

THE EDITOR (2)

A Daphne Taylor Mystery

Plot Summary - Chapter by Chapter Breakdown

Notes: We have left several details of this story vague, so you can give them a personal touch. You can tailor this outline in several of the following ways to make it unique, without changing the main plot. 1) Daphne Taylor could be much younger and a magazine editor instead of a literary editor. 2) The story may be set in any town, village or community of your choice. 3) Detective Stanton and Daphne (if younger) may be involved romantically. 4) The diamond ring may be found elsewhere than in an old bird's nest. 5) Change the ending – Daphne Taylor confronts her friend's killer and Stanton arrives just in time before Mrs. Gavin's son is ready to kill her.

Part One - Rising Tension

Chapter One

CH 1/ Scene 1 – Daphne Taylor lives a quiet life. She is retired but still working. Perhaps it was an odd concept some years ago, but for Daphne it had been her plan all along. She bowed to the exigencies of her bosses for too many years. Now, however, she is free to work at her own pace, doing what she loves best: editing and writing books. From her apartment's exceptional vista, she can watch the fickle ocean moods, the sandy beach bathing in the sun or soaking in the pouring rain, and the people going about their own lives.

CH 1/ Scene 2 – That Saturday afternoon, Daphne is reading one of the novels she just finished editing when a loud yapping and a woman's scream pulls her abruptly out of her concentration. The distressed dog is now howling from the twenty-first floor balcony across the street, looking down at the inert body of his owner lying on the garden patch below. Daphne's neighbor, Lillian Davros has either committed suicide or has been killed. Without giving a second thought to her work, or her slow-cooking crockery pot she turned on a half-an-hour earlier, Daphne rushes out the door, down the elevator and across the street where she kneels down beside her friend's body.

CH 1/ Scene 3 – The building concierge has already called the police and the ambulance. Nevertheless, Daphne decides that Detective Michael Stanton should be involved. Daphne does not believe for one minute that her friend has committed suicide. Stanton has heard of the incident and tells Daphne he is on his way to her place. He further tells her not to go near Lillian's apartment – to let the forensic team handle the crime scene. Daphne is not happy about the request, but she would not want to be accused later of messing up a crime scene.

CH 1/ Scene 4 – Daphne and Stanton have worked on a couple of cases together, not that Stanton would ever admit it openly, and borne of mutual respect, their relationship has survived a few trying experiences of late. When Stanton arrives, Daphne is in tears. The editor, as she is affectionately called, is going to pieces over Lillian's death. "The woman wouldn't hurt a fly," Daphne tells him between sobs. The detective replies that it may have been an accident. No one knows yet if she fell accidentally, intended to commit suicide or was pushed to her death.

CH 1/ Scene 5 – Daphne is adamant; Lillian would not commit suicide. She had no reason to do so. She was planning to take a cruise to Mexico this winter. She was careful in everything she did. Even when she had no need for it, Lillian would take her cane to walk down to the grocer if it was raining or slippery outside. According to Daphne, Lillian was carefulness personified. As for being pushed, Daphne has no idea at this point who would want her friend dead, and for what reason.

Chapter Two

CH 2/ Scene 1 – As soon as Dr. Riddle arrives on the scene, which has been cordoned off to traffic already, Stanton asks Daphne to accompany him to identify the body before it's taken to the morgue. Daphne agrees reluctantly, but she prefers doing that than watching the scene from her own balcony and

brewing dark thoughts about her friend's death. As Dr. Riddle asks Daphne if she knows the woman, Daphne burst out in renewed sobs and hides her head in Stanton's chest, but not before saying that yes, the woman is her friend, Lillian Davros.

CH 2/ Scene 2 – Sergeant Hancock, Detective Stanton's partner comes out of Lillian's building and asks Daphne if she wants to keep Joker, Lillian's little dog for a day or so until they can make arrangements for him to be taken to the local SPCA. Daphne knows Joker. She has taken him for walks on a couple of occasions and she will be pleased to keep him for a while – maybe she'll adopt him. One thing no one noticed yet is the locket attached to Joker's collar. Daphne does not want to attract the detective's attention to it and takes the dog back to her apartment.

CH 2/ Scene 3 – That evening, once the scene of the crime has been cleared and the forensic team has completed its examination of the garden where Lillian died, and of her apartment, Daphne decides her dinner has cooked long enough and serves herself a plate of stewed vegetables and chicken. Daphne is not a vegetarian, but she prefers vegetables, fish and poultry to pork or beef. Besides, veggies are cheaper. While she is eating her dinner and sharing bits of chicken with Joker, she decides that she will get his food bag and bowl from Lillian's apartment on Monday – when she'll be able to get her key from the building manager's office.

CH 2/ Scene 4 – Later that same evening, Daphne is watching a program on TV while sitting on the couch with Joker lying down beside her. It is then that she remembers Joker's locket. She takes it off the dog's collar and opens it. Inside it, there is a very small note rolled under a key. It looks like a mailbox key. Daphne unrolls the note. It reads: "4u opn sdb 4367 at bk." Daphne immediately understands what it means. The key is for her to open the safety deposit box 4367 at the local bank. So, she was right; Lillian knew she was in danger and she hid something in the safety deposit box at her bank.

CH 2/ Scene 5 – Looking at her watch, Daphne concludes it's too late for her to call Detective Stanton. Besides, the bank will be closed until Monday. She would never be able to get to Lillian's box before then. That's where Daphne is wrong. An investigation doesn't stop because it's the weekend. Daphne returns to watching TV when her cell phone rings. She picks it up distractedly and is surprised to hear Stanton's voice at the other end of the line. The detective wonders if he could bother her for a few minutes before she goes to bed.

Chapter Three

CH 3/ Scene 1 – Daphne tells him that she'd love to share a glass of wine with him – unless he's still on duty – and tell him what she found. Stanton replies that he'll be right over and that he'll have that glass of wine with her. When Daphne asks him if he's had supper already, he hesitates. "Of course you haven't," Daphne tells him. "Just bring your appetite with you," she adds. About fifteen minutes later, Stanton walks in Daphne's apartment. He crouches down to pat Joker's head, and caresses him affectionately. Daphne has already set up a plate with the stew for the detective. As he sits down to eat, Daphne asks him if a bank would open its doors on Sunday if you needed to access a safety deposit box in the course of an investigation.

CH 3/ Scene 2 – After swallowing a mouthful, Stanton says that yes, a bank manager will even open a vault if necessary. But why is Daphne asking. The editor then shows Stanton what she found in Joker's locket. He shakes his head and smiles at his friend. When he finishes his meal, he explains that Lillian's apartment was an absolute mess; that she has definitely been killed and then thrown over the balcony railing. No one noticed the suspect doing it since Lillian did not scream or attract anyone's attention *before* she fell to her death.

CH 3/Scene 3 – On Sunday morning, Stanton comes back to drive Daphne to the bank where the manager and Sergeant Hancock is waiting for them. Daphne shows the key to the manager, gives him the box number while Stanton hands him a warrant to open the box. The four of them go down to the safety deposit boxes' vault and soon open Lillian Davros' box. Inside they find a deed to a villa on one of the islands close to Vancouver. There is also another note in the box. This one reads: "Be a squirrel and find the nest in the oak tree. A treasure awaits you."

CH 3/ Scene 4 – Stanton has no choice; he has to take Daphne and Joker to the island and find the house, the oak tree and hopefully the “treasure”. He feels he’s on a scavenger hunt. What else is there to do on a Sunday? Going to Bowen Island on a sunny morning should make for a pleasant change. Daphne is happy enough. Going to Bowen Island will bring back fond memories, which reminds her that one of her clients wanted her to write a horror story taking place on that island.

Part Two - Main Action

Chapter Four

CH 4/ Scene 1 – When they finally reach the island, it’s time for lunch. Stanton and the editor decide to have a bit to eat at the popular watering hole. They are looking for answers. They question the owner, an older woman, by the name of Mrs. Sliver, who’s apparently lived all her life on the island. She tells the both of them that Lillian was a cagy character. She owned that nice house over the hill. It looks over the ocean side and the beach below. She does not know why but people call it *The Oak Tree House*. Stanton asks if she knows if the house is occupied right now. Mrs. Sliver says that no. The house has been vacated last fall and no one has rented it since then.

CH 4/ Scene 2 – After an excellent lunch, Stanton and Daphne make their way to *The Oak Tree House*. They find it closed and secured, as any rental property on the island would be over the winter. With the keys they have found in the safety deposit box, they open the front door and find themselves in an impressive foyer surrounded of a grand staircase. Daphne never imagined that Lillian owned such a luxurious property. The detective and Daphne split up to search the house more effectively. Once upstairs, they realize that everything in this house is just as it should be. It feels unoccupied such as a display-home in a new development would. But they’re not here to write a review of the property but to find what ever Lillian didn’t want her killer to find.

CH 4/ Scene 3 – When they are in the master bedroom looking through dresser and wardrobe, Daphne throws a distracted glance outside. She stops what she is doing, goes to the bed and lies down. Taken aback, Stanton rushes to the bedside and asks if the old editor is alright. Daphne laughs, gets up and tells the detective to lie down and to tell her what he sees out the window. He complies and soon laughs out loud as he gets up from the bed. “You miserable old woman,” he exclaims as he rushes out, down the stairs and out the door. Daphne and Joker are right behind him.

CH 4/ Scene 4 – Stanton stops under the oak tree that has grown beside the house and whose leafy branches provide shades to the inside of the master bedroom. On one of these branches there is an old nest. Something in that nest scintillated and blinded both Daphne and Stanton when they lay on the bed. No one would have known anything about this – what ever this is – unless they knew to wait until the sun rays hit the nest at that particular hour of the afternoon.

CH 4/ Scene 5 – Using a ladder he found in the garden shed, Stanton climbs up the tree and then makes his way to the branch where the nest is located. It’s not difficult for the athletic young man to reach the little birds’ abode. He pulls out the fine wire mesh from over the nest, which was probably placed there to prevent the birds to pick up the “treasure” beneath it. Stanton then puts his hand in the nest to retrieve a splendid diamond ring. He can’t believe the size of the stone. He never saw one that big. No wonder someone would kill to get it. He will have to find out the jewel’s provenance and its value. But for now he puts it in his jeans pocket and retraces his steps to the ground. When he shows the ring to Daphne, she gasps. “That’s incredible!” she says, admiring the gorgeous diamond radiating in the afternoon sun.

Chapter 5

CH 5/ Scene 1 – Upon their return to town, Stanton drops Daphne off at her place and goes back to the station. The desk sergeant in attendance tells him that a lady has been waiting for him nearly all day. She is having a coffee in the visitors’ room. Stanton makes his way to the room and finds the woman in question sipping on her coffee. She apologizes for intruding on the detective’s Sunday, but she thought important for her to have a word with him before he goes further in his investigation of Lillian Davros’s

death. When asked what her interest in the case is, the woman says that she is Lillian's cousin, Elvira Gavin, and that she only learned of Lillian's death on the late night news the previous day.

CH 5/ Scene 2 – The detective is not too sure as to the veracity of the lady's story, but he's willing to listen. Mrs. Gavin says that they grew up together in Winnipeg and that Lillian married well when she was very young. Her husband was older than she was, but they seemed to love each other very much. When he died, Lillian was devastated and could not bring herself to stay in their house on Bowen Island. Mrs. Gavin and Lillian grew apart and the cousins seldom wrote to each other now. Ultimately, Mrs. Gavin is wondering if Lillian has left a will.

CH 5/ Scene 3 – In such cases as this one, it is quite common for the family to rally around the possibility of an inheritance from the dearly departed. Lillian Davros, however, had no children and up to now, Stanton was not aware of Lillian having made a will. He tells Mrs. Gavin to stay in touch. He will inform her as soon as he has more information about Lillian's will – whether it exists or not.

CH 5/ Scene 4 – This being Sunday afternoon, he does not want to bother Sgt. Hancock with running a background check on Mrs. Gavin and only goes to his office to place the ring in an evidence bag, tag it and put it in the evidence locker together with the other items the officers brought back from Lillian's apartment. When he's done, he bids goodnight to the desk sergeant and leaves the precinct. He is about to unlock his car when he notices that Mrs. Gavin is watching him from her car window.

CH 5/ Scene 5 – Stanton wonders what the woman really wants. "The diamond probably," is his answer. He climbs behind the wheel and decides to phone Daphne. He does not like that she's alone tonight and that Lillian's killer is still at large. Stanton left Daphne to her own device once and she almost paid for her incurable curiosity with her life. When Daphne tells him that she's at the park with Joker and that she'll have dinner at the beach restaurant afterward, he "orders" her to go home and to lock doors and windows. Daphne cracks up laughing: "Detective Stanton; do you remember that I live on the fifteenth floor? Who's going to climb up the building...?" Stanton is not laughing. He reminds her that her friend died from an intruder on the twenty-first floor. He then tells her about Mrs. Gavin and asks the editor if she ever heard Lillian mention her cousin Elvira from Winnipeg.

CH 5/ Scene 6 – Daphne and Joker go home after Daphne told Stanton that Lillian never once mentioned a cousin from Winnipeg in all the years she knew her. She also reminded him that it's easy for anyone to find out when they were married, to whom, and where the couple lived, especially if the man was wealthy as the ring seems to indicate. Is Mrs. Gavin the killer? Perhaps. Yet Daphne would like to find out under what pretext the woman could have intruded on Lillian's privacy, if she was not family.

CH 5/ Scene 7 – The next morning Stanton finds the forensic report on his desk. The finger print analyst is reporting that among the prints found in Lillian's apartment, one set matches the prints the detective submitted the evening before – those he lifted from Mrs. Gavin's cup of coffee, which she drank at the precinct the previous afternoon. The report also states that it will take a few days to compare the two women's DNA but as soon as CSI has an answer for Stanton, he will be the first to know.

Part Three - Resolution

Chapter Six

CH 6/ Scene 1 – Stanton knows he needs to move fast now. Although Daphne is aware of Mrs. Gavin being a suspect in the murder of her friend, the detective would not put it past her to let her into her apartment. When he calls her, Daphne is again out with Joker. He is not happy about it. He tells her that he's going to take Joker to the SPCA if she does not stay home – at least for the day. Daphne has to agree that she puts herself in a precarious position every time she steps out the door. On her way home she buys a box of "pee-pads" for Joker, so she does not have to go for walks with him as often.

CH 6/ Scene 2 – In the meantime, Stanton and Sgt. Hancock run a background check on Mrs. Gavin, try locating Lillian's solicitor – to see if she has made a will – and obtain her bank statements from the manager. Mrs. Elvira Gavin is indeed from Winnipeg. She is also the daughter of Lillian's aunt. However,

Mrs. Gavin has a checkered past. She has been involved in a few share trading infractions, none that would have seen her jailed for any length of time. Nevertheless, the lady loves money and she's broke according to her latest bank records. She flew from Toronto, where she resides currently, on the Thursday before Lillian's death. She stayed in a hotel near her place. When the concierge of Lillian's building identified the lady as the last visitor to phone Lillian from his desk, Stanton is ready to arrest Mrs. Gavin for the murder of her cousin.

CH 6/ Scene 3 – When he calls on Daphne to tell her that he's about to arrest the lady, she tells him that he's wrong. Stanton tries arguing with her until she holds up a hand and asks him to come to her balcony with her. As soon as they're in front of the railing, which is identical to Lillian's, Daphne asks him to imagine a woman lifting her over the railing – even if she was unconscious or dead. Stanton has to admit it would be unlikely for a woman as frail and petite as Mrs. Gavin to lift anyone of Lillian's weight over a balcony railing.

CH 6/ Scene 4 – The only conclusion to draw from that inference is that Mrs. Gavin has (or had) an accomplice. Stanton returns to question the concierge at Lillian's building to find him gone! His replacement is due at any minute. When the young man appears, he tells that Robert called him unexpectedly. Apparently his aunt is very ill and he had to leave to meet her at the hospital. Stanton does not believe a word of that story. On the contrary, he thinks he's found Mrs. Gavin's accomplice. As soon as he's found out details about the fleeing concierge, he phones Daphne to tell her not to open her door to anyone, especially anyone pretending to be from the building management.

CH 6/ Scene 5 – By seven o'clock on the Monday night, Stanton had Mrs. Elvira Gavin and her son, Robert Gavin in the lock-up. They are charged with conspiracy to commit murder. The motive: getting her hands on Lillian's inheritance. Unfortunately, Lillian did not leave her estate to Mrs. Gavin. She has left her fortune to charity and the diamond ring is to be sold at auction; the proceeds to be donated to a charitable organization that looks after the homeless of Vancouver.

CH 6/ Scene 6 – As for Joker, Daphne decides to adopt him and keep him as her “demanding” companion. “He keeps me active and on my toes, and I'm not talking to myself anymore,” Daphne told Detective Stanton when he came to have dinner with *the editor* after the trial.

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