

Final Act for “One Mystery Author Too Many”

Spoiler Alert: This is the final act which reveals the identify of the murderer. Please read the introduction and study the package of clues before you read this part.

We are inside the home of I. Reed Toomuch, reclusive billionaire and devoted mystery fan. He has invited fourteen mystery authors to spend the weekend at his private island off the coast of Maine. Soon after the party begins, one of the guests is murdered.

Brenda Buckminster:

What are we going to do? One person is already dead and there’s no help coming until Monday. That’s two days from now. None of us will be left by then.

Vaughn Heartacher:

I don’t know about the rest of you, but I’m locking my door when I go to bed. And I’m warning everyone right now. I’ve brought a gun and I’m not afraid to use it.

Brenda Buckminster:

That doesn’t sound very social.

Jim Haymaker:

Don’t let him scare you, Brenda. Vaughn is always threatening to shoot someone.

Vaughn Heartacher:

Maybe so, Haymaker, but if you come anywhere near my room while I’m sleeping, your agent will need a Ouija board to get your next mystery out of you.

June Flemmagardner:

Oh dear! I’ve got a book signing on Tuesday. What’ll happen if I’m the next victim?

David Ross Enfelder:

That’s easy, June. Your books will be autographed by a ghost writer.

June Flemmagardner:

This is no time for jokes, David.

Nikki Seelbach:

I can't help thinking about the mystery by Agatha Christie, 'And Then There Were None'.

David Ross Enfelder:

You're right, Nikki. Makes me wonder about those mystery parties Jim Haymaker is always throwing. The ones where the guests pretend they're being murdered, until nobody is left. Maybe he's the one behind this. Except this time, he's gotten carried away. I'm telling you, it's Jim and he's gone off the deep end.

Jim Haymaker:

Just a minute! Nobody has actually died at one of my parties. I resent the accusation.

Dottie Kennel:

I think it's the butler.

Bruce Casket:

Dottie, that's what you always say in your books. The butler did this, or the butler did that.

Dottie Kennel:

Not true, Bruce. In my last novel, it was the scullery maid.

Jim Ziskopff:

What the hell is a scullery maid?

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

Who cares? We already knows it was Butler what had access to rat poison. I think he's the guy what iced Royal Pane.

Janine Sloveniski:

I don't understand. Which Butler? Mr. Butler, or Mrs. Butler?

Vaughn Heartacher:

Either one. Those butlers are all alike, if you ask me.

I Reed Toomuch:

Just a minute! I'll thank you to stop accusing my staff. Besides, I think I've got this figured out.

Stephanie Gamby:

This was your party! How do we know you're not the murderer?

I Reed Toomuch:

I assure you, Stephanie, I'm not the murderer. I've been talking this over with my staff.

Janine Sloviniski:

Oh, that's just great. You and the two Butlers. Mrs. Butler is one who bought the food. She must have poisoned it before we got here. There is children's fable in my country, Tasmaniastan. The evil witch invites children into her cottage, so she can poison them.

Evelyn Butler:

Thomas, did you hear what Miss Sloviniski said about your wife?

Thomas Butler:

You're right dear. That was completely inappropriate. We all know there aren't any children here.

Janine Sloviniski:

This is not all. I heard you and victim had something going at one time. He jilted you and now you've had your revenge.

Vaughn Heartacher:

I don't understand. Did somebody just imply Royal Pane had an affair with an evil witch?

Evelyn Butler:

This is outrageous! All of you ate the same food and drank the same drinks. Royal Pane was the only person who died. How do you explain that?

I Reed Toomuch:

That's a good point, Evelyn. Well, Janine, how do you explain that?

Janine Sloviniski:

Fine. Then it was Mr. Butler. He wanted to get even with Royal Pane for sleeping with his wife. Somebody just said he had access to strychnine.

Thomas Butler:

I didn't poison anyone! And I'll thank you to leave my personal affairs out of this.

Janine Sloviniski:

Sounds like it wasn't your affair, so much as it was your wife's, if you get what I'm saying.

I Reed Toomuch:

That's enough of that. And I think we can rule out strychnine as the murder weapon.

Dottie Kennel:

What about Deadly Nightshade? Lynn Redmond grows it in her backyard. For all we know, she brought some with her.

Lynn Redmond:

I did no such thing!

I Reed Toomuch:

I don't think it was strychnine, or Deadly Nightshade. Consider the symptoms just before he died. The rash and the swelling. I think it was an allergic reaction.

Vaughn Heartacher:

You mean like to peanuts?

Jim Ziskopff:

I think you're on the wrong track, Heartacher. I saw Royal Pane eating peanuts. The way he was going to town, it looked like a squirrel had gotten into the pantry. I'd be surprised if there's any left.

Lynn Redmond:

I hope there wasn't any in the food. I'm deathly allergic.

Vaughn Heartacher:

I think I tasted some in the cheesecake, Lynn. As a matter of fact, I'm sure of it.

Lynn Redmond:

Thank God I gave up dairy before this party.

Nikki Seelbach:

I remember seeing Bruce Casket mixing something into the graham cracker crumbs used to make the crust for the cheesecake.

Lynn Redmond:

Bruce, you know I'm allergic! You've had it in for me ever since I successfully defended Royal Pane in that lawsuit you brought against him.

Bruce Casket:

I'm not saying another word until I talk to my lawyer.

Lynn Redmond:

Speaking as an attorney, I think that's probably a good idea, Bruce.

Brenda Buckminster:

We need to focus on what killed Royal Pane, and it wasn't peanuts.

Bruce Casket:

I agree with Brenda. Let's forget about the nuts.

Stephanie Gamby:

He was deathly afraid of bees.

Nikki Seelbach:

Do you mean Royal Pane?

Stephanie Gamby:

Of course, I meant Pane. He's the victim, isn't he? Who else would I be talking about?

Nikki Seelbach:

That doesn't mean he was allergic to bees. I'm afraid of guns. That doesn't mean I'm allergic to them.

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

My experience has been that most people don't have a reaction to the gun. It's the bullets what cause all the problems.

Stephanie Gamby:

But what if Royal Pane *was* allergic to bees?

David Ross Enfelder:

Didn't Dottie Kennel bring a jar of home made honey as a gift?

Stephanie Gamby:

That's it! She killed him with honey. Years ago, Royal Pane beat her out for best new novelist. The rumor was that he bought off the judges.

Dottie Kennel:

The honey was for our host. As far as I know, the jar hasn't even been opened.

I Reed Toomuch:

I'm afraid it was, Dottie. I couldn't resist. Your honey was delicious. There was something interesting in the flavor, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it.

David Ross Enfelder:

Maybe it was cyanide. Did it taste like bitter almonds?

Dottie Kennel:

For your information, Mr. Ross Enfelder, it was lavender from my own garden. I have bee hives and make all my own honey. I'm even working with a partner on developing a line of cosmetics based on one hundred percent natural ingredients. Including honey.

June Flemmagardner:

This is all very sweet, literally. But we should focus on the murder. Mr. Toomuch, you said you had this figured out.

I Reed Toomuch:

Thank you, June. Let me get to the point. I believe our victim was allergic to bee venom. Not peanuts. Not honey.

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

What about shellfish? I had an aunt who was allergic to shrimp. Blew up like a balloon every time she ate one. Scared the hell out of me when I was a kid. But she kept on eating them.

Brenda Buckminster:

What happened to her?

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

They found her body in the kitchen one day. There was cocktail sauce on her fingers.

I Reed Toomuch:

I really don't think it was shrimp that killed Royal Pane.

June Flemmagardner:

Maybe it was lobster.

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

I don't know if my aunt was allergic to lobster.

I Reed Toomuch:

It doesn't matter. I'm allergic to all crustaceans, and my staff knows that.

Evelyn Butler:

I would never bring any kind of shellfish into this kitchen.

Thomas Butler:

Besides, it's true Royal Pane was deathly afraid of bees. I heard a number of people say that. I made a list of names for Mr. Toomuch.

I Reed Toomuch:

I've got it right here. Bruce Casket, Dottie Kennel, Brenda Buckminster, Janine Sloviniski and Jim Haymaker.

Thomas Butler:

And you too, sir. Your name was on the list as well.

I Reed Toomuch:

Thank you for pointing that out, Thomas. Much appreciated.

Evelyn Butler:

Are you deliberately *trying* to get us fired, Thomas?

Thomas Butler:

At least I didn't sleep with the victim.

Evelyn Butler:

You agreed we were past all of that!

I Reed Toomuch:

Please, Evelyn and Thomas. Not now. A man has been murdered.

Thomas Butler:

Not soon enough for me.

I Reed Toomuch:

Thomas! I won't warn you again.

Thomas Butler:

I'm sorry sir.

I Reed Toomuch:

Now, if we can get back to the matter at hand. Several people also mentioned the EpiPen Royal Pane pulled out of his bag today while he was looking for reading glasses.

Thomas Butler:

I made a list of those names as well, sir.

Jim Haymaker:

Got a real thing for lists, doesn't he?

Evelyn Butler:

You don't know the half of it.

Thomas Butler:

Being organized is not a sin. Adultery, on the other hand, makes the top ten.

Dottie Kennel:

It's another bloody list.

Evelyn Butler:

Keep it up, Thomas. Just remember, murder is also one of the top ten sins.

Jim Haymaker:

Before long, I think one Butler is going to kill the other Butler. It'll be the first time anybody said, 'It was the butler', and you don't know if they're referring to murderer or the victim.

Vaughn Heartacher:

Has anybody ever tried that angle before? Might make a great mystery.

I Reed Toomuch:

Please. Let's get back to the murder that's already happened. Thomas, read your list of people who knew Royal Pane had an EpiPen and where it was kept.

Thomas Butler:

Yes, sir. Lynn Redmond, Bruce Casket and Dottie Kennel.

Evelyn Butler:

You left out your own name, Thomas.

Thomas Butler:

Thank you, dear.

Evelyn Butler:

Don't mention it. Just helping you to stay organized.

I Reed Toomuch:

Let's not forget when we tried to save Royal Pane, we were unable to find his pen.

Lynn Redmond:

Are you implying one of us removed it, hoping he would get stung and die? The next thing we know, you'll be proposing one of us brought trained bees to the island.

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

What about Dottie Kennel? She just said she raises bees. Maybe she trains them, too. She's probably got a whole squad of trained killers outside. I could've used them in my former life, before I went legit and turned state's evidence.

Dottie Kennel:

The notion that you could train something as simple as a bee to commit homicide on command is ludicrous, Mr. Castelloni.

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

I don't know about that. My uncle Vito trained his nephew to become a button man, and he was dumb as a plate of lasagna.

I Reed Toomuch:

I think we can safely assume, Mr. Castelloni, Royal Pane was not the victim of a trained squad of killer bees. I was referring to research targeted at the development of a new form of synthetic bee venom. This material is both odorless and tasteless. I know because I am funding a portion of the research.

Lynn Redmond:

Sounds like you're confessing to murder.

Jim Haymaker:

Ouch! Mr. Toomuch, I'll bet that stung.

June Flemmagardner:

If bad puns aren't on that list of top ten sins, they should be.

I Reed Toomuch:

I'm not the only person who knows about bee venom. Isn't that right, David?

David Ross Enfelder:

It's true I'm writing a new mystery about a killer who uses a synthetic version of bee venom as the murder weapon. But I gave copies to Lynn Redmond and Bruce Casket for them to review. They could have gotten the idea from me.

Janine Sloviniski:

Bruce discussed the book with me and Dottie. I thought it was a ridiculous premise.

David Ross Enfelder:

That's not what Bruce told me after he read it.

Janine Sloviniski:

Maybe it's not what he said to you, but he agreed with me when I said it was completely implausible. In my country, we have saying. If you want to know who poisoned well, look no further than woman who fetches water.

Evelyn Butler:

Is she saying it was a woman?

Brenda Buckminster:

I think she's saying they don't have indoor plumbing in Tasmaniastan.

Ricky "Blues" Castelloni:

I think the whole idea about a squad of killer bees is more plausible. I even got a title picked out. Murder among the Birds and the Bees.

I Reed Toomuch:

Be that as it may, I think the killer was someone who had access to some of this new bee venom.

Thomas Butler:

It would also have to be someone who knew Royal Pane was going to be one of the guests, sir.

I Reed Toomuch:

That's a good point, Thomas. It would be helpful if we had a list.

Thomas Butler:

I thought you'd never ask.

Evelyn Butler:

I knew it.

Thomas Butler:

That would be me, and you, Evelyn. As well as Mr. Toomuch, obviously. David Ross Enfelder, Bruce Casket, Dottie Kennel, Janine Sloviniski, Jim Haymaker, and Ricky "Blues" Castelloni.

Jim Haymaker:

I'm glad I finally made it onto one of those lists. I was beginning to feel left out.

Nikki Seelbach:

Nobody mentioned my name, yet.

Jim Haymaker:

Hang in there. I'm sure you'll make one before we're through.

Nikki Seelbach:

I'm not sure how to take that.

I Reed Toomuch:

So, in the end, it had to be someone who knew Royal Pane was allergic to bee venom, that he was invited, where he kept his EpiPen, and who had access to synthetic bee venom.

Evelyn Butler:

I remember Mr. Ross Enfelder commenting he was able to procure some, as part of the research for his new book.

Thomas Butler:

And you sir, you had access as well.

I Reed Toomuch:

My supply is locked in my office safe. But I know two others. One of whom was Janine Sloviniski.

Evelyn Butler:

The same woman who was familiar with Mr. Ross Enfelder's new novel for killing victims with bee venom.

Janine Sloveniski:

When I told story about woman fetching water from poisoned well, I was not talking about myself.

Jim Ziskopff:

Sounds like you've been to the well one time too many.

Brenda Buckminster:

You should be poisoned just for coming up with that line.

I Reed Toomuch:

There was one other person who had access. Bee venom is often used as an ingredient in cosmetic products. Isn't that right, Dottie?

Dottie Kennel:

That doesn't prove anything.

I Reed Toomuch:

Thomas, how many lists does that make for Mrs. Kennel?"

Thomas Butler:

All of them.

Nikki Seelbach:

That can't be good.

I Reed Toomuch:

You should all know, that under the circumstances, I asked my staff to search your rooms after Royal Pane was murdered.

June Flemmagardner:

Outrageous!

I Reed Toomuch:

You have my apologies.

Evelyn Butler:

We found an unlabeled jar in Mrs. Kennel's room, with an unknown material inside. Mr. Toomuch says it looks like synthetic bee venom.

I Reed Toomuch:

I'm sure chemical tests will confirm my suspicions. Dottie, please consider yourself under house arrest.

Dottie Kennel:

You had no right to search my luggage. And no search warrant. My lawyer will never allow you to enter that jar as evidence in a court of law.

I Reed Toomuch:

I hope you're right, Dottie. After all, you did us a great service. We all know the victim was a royal pain.