

A Murder at School

The word life consists of only four letters, but it could take twists and turns and be so incomprehensible that you may do something incredulous.

Today, I'm presenting you with a strange and delicate story about what happened in a school in a small English town - Qualberg.

Ms. Alice Hope used to teach History. She taught well and seemed to enjoy teaching herself. She always favored those who did well in history. David Smith was certainly not one of them. He had a very different way of thinking, which often distracted him from his academic performance.

Something horrible happened at the school one day. On December 24th, the school librarian, as usual, opened the library in the morning, only to receive the shock of her life. Ms. Alice Hope was lying dead on the floor near the bookshelf.

That created massive havoc amongst the teachers, the students, and the staff. Everybody was discussing the sudden and unexpected demise of poor Ms. Alice. After the autopsy reports came forth, it became clear that Ms. Alice had been murdered. This news spread like wildfire. The library was sealed off immediately, and the police frequently appeared at the school for inquiries and further investigations. The police interrogated every member of the school, starting from the bus drivers to the principal.

After the investigation, the police learned about Robert Hope, the chemistry teacher. And he turned out to be Alice Hope's younger brother. By looking at the post-mortem reports, anybody could tell that the murder was committed with the help of some chemicals. This naturally gave rise to suspicion over Mr. Robert Hope. Although he was the younger brother of Alice Hope, he had always envied her for inheriting all their father's wealth. Thus, they constantly quarreled and never saw eye to eye with each other. Robert was interrogated many times, and some of his answers were not entirely

convincing. The police had already identified Robert Hope as a prime suspect, not only because he had some motive to kill her but also because they had a very strained relationship. The police also had a few witnesses who talked about Robert's movements on the day of the murder.

A police officer, called Andrew Jones, was in charge of the investigation. Andrew was very experienced and thorough. Although all the needles pointed to Robert, Andrew had to be absolutely sure of his facts. He decided to check witnesses, facts, and then make a watertight case.

Early that morning, Andrew entered the school and went directly to the chemistry lab. Mr. Robert was mixing some chemicals, and making notes. He looked quite worried. Robert got petrified and angry at the same time on seeing a police officer again.

He began, "Now, what? Aren't you satisfied yet? Haven't you asked me the same questions several times?"

Andrew made a friendly gesture and smiled. He said, "Friend, I never believe in hearsay evidence, nor do I jump to conclusions. Please do not get overworked. All I need is a little information about some people." Robert got a little pacified and looked a little less hostile

"Would you know who has a very creative mind when it comes to an interest in Chemistry?" Andrew asked inquisitively. Mr. Robert frowned. After a little thinking, he said, "Well, from the 10th standard, A grade, Michael King is really good. David Smith is another boy who stumps with odd but intelligent questions." Both men continue talking for quite some time. Robert felt as if he was talking to an old friend.

"Alright, thank you for your cooperation, Mr. Robert Hope." Andrew bowed ceremoniously and left the lab.

Andrew's colleagues were a little frustrated with Andrew's way of working. They were getting impatient, thinking this to be an open-and-shut case. They felt that Andrew had made no progress. Although in Andrew's mind, pieces of the puzzle were slowly falling into place.

After a week or so, Andrew briskly walked to the principal's cabin and demanded, "I want to hold a meeting in the conference room urgently. I have discovered the murderer of Ms. Alice." The principal's curiosity didn't allow him to stay quiet; however, looking at Andrew's face, he didn't say a word.

The invited students and teachers were sitting in their respective seats. Their gaze was fixed on Andrew. The atmosphere in the room had tensed up. Andrew sipped his tea and began, "Ladies and gentlemen, I hope we all know the reason behind gathering here. And now, without wasting any more time, let me reveal the murderer of Ms. Alice. The person who has committed this heinous crime is sitting amongst us right now. Everybody looked at each other and Robert with dread and suspicion. Andrew took a deep breath and said, "You won't believe this. But it is true, the murderer of Ms. Alice is none other than a student from the 10th grade. And his name is - David Smith." There spread a pin-drop silence. All the teachers and pupils in that room started looking at David with disbelief. Some were even angry

about it. David couldn't bear the gazes of everyone anymore. He started trembling with fear and burst into tears.

Andrew spoke, breaking the silence, "Am I right, David?" David had heard what Andrew had just said, but had no nerve to say anything. His eyes were red because of crying, and his tears had dried up. Suddenly, David stood up and claimed, "Yes, I was the one to kill Ms. Alice."

Andrew said with a steady voice, "David, I want you to tell us why exactly you killed Ms. Alice without hiding anything." David just stood staring at nothing. Realizing that he's not going to speak out, Andrew continued speaking, "Alright, let me throw some light on this. On the first day David and I met, I realized how much he hated Alice. When I asked him more about it, I learned that Alice was never nice to David. She would always jeer at him, scold him for being late to classes, and for getting low grades in history. However, the fact was that David knew a lot about World War 2, various revolutions around the world, and so on. However, David never got top marks. He felt neglected, insulted, and out of place."

Everyone was listening attentively, as if it were a fiction story. Andrew continued his monologue. "Coming back to the point, I was suspicious of David's actions. For example, whenever I talked about Ms. Alice, David had a queer glint in his eyes, which I thought was not normal. I was also a little baffled to hear David's chemistry experiments and his knowledge about various chemicals. His notes mentioned botulinum toxin and Clostridium botulinum, which alarmed me. I went ahead and spoke with a few chemical experts, who mentioned that they never discuss such fatal chemicals and substances at schools. My research later told me that these are actually poisonous materials." Everyone was hearing this in awe, and didn't know what to say. Andrew continued in his speech, "So I got thinking, has David gotten his hands on these materials? My theory says – Yes! The fact was that he actually created this chemical on December 21, which was 3 days before Ms. Alice Hope was killed. I accidentally happened to check Ms. Alice's history book, where I found a dusty white substance that smelled very strongly. I made a very quick forensic check, and guess what? The white powder was nothing but the botulinum toxin! Which is also known as a miracle position."

Here, Andrew took a pause. There was a murmur among the audience and an incredulous look in everyone's eyes. He continued, "Let me now give you the account of how it must have happened. On the eve of Ms. Alice's death, she was examining a book about the Russian Revolution. A little later, she went out with the librarian to have a cup of tea, keeping her book half open.

David walked in and saw his opportunity. He swiftly reached her book, sprinkled a general dose of Botulinum on the open page, and silently walked out. As he had expected, Ms. Alice continued working late that evening, even after the librarian had left for the day. It was inevitable that she would come into contact with the powder. And that's how she died."

David was looking down all the time. His body language told everyone that Andrew's theory proved to be accurate.

He was expelled from the school and taken to the juvenile center.

Now, you must be wondering how I know all this so vividly. That's because I'm none other than David Smith himself, and I'm talking to you from this center where I'm kept. Yes, I did kill my history teacher to teach her a good

lesson for her behavior towards me. And I warn all of you too, as I still have preserved some of the botulinum toxin powder. Beware!