

FATHER JEROME TO THE RESCUE

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) John Culver is indeed a knighted Englishman of ill-repute. 2) The story may be set in any town, village or community of your choice. 3) Inspector Damien may have a bigger role to play. 4) Isaac Fulton may be the killer. He may not want a gay couple occupying his house. 5) Further the ending – Sylvie and Lucie may take over the house and open the resort spa. 6) Change the ending – Cecilia Robinson finds the killer and tries killing him in a fit of rage.

Part One - Rising Tension

Chapter One

CH 1/Scene 1 – This morning, Father Jerome is driving his Austin Martin Mini through the village of Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island, Canada. Although not large or of significance in the grand scheme of things, Father Jerome's parish is of great importance to him. He knows everyone by name and has baptized many. He loves the countryside, the beach, the wintry days even, because he feels he lives in the most beautiful place on earth. The coast is yet unspoiled and still void of the insidious tourist popularity that infects most resort towns in Western Canada.

CH 1/Scene 2 – When Father Jerome arrives at Mrs. Cecilia Robinson's house, he gets out of the car, locks its doors and marches to the front door. He knocks and waits. Cecilia opens it wide – as wide as the grin on her gentle face. Cecilia is the parish secretary and the village's busy body. Today, Cecilia is due to submit the church attendance and donation reports for the past month. She invites Father Jerome to come into the kitchen where a spread of pastries, coffee pot, cups, saucers, creamer and sugar bowl populate the table. Father Jerome, who loves good baking – his pot belly being a fair testimony of it – takes a seat and waits for the lady of the house to serve the coffee. They talk for a while until the subject of "the newcomer" disturbs the good humor of their conversation.

CH 1/Scene 3 – The newcomer is a middle-aged man by the name of John Culver, who is a mystery to most of the villagers. He doesn't belong to any religious denomination and has decidedly intrigued the local gossip mongers. "What is he doing here?" is the question on everyone's lips. He is renting a house on the outskirts of town – on the beachfront no less. In the last week, he's invited a couple of young women from the mainland to his home, to Cecilia's dismay (not to say disgust). "What if he intends to open some sort of brothel in the village, Father?"

CH 1/Scene 4 – Father Jerome leaves Cecilia's house a little perturbed. Nothing good ever comes from rumors and gossips. In the end too many people suffer, most of the time for no good reason. On his way back to the church, and after he paid a visit to a couple who just returned from the hospital with a brand new baby, Father Jerome decides to stop by the newcomer's house. After ringing the doorbell a couple of times, a young man comes to the door, opens it and informs Father Jerome that "Sir" John Culver is not available until 11:30 a.m., when he would have finished his meditation.

CH 1/Scene 5 – Father Jerome is not to be deterred in his purpose and tells the young fellow that he will be back in a half-an-hour to meet with Sir John Culver. Returning to his car, the good Father wonders if "Sir" John is a true nobleman or if it's a title that he's adopted to enhance his sense of self-importance in the community. A half-an-hour later Father Jerome rings the doorbell again and waits. The young fellow re-appears at the door at the same time as the two of them hear a scream emanating from the room just above the front door.

Chapter Two

CH 2/Scene 1 – Father Jerome pushes past the young man, looks around the foyer, climbs the stairs and stops in front of the door, which he supposes would open into the bedroom from which he heard a man yell in horror. Father Jerome tries the doorknob – it's locked. The young man tells Father Jerome that he

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will get the keys from the cloak room and rushes down the stairs. Father Jerome checks the door one more time and surprisingly, the door gives way under the priest's heavy body when he leans against it.

CH 2/Scene 2 – What Father Jerome finds in the room is nothing short of astonishing. *Sir* John Culver is lying spread-eagle on the floor in front of the open window, an arrow protruding from his heart. Father Jerome kneels down beside the body, crosses himself and mumbles a quick prayer for the “dearly departed”. When he stands up, the silence permeating the place is almost oppressive. The young fellow who opened the door is gone. Father Jerome calls his friend, Constable Rainer on his cell phone, tells him what happened and where he is.

CH 2/Scene 3 – When Constable Rainer arrives at the house, he finds the front door wide open, and Father Jerome sitting on an upholstered bench alongside the staircase. Constable Rainer has known the old priest since he was a boy. He knows Father Jerome is not to be rushed. He always tells a story completely without omitting a detail, but you need to wait until the good father is ready to regale his audience. In this instance Father Jerome doesn't seem prepared to tell a story, nor does he utter a word before he leads the way upstairs to the bedroom.

CH 2/Scene 4 – Rainer has never seen a dead body – certainly not one with an arrow protruding from his chest – in his lifetime. He turns around, puts his hand to his mouth and runs to the nearby bathroom to throw up. When he returns to the bedroom he finds Father Jerome talking to Inspector Robert Damien of the island's Eastern Precinct. The inspector is already trying to ascertain the arrow's trajectory and its point of release from the bow. It is obvious that it has been shot straight through the window within moments of Father Jerome ringing the doorbell for the second time. However, before they can confirm the time of death, they have to hear what the medical examiner has to say.

CH 2/Scene 5 – When Wilbert Daniels steps through the doorway of the bedroom, he shakes his head. Wilbert Daniels has been the regional ME for more years than he cares to count, but this is a first for him. He greets Father Jerome and Inspector Damien perfunctorily and begins his examination of the body while his men come up with the gurney to take the deceased away. As soon as he's finished examining the defunct and has taken his temperature, Wilbert announces that John Culver couldn't have died earlier than thirty minutes ago. He will confirm the time after the autopsy.

Chapter Three

CH 3/Scene 1 – Father Jerome groans his annoyance. He knows now that the scream he heard could not have come from the man lying on the bedroom floor. He also knows that the young man who opened the door to him twice is most certainly involved in this affair. Wilbert Daniels tells the inspector that he will have an autopsy report on his desk by the next day. Inspector Damien is stumped. There is possibly no witness to the murder; there's no one in the house; the only man who could have provided some information about the dead man has flown the coop.

CH 3/Scene 2 – Father Jerome is definitely annoyed. He doesn't like to be snared into a dilemma. He likes things to be clear, clean-cut and fully explained. However, right now, nothing is clear – muddy is more like it – nothing is clean-cut and nothing can be explained. After bidding good-morning to the inspector and the Victoria CSI team who has just arrived, Father Jerome returns to Cecilia's house.

CH 3/Scene 3 – The lady is in the middle of preparing lunch. Father Jerome takes a seat at the kitchen table and finally tells his secretary what happened. Flabbergasted, to say the least, Cecilia slumps down in a chair and begins asking a slew of pertinent and not so pertinent questions about the case. Amongst the pertinent questions is one to which Father Jerome will need to find an answer: “Who is an archer in the village?”

CH 3/Scene 4 – The news spreads like the proverbial wild fire. John Culver is dead. To some, it simply means, “good riddance; another one of these weirdoes gone for good”. For others it means there is a criminal element amongst them; someone who's not afraid to kill in cold blood, because this isn't a mere hunting accident. It is a deliberate and calculated act of malice. When Sunday comes around, no one is

closer to an answer. John Culver was practically an unknown entity in the village while he was alive and now very much a stranger in death.

Part Two - Main Action

Chapter Four

CH 4/Scene 1 – As soon as Inspector Robert Damien receives the autopsy reports, which confirms the time of death, he takes his car and travels to Qualicum Beach. He finds Father Jerome in the rectory garden, tending to his roses. The two men talk for a little while until the Father asks the inspector if he's looked into the dead man's background. "Yes," is the answer. In fact, John Culver was known to the police in Eastern Canada for running a high-class escort agency. He came to Vancouver Island ostensibly to do the same.

CH 4/Scene 2 – The two women John Culver had invited to his home prior to his death learn of the man's demise in the newspaper. They are not at all happy with this turn of events. Apparently, they have invested in John Culver's prospective enterprise and wonder how they could recoup their money without getting involved with the police and their questions. They decide to visit the village as tourists and to listen to the gossips before doing anything.

CH 4/ Scene 3 – In the meantime, Inspector Damien informs Father Jerome that they're looking for an arbalest – not a bow. That information puts another dimension to the investigation. Not only will they need to find an archer, but one that uses a crossbow or arbalest. Archery – with bow and arrow – is a well-practiced sport on the island, but Father Jerome has yet to see anyone armed of an arbalest. "These things are the devils," he tells the inspector. But if it is an arbalest that he should find, it is an arbalest that he will locate.

CH 4/ Scene 4 – In the next two days, Father Jerome walks through the woods overlooking John Culver's house. Armed of binoculars, the Father tries to find the spot from which the fatal arrow could have been launched. On the third day and with Wilbert Daniels' helpful distance-shot calculations, Father Jerome finally finds the location where the archer must have been standing when he aimed his crossbow.

CH 4/ Scene 5 – However, at first glance, there is no clue as to who the person could have been. The rain has now washed out any evidence of anyone standing in that spot. Nevertheless, with the determination of a pit-bull, Father Jerome continues his search for the smallest indication of someone being there. When he finds a cigarette butt beneath a leaf, he is hopeful. When he finds a second and a third butt down the hill from where the archer must have been standing, he is more than hopeful; he is certain the forensic guys will determine who smoked these cigarettes.

Chapter 5

CH 5/ Scene 1 – When the following Sunday comes around, the two ladies from the mainland arrive at the church to attend mass. Surprised but not unduly so, Father Jerome inquires – discreetly of course – as to why they are visiting the village so late in the season. Sylvie and Lucie tell Father Jerome that they learned of their friend's demise and they wanted to pay their respects to his family, "if they were here?"

CH 5/ Scene 2 – Father Jerome learns from Sylvie and Lucie that, while in Vancouver, John Culver lived with a young man named Gabriel Simpson. They think that John and Gabriel were more than "friends", which detail seems to shock Cecilia, who's been eavesdropping on the ladies' conversation with Father Jerome. Sylvie then informs the Father that she and Lucie have documents (with their solicitors) proving that they lent a large sum of money to John Culver to start a spa and retreat resort in Qualicum Beach.

CH 5/ Scene 3 – Father Jerome asks Cecilia to see to the ladies' "comfortable stay" at the local B&B and to ensure that what ever she heard during his conversation with the two women does not go any further than her ears. Cecilia agrees reluctantly. She has a quilting party organized for the next day, and she will be "forced" to reveal what she knows to her dearest and closest friends. Of course, they will keep all this hush-hush as they always do. Next, Father Jerome needs to find out who the person who screamed was.

It was the voice of a man. To find the answer to that question, he must first find this Gabriel Simpson person.

CH 5/ Scene 4 – An APB is sent out to all precincts in and around Vancouver Island and the Lower Mainland to locate Gabriel Simpson. Inspector Damien finds out that Gabriel is actually on parole and had been employed by John Culver shortly after his release from prison. Gabriel's only crime was to have stolen a few gadgets from the local electronic store. He is not considered a menace to society and is not known to carry a weapon of any sort – not even an arbalast. Gabriel does not smoke either.

CH 5/Scene 5 – After examining the cigarette butts that Father Jerome has discovered in the woods across from the villa where John Culver was killed, the CSI team in Victoria reports to the inspector that the DNA on one of the butts belongs to a man named Isaac Fulton. Fulton is the owner of the villa where John Culver lost his life. Fulton is apprehended and questioned by Inspector Damien at the Precinct.

CH 5/Scene 6 – That leaves Father Jerome with that last nagging question to be answered; “Who screamed when I rang the doorbell for the second time?” To find the answer to this question, Father Jerome retraces the possible steps the person might have taken going into and out of John Culver's bedroom. Since the scene of the crime has now been “released”, Father Jerome is able to walk about the house unimpeded. During his thorough examination of the premises, he notes that there is a relatively easy way in and out of the house through an old coal cellar. He believes the “bedroom screamer” ran out using the coal cellar exit. “But who is the blighter?” he asks himself for the umpteenth time.

CH 5/Scene 7 – A day later, Inspector Damien phones Father Jerome to tell him that they located Gabriel Simpson. He ran away because he was scared to be accused of the murder of his “friend”. “No” he does not know how to handle a crossbow. “Yes” John Culver was opening a spa in Qualicum Beach in a year or so. “Yes” he knows Sylvie and Lucie. He met them in Vancouver when John Culver first arrived in Western Canada.

Part Three - Resolution

Chapter Six

CH 6/ Scene 1 – Father Jerome is not happy. Somehow he does not believe Isaac Fulton or Gabriel Simpson have anything to do with the murder of John Culver. He believes that when they will find the “screamer”, they will find the killer. Upon Gabriel's release from custody, Father Jerome invites the young man to have a cupper with him at the rectory. He asks Cecilia to attend their conversation and to take notes – if Gabriel doesn't mind, of course. During the meeting, Gabriel starts to relax a little, knowing that no one can arrest him now. He's told the police everything they wanted to know.

CH 6/Scene 2 – However, what Inspector Damien failed to ask Gabriel was the name of the other man who lived with him and John Culver at the villa. Gabriel is hesitant at first, but when Father Jerome reminds him that being an accessory to murder is just as bad as being the killer, Gabriel caves in. Lyndon Markham is a friend of Gabriel. They have known each other since childhood. Lyndon is an archer – his favorite pastime. Gabriel does not know for a fact that Lyndon shot John Culver, but he suspects him.

CH 6/Scene 3 – Why did Lyndon scream? Father Jerome finds out the answer when Inspector Damien finally locates Lyndon on Bowen Island. Lyndon grew to hate John Culver because he knew the man would take Gabriel away from him. He could not accept to move on with his life without Gabriel. When he first came to the village and inquired as to who owned the house John Culver was renting, he found Isaac Fulton. The latter showed Lyndon where he could observe the “couple” from the nearby woods.

CH 6/Scene 4 – On the day, Lyndon saw John Culver embrace Gabriel in front of the window of the upstairs bedroom. He could not resist aiming at John Culver and firing the arrow that killed him. Unsure of what he had possibly done, he ran back to the house and came in via the coal cellar. He reached the bedroom, within moments of Father Jerome ringing the doorbell, to discover the body of John Culver in front of the window. He screamed in horror at the realization of what he had done.

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