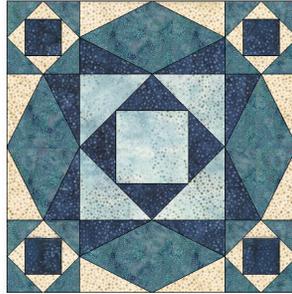




No Rest for the Wicked

Mystery written by Penny Pislain
Mystery quilt designed by Cynthia McNutt Scollard



Block 1 — Storm at Sea

“So, what do you think?”

Homicide Detective Dmitri Trevesani glanced up from his crouched position. They were about ten feet away from the victim, having used the same path the first officer on the scene had used to minimize contamination as much as possible. “Two, maybe three days,” he said, shrugging. “We won’t know for sure until the Medical Examiner arrives. Who found her?”

His partner-of-the-moment, Homicide Detective Tom Jones, flipped through his notes. “Couple of kids. Brothers, ages seven and nine. They’re over there with their parents.” He indicated the yellow police tape with a tilt of his chin.

Dmitri twisted around to look back at a worried looking couple in their mid-thirties standing with two young boys. “Great,” he muttered. “They’ll probably need a lifetime of therapy after this. Has anyone talked to them yet? Or their parents?”

“The first uniform on the scene did.

That’s him over there.” Tom pointed at a uniformed police officer standing next to his cruiser.

Dmitri stood. “Thanks, Tom. See about moving the family a little bit further down the beach, will you? Don’t want the kids any more traumatized than they already are.”

“Right.”

“And can you get some pictures?” he called out as Tom wandered off.

“Yep,” Tom called back.

Dmitri pulled his notebook and a pen out of his jacket pocket and drew a quick sketch of the scene, including the location of the body and its relation to the surroundings. He noted the time, date, weather conditions, and any other pertinent information he could think of then made his way to where the officer stood, arms folded across his chest and a scowl on his face. The name on his badge read “Gutierrez.”

“Can you believe this?” he demanded

when Dmitri was close enough to hear. “Leaving a DB where a couple of kids can find it? I’m sure it happens in big cities like Seattle all the time but not here in Sequim.”

He wasn’t so sure about that, but it was definitely a sick world, all right. He supposed if it wasn’t, they would all be out of a job.

“What do you know so far?” he asked, opening his notebook.

“I got the call about forty-five minutes ago,” Gutierrez said. “I secured the scene, took pictures, then spoke with the parents. They were having a picnic up the beach a little way and the boys were exploring. Mom says they started screaming. She and the dad thought someone was trying to kidnap them so they came running. The boys found the woman lying where she is now behind all the debris that washed up onto the shore after last night’s storm. They had no idea she was there until they stumbled upon her.”

“Any witnesses? Anyone else see anything?”

The officer shook his head. “No one else was around when I arrived. I asked the parents if they had seen anyone and they said no, the beach was deserted when they got here and no one has been here since.”

“Are the crime scene investigation team on their way?”

“I called it in. They should be here any minute. I also advised the medical examiner so he’ll be here in awhile, give the CSI guys time to do their thing.”

“Yeah, okay.” He finished writing and glanced up. “I’ll go talk to the parents.”

Gutierrez nodded. “The boys are pretty upset, just so you know.”

“Thanks. I’ll tread cautiously. You got their names?”

“The parents are Brian and Evie Hanford and the boys are Gage and Xander.”

“Got it.”

He wrote that information down in his book, too, before approaching the family slowly, not wanting to startle the boys who already looked scared out of their minds. Both of them were pressed against their parents and staring at him with widened eyes. He stopped about three feet away so he wasn’t crowding them.

“Hello,” he said. “I’m Homicide Detective Trevesani of the Sequim Police Department—”

“There’s a restaurant in town called Trevesani’s,” the mother pointed out, interrupting him.

“It belongs to my family,” Dmitri told her.

“We’ve eaten there. The food is very good.”

He smiled. “Thank you. My parents do most of the cooking, but my brothers, sisters, and I help out when needed.” He changed the subject back to what he was here for. “Would you mind if I ask you a few questions?”

The dad, Brian, shook his head. “We don’t really have anything to add other than what we told the officer over there but we’ll answer any questions we can.”

“Thank you,” Dmitri said. “I appreciate that.”

He asked them to repeat what they had told Officer Gutierrez while he wrote it down in his notebook and once they had done that, he crouched down in front of the boys.

“Which one of you is Gage and which

one of you is Xander?" he asked.

"I'm Xander," said the oldest boy.

He smiled. "That must make you Gage," he said to the youngest one.

The boy nodded but he didn't say anything.

"Can you tell me what happened?" he asked them. "You don't have to if you don't want to," he hurried to add, "but if you want to tell me, that would be helpful."

"You won't arrest of us if we don't tell?" asked the oldest boy.

"No," he said, shaking his head. "I only arrest bad guys and I can tell you boys aren't bad guys."

"But how can you tell?"

"Because bad guys do really bad things."

Xander dropped his voice. "Like hurt that lady?"

"Yes, like hurt that lady."

"I hurt my brother once."

He wasn't sure what to say to that. "I see."

"He hit me in the arm," Gage piped in.

"That wasn't very nice," Dmitri said.

"What did your mom and dad do?"

Xander hung his head. "My mom made me say I was sorry, then she put me in time-out so I could think about what I did. She made me tell my dad when he got home from work."

"I cried," Gage said proudly.

"I would imagine you did," Dmitri said.

"Getting hit hurts. I have three big brothers and sometimes, when we were little, they would hit me."

"Did you arrest them?" Gage's eyes were wider than they had been when Dmitri first walked up.

"No. We were kids and I wasn't a policeman, yet, so I couldn't arrest

anyone."

"Can you arrest them now?"

"I can now, but they don't hit me anymore. They know better."

"Are you going to arrest me for hitting Gage?" Xander asked.

Dmitri smiled and shook his head. "No. It sounds to me like your mom and dad took care of everything so you don't need to be arrested. I'm sure you learned your lesson. It's not a good idea to hit people, though, so you shouldn't do that anymore."

"I won't."

He rose to his feet and patted the boy on the head. "I know you won't. You're not a bad guy."

"I'm not a bad guy, too."

"Either, Gage," their mom said. "You're not a bad guy, either."

"That's what I said."

Dmitri laughed. He figured he'd spent enough time putting the boys at ease and it was time for him to get down to business so he could let this family go. "Do you want to tell me what happened?"

They both nodded. Then the boys told him about exploring and finding the woman's body. They went into minute detail about the rocks and pieces of tree branches they found, but they quickly glossed over finding the woman. That was okay, he got the idea and he didn't blame them. They were probably going to have nightmares for months, if not years, as it was.

Before leaving the family, he talked to the parents about counseling for the boys, letting them know that there were resources available if they were needed and gave them his card, in case they thought of anything else. Then he joined

his partner near their car where he was leaning against the front fender. Since the crime scene investigators had shown up while he was talking to the family, he wanted to make sure he was out of their way so they could work.

While they conducted their investigation, he and Tom went to the surrounding houses and interviewed the neighbors. Unfortunately, no one had seen anything and everyone had pretty much been indoors due to the inclement weather the past few days. Discouraged, they returned to the crime scene.

The investigators were taking pictures and systematically canvassing the area for evidence.

The lead CSI joined them. “As soon as the medical examiner gets here, we can take pictures of her face and, if necessary, Eddie can do a sketch.”

“Thanks, Alex.”

Although they were at it for a few hours, it was obvious there wasn’t much evidence to collect. “Sorry, Detective,” Alex said, “there isn’t a lot here and even if there was, all the rain last night would have washed it away. If I had to guess, though, I would say that this is most likely just the dump site. We don’t really see anything here that would lead us to believe this is the murder scene. But again, it’s hard to tell at this point.”

He figured as much. The storm last night had been a bad one. “Got it.”

“ME’s here,” Tom said.

Dmitri nodded. He was anxious to get the man’s professional opinion.

“Well,” said Marc Bennett, kneeling next to the woman’s body, “since it’s been cold, it’s going to be hard to pinpoint time of death.” He rolled her over onto her

side. “From the appearance of the lividity, which you can see is pooled around her left side,” he pointed at the purplish coloring to her skin where her top was raised, “not her stomach as it would be if she was left face down as she is now, she was moved sometime between six and twelve hours after death.” He looked around. “The CSI team would probably be able to tell you for sure, but my guess is the crime scene is in another location.” He shrugged. “She could have died a week ago, it could have been a few days. I’ll know more after the autopsy.” He looked up. “Anyone have an ID?”

“No,” Dmitri said. “When we finish up here, I’ll look into missing persons. See what I can find.”

“Sounds good. I’ll let you know what I find out from the autopsy.”

“Thanks, Marc.”

He wandered over to his partner. “Alex and Marc are saying that our victim was probably dumped here.”

Tom sighed. “That’s awesome. The actual crime scene could be anywhere.”

Unfortunately, that was true. As it was with every new case, he allowed himself a moment to consider the impossibility of their task. Then he took a deep breath and forced himself to calm down. He always felt that he was the voice of the voiceless, of those who can no longer speak for themselves. This time was no different. They would do their job and they would find justice for this woman, whoever she was.

Due to exposure to the elements, Eddie was needed to make a sketch of the woman. Dmitri stood to the side and watched the man work. He was quick, but thorough.

“Can you email a copy of that to me?” he asked.

Eddie looked up. “Sure. I’ll send it as soon as I get back to my desk.”

Since the investigators were about ready to wrap it up, Dmitri headed for his car. Back at the station, he pulled up the missing persons database and starting looking for women who had gone missing recently in surrounding areas.

He’d been at it for awhile, and his eyes were beginning to cross from the strain of staring at hundreds of pictures, when someone stopped by his desk. He looked up to see Officer Gutierrez standing there.

“Hey, Dmitri,” he said. Since they were no longer in the professional setting of a crime scene, they were a lot less formal.

“Hey...” What was the officer’s first name? He was drawing a blank. It was something more common like Bill, or Bob, or John. John. That was it. “...John. What’s up?”

“How’s your sister?”

Dmitri gave the man his full attention. “My sister?” he said frowning. “She’s engaged.”

John’s eyes widened. “RosaMarie is engaged?”

“What? No. Annaliese is engaged.” His frown deepened. “What about RosaMarie?”

He shrugged. “I was just wondering how she’s doing.”

“She’s doing fine.”

“That’s good. Tell her I said ‘hi.’” Then he walked away.

Dmitri stared after him. What was that all about? And how did Gutierrez know RosaMarie? Next time he saw her, she better have a good explanation for this.

He put the issue of his sister and

Gutierrez aside and concentrated on the pictures. The problem was that he wasn’t sure the image he had in his mind of the woman was accurate. It would probably be best if he waited until he got the sketch from Eddie. He could have taken a few pictures with his phone once the ME had turned her over but he quit doing that when his nieces and nephews started playing games on it. He didn’t want them to accidentally see something they shouldn’t and have them traumatized for life as he was afraid the Hanford boys might be after finding the victim of their latest case. Besides, his brothers and sisters-in-law would be horrified and he couldn’t blame them. If he ever had kids, he would shield them from the horrors of his job as much as possible. He would do no less for his nieces and nephews.

Tom came in and sat down at the desk that butted up against his. “Find anything?”

“Not yet, but then I need the sketch. And maybe the pictures Alex’s team took. It’s hard to reconcile these pictures of smiling women whose faces are so full of life with a picture of someone who is lifeless.”

“I got a few pictures, but I’m not sure how helpful they’ll be with her hair in her face.”

“Probably not very.”

Tom nodded. “No, probably not. It never fails to amaze me that there are so many missing people. But what really amazes me are the ones that no one ever misses. How can not one person notice that they are gone?”

“I don’t know.” Dmitri rubbed his eyes with his thumb and forefinger. “It boggles the mind.”

Just then, his computer dinged. He checked his emails and found the sketch from Eddie. Once he'd printed it out, he held it up next to the computer screen and scrolled through the pictures again. There were a few possibilities, so he printed those, but even they seemed like a long shot.

"Print out another copy of the sketch," Tom said. "I'll see what I can find."

Dmitri printed out a second copy and handed it to Tom. They worked in silence for some time.

"Is your brother-in-law still mad at me?"

Dmitri looked over the top of his computer monitor at his partner. "I don't have a brother-in-law."

"Darrow," he pointed out.

"He's not my brother-in-law."

"Yet."

"Stop rubbing it in."

Henry Darrow was Dmitri's brother-in-law-to-be by engagement to his sister, Annaliese. Henry was all right. He'd been involved in one of their investigations a few months back when a woman's body was found under his boat dock. He met and started dating Annaliese shortly after finding the body. Dmitri talked him into putting their relationship on hold until they caught the killer so Annaliese wouldn't be in danger. Henry reluctantly agreed.

Tom was certain Henry was the murderer and didn't think looking for evidence of another responsible party was necessary. After they found the real killer, Henry and Annaliese reunited. Tom had muttered a half-hearted apology and walked away. Henry didn't hold a grudge, exactly, but it never failed to irritate him when he thought about it. Which made for good times when Dmitri was in the mood

to remind his future brother-in-law that he could have wound up in prison.

Tom laughed. "Being in denial doesn't change the facts."

"I don't want to talk about it. I'm busy."

He ignored his partner after that and continued scanning through pictures.

When Tom stood up and stretched, Dmitri glanced at the clock. It was after five and he'd promised his mom he would help out at the restaurant tonight. He put the sketch in his desk and shut his computer down.

"See you tomorrow," Tom said on his way out.

"Yep." The lights in the parking lot were already on by the time he got to his car. He drove the ten minutes to the restaurant and parked in the front lot instead of behind the building like he usually did. A few minutes to relax before he either started cooking or waiting tables, whichever job he was needed to fulfill tonight, sounded like a good idea.

There was an empty table in the corner. He grabbed a glass from behind the counter and poured himself some water before sitting down. He took a sip and stared out the window. Movement out of the corner of his eye caught his attention. He looked up to see Annaliese standing there.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

He sighed. "Nothing."

She sat down across from him and he groaned. "I was hoping for some peace and quiet before I had to get started."

Reaching across the table, she took his hand. "Is it work?"

He sighed again, this time long and drawn out. "Why are there missing people no one cares about?" He hadn't meant to

say that but he was in a strange mood.

She hesitated. “I don’t know, Dmitri. Everyone should have someone who cares.”

Yes, they should.

“Why don’t you let me get you some of Mama’s comfort food.”

“Spaghetti and meatballs,” he scoffed.

“It’ll cure what ails you,” she pointed out.

“So, I’ve heard.” Then he shook his head. “I told Mom I’d take over for Nick tonight so he can go out.”

“Nicholas can wait. It won’t hurt him.” She squeezed his hand. “I’ll put your order in now. I think she might be making some so it should be ready soon.”

“I’m not really hungry.”

“Mama will be upset if you don’t eat. You should know that.”

Yeah, he knew that. “Okay. Tell Nick to give me a few minutes. Is he cooking or doing tables?”

“Cooking.”

Good, he wouldn’t have to deal with customers in his present mood.

His sister brought out his food and he had to admit, it did help with some of his attitude. It must be the love their mom always insists is the secret ingredient she puts in all of her cooking. After eating, he cleared the table and went into the kitchen to take over for his little brother.

