should buy him a little outdoor grill and associated tongs and such for his effort...let him see that work brings reward.

Thus, Dewey had neither motive nor opportunity. He was just recognizable because of his unusual choice of clothing. We are left with the question of why someone would wish to murder Elise?

Motive

Taken on her own, and at face value, Elise seemed a somewhat silly woman, apparently happily married to Jeremy (although of course we never saw them together). The only tangible connections between them were the dogs. If Elise were not murdered for her own actions, then I think we need to look at her in relation to someone else. I think that it was the fact that

she was Jeremy's wife that did her in. Remember, Clara thought she saw Jeremy dressed in drag, long ago, trying to pick up young men. Perhaps one of these young men came to the tournament, in his mind to renew his relationship with Jeremy, and found Elise, Jeremy's wife.

That idea brings to mind my bridge partner, Harold. He stumbled, verbally, over the idea of renewing his 'friendship' with Jeremy. Was that because he was really thinking something else and so being a bit awkward with what actually came out of his mouth? Perhaps. Now, I do think that Harold is our best suspect—not from merely that awkwardness, but I believe he is the only one we know who had both motive and opportunity. Let's see if it all fits.

Certainly, when I played bridge with him he appeared to be dreadfully distracted.... I think Harold clearly did not know that Elise and Jeremy were one and the same. Elise was standing in the way of his relationship with Jeremy. With her out of the way, he thought he would be free to pursue his earlier affair, from years ago, with Jeremy. He noted, as had Clara, that Jeremy had been out of circulation for a number of years—perhaps in the military, or overseas elsewhere, or who knows what. In any event, this meeting with Jeremy was something that Harold had long-anticipated. Finally, he was to return to a hoped-for permanent relationship with the love of his life. But, Elise stood in the way. In fact, Harold only connected Elise with Jeremy through the dogs. I suspect that Harold was in the crowd in the lobby when Elise caused a ruckus with the dogs on checking in. Then, later (mid-afternoon), Harold saw Jeremy with the dogs in the gym.

Now, in terms of the gym, here is the timing I see. In the morning, before the tournament, Dewey went to the gym. Jean-Pierre was there taking care of the towels. After about half an hour, Jean-Pierre got a bunch room service calls on his smartphone and he left the gym. A few minutes later, Dewey left the gym and forgot his gym-dashiki. After some time (early afternoon), Harold came in and used the cardio machines for a while (maybe 15 minutes) and then went into the weight-lifting area. While he was lifting free weights, Jeremy and the dogs came into the cardio area—

he could see them in the mirror. Harold saw them and thought about greeting his old friend/lover, but when he saw the dogs a sense of rage and betrayal came over him. At that point, he absent-mindedly picked up the black and white dashiki and hastily left the gym. Jeremy continued exercising the dogs on the treadmills. After some time, Jeremy and the boys went out on the adjacent patio for a bit of fresh air and sunshine. While they were out there, Judy entered the picture, got on the elliptical cross-trainer and started day-dreaming. As the weather got worse, the patio group re-entered the gym and continued working out on the treadmills. Then, Judy left. Of course, everyone in the gym assumed that things were as they were claimed to be: that Jeremy and Elise were a man and woman married to each other with two pampered service dogs. It was only through the dogs that people were able to connect Elise to Jeremy.

After quite some time, Jean-Pierre returned, noticed that the dashiki was no longer in the gym, and naturally assumed that Dewey had returned to pick up his forgotten item. Much earlier, Harold had gone back to his room, with the dashiki absent-mindedly tucked under his arm. As he sat alone, his emotions deepened and swung back and forth between heartbreak and seething anger. Somewhere in the midst of these overwhelming feelings, he must have concluded that getting Elise out of the picture was his only clear path to happiness and a long-term relationship. I think it was probably the case that his 'affair' with Jeremy had begun as some sort of almost-innocent emotional relationship which, at some point, crossed the line to a full-blown physical affair (probably Jeremy pushed him across that line). I suspect that the naive Harold remembered the full range of feelings...perhaps his first involvement, while the more experienced Jeremy just saw Harold as one of many passing ships in the night.

When Harold saw the dashiki lying on his bed, he picked it up as he considered it as a possible disguise later. As was the case with others, he knew that most people identified Dewey by his dashikis and not by his name. Thus, he put on a light T-shirt, stuffed the black and white dashiki in his pocket, and armed himself with a small, but potent, gun he carried when he travelled. Now, he waited for the perfect opportunity to execute this plan. He had plenty of motive and circumstances prevailed to present him

with a natural plan. He had no idea, however, that in getting rid of Elise he would also be getting rid of his beloved Jeremy.

Opportunity

Each evening, shortly after dusk, there was a fireworks display in the park across the river from the DoublePark. Crowds gathered along the river walk and folks marveled at the beauty of computer-guided pyrotechnics. Harold had planted himself on a bench along the river walk and was waiting for a possible opportunity to use the noise from the fireworks to cover the noise from his gun.

You can imagine his adrenalin rush as things unfolded to fit his plan. First, Elise—not Jeremy—came along and was walking the dogs for their evening outing. Soon after, you and I and Dewey passed between Elise, who was looking at the river, and Harold who was sitting on the bench. Once we passed, it was an easy matter for Harold to slip on the black and white dashiki. Shortly before we got to the pergola, Elise probably tied the dogs to the fence to protect them, and herself, from their possible sudden reactions once the fireworks began. The dogs were accustomed to being tied up, as they had been on the treadmills in the gym. Judy had seen that earlier.

Once the fireworks began, it was an easy matter for the dashiki-clad Harold to leave his bench and, in the crowd, press up behind Elise, and time shooting her with the predictable pattern in the fully regular display of fireworks. With the dogs tied up, they would not interfere. Alternating sections of the fencing opened up, so it was simple for Harold to push the body through the fence. Probably no one saw that, and even if they did, it would be natural to conclude that some sort of accident had happened when someone, perhaps a sailor, had inadvertently left a fence gate ajar.

It was a fine plan, and perhaps Elise would have sunk to the bottom and no one would have known. As Judy noted from seeing the tall ship tied up to the bank, the river must have been quite deep, even right next to the river walk. But, Judy's natural curiosity uncovered the plan too quickly.

Because Judy got interested in the kids catching carp, and expressed interest in the pattern of bubble related to the size of the fish, she found Elise. The female undergarments, with their bubbly foam and other padding materials, trapped air and released extra-large air bubbles as the body began to submerge, gradually, in the river. Even though this action with the bubbles accelerated discovery, still Harold had time to remove his dashiki and vanish into the crowd. Clearly, though, a number of folks remembered seeing him in the dashiki. He was right; the disguise he chose was a good one.

Now, I suspect he still has that dashiki in his room; when he picked it up from the gym, when he was not thinking clearly, he absent-mindedly tucked it under his arm. I suspect the extra pressure that Judy's discovery put on him forced him to respond in a similar manner. Thus, I would encourage the police, first and foremost, to search Harold's hotel room where I bet they will find the dashiki, probably somewhere in the bed. But for Judy's natural instincts, Harold might well have gotten away with murder!

Well, what do you all think? "Charles," Judy said, "call the Police and tell them all of this. It makes perfect sense. But, it is YOU, Charles, and your impeccable skill with logic, which kept Harold from getting away with it!" The police found the black and white dashiki as Charles had suggested. After a bit of investigation and interrogation, they escorted Harold to a police car. Later, Charles and Judy went to have dinner on the patio and enjoy a romantic and spectacular sunset together in advance of this evening's fireworks display.





* All characters appearing in this work are fictitious. Any resemblance to real persons, living or dead, is purely coincidental.