

FATHER JEROME – Book 6

The Accidental Monk

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) Father Jerome may have known or recognized Laura – the first victim. 2) The story may be set in any town, village or community of your choice. 3) The Bishop may have been the one with contacts in Brazil (rather than Père Joseph). 4) The courier might have kept the emeralds and only killed the two women to prevent them from speaking to the priests or police. 5) Change the ending – The courier is found and arrested before the accidental monk has to leave Canada.

Part One - Rising Tension

Chapter One

CH 1/Scene 1 – This morning Father Jerome is on his way to Horseshoe Bay, near Vancouver. He has an appointment with Joseph Landrieu, a young monk who wants to dedicate his life to working in West Africa. Joseph was brought up in Qualicum Beach, a small coastal village on Vancouver Island, Canada. Although not large or of significance in the grand scheme of things, Father Jerome's parish of Qualicum Beach 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 – Joseph is an accident waiting to happen. He was born in a taxi – accidentally. He became a priest because he fell off his bike in front of Father Jerome's church – accidentally. He vowed to become a monk because he bumped into a white monk while visiting Montreal three summers ago – accidentally. Père Joseph is now affectionately known as the "accidental monk". It seems that everything he does, every decision he makes happens by accident. Today is no different. He was waiting for Father Jerome at the corner café facing the beach near the ferry terminal on Horseshoe Bay, when a woman fell faint and then died at his feet in front of the terrace – accidentally.

CH 1/Scene 3 – As Father Jerome disembarks from the ferry, and drives toward the village of Horseshoe Bay, he notices the police cars, ambulance and a group of gawking thrill seekers gathered near the café where he is to meet Père Joseph. When Father Jerome asks Joseph what happened, the young monk replies that he has no idea. He claims he does not know the woman and when he knelt down to help her, he knew she was dying. With her last breath she handed Père Joseph a piece of paper. The latter shows the piece of paper to Father Jerome as the local detective arrives on the scene.

CH 1/Scene 4 – The detective introduces himself as DI Jackson – Horseshoe Bay Precinct. He asks Père Joseph what his relation to the victim is. Joseph is quick to reply that he doesn't know the woman. When DI Jackson asks what Father Jerome is doing here, he says that he came from Vancouver Island to meet with Père Joseph before he is to leave for Africa. Father Jerome does not mention the piece of paper the lady gave Joseph before she passed away. Satisfied that the two clerics have probably nothing to do with the victim, DI Jackson leaves them but asks them to give their contact details to the constable.

CH 1/Scene 5 – When Father Jerome and Père Joseph are finally left alone, Father Jerome unfolds the piece of paper and reads: "Ariadne needs your help – 604-777-3845." Father Jerome concludes that the piece of paper was given to the lady before she died and her death was probably to prevent her from contacting the person who has that phone number. On the other hand, Père Joseph appears curious to know who the victim is. He gets up from the bench where both clerics were sitting outside the café and approaches DI Jackson with the question: "May I ask the lady's name to remember her in my prayers?" DI Jackson is not a loquacious man. He answers, "Don't bother, Father, there'll be plenty people to pray for her soul once we know who she is."

Chapter Two

CH 2/Scene 1 – As soon as Père Joseph and Father Jerome get to the Father's car in the parking lot behind the café, Father Jerome takes his phone out of his pocket and punches the number on the note. A lady answers. Father Jerome asks if she is Ariadne. Yes, is the answer. The Father then asks if he and Père Joseph could pay her a visit. They've been asked by a friend to help, he says. "Did Laura send you?" she asks. Hoping that he's not lying, Father Jerome answers that yes, *Laura* gave him a note with Ariadne's phone number.

CH 2/Scene 2 – A half-an-hour later Père Joseph and Father Jerome are invited to sit in the living room of Ariadne's house. She is an elderly lady who looks a little taken aback by seeing two priests (one of them dressed in a white habit and the other in a black cassock) sitting on the sofa. Father Jerome slowly and carefully explains what happened at the café and shows Ariadne the note Laura (presumably) has given Père Joseph before she passed. Ariadne is silent for a long moment before she nods and agrees to reveal the reasons for which Laura thought she needed help.

CH 2/Scene 3 – Just as she is about to speak, Ariadne slumps back in her chair and closes her eyes. Father Jerome rushes to her. When he bends down to check for a pulse (and finds none) he notices a tiny puncture mark near the jugular vein. He immediately wonders if it could be a pin that was blown into her neck from outside the kitchen window. Père Joseph agrees with Father Jerome – it could be a curare dart. He adds that he didn't notice the same at the base of Laura's neck, but it doesn't mean it was not there.

CH 2/Scene 4 – Father Jerome knows the drill – do not touch anything before the police arrive. Both men sit down on the sofa again and wait for DI Jackson to arrive. When he does, he is very suspicious, of course. Both men were at the scene of the first incident and now, they're at the scene of the second incident. When he asks both men what brought them to the lady's house, Father Jerome shows the detective inspector the note. DI Jackson is furious. Father Jerome is in trouble. He has tampered with evidence, and he knows it. However, he trusts in God's understanding and benevolence. He hopes to be able to solve that mystery to appease DI Jackson's anger.

CH 2/Scene 5 – Knowing the clerics are probably in the clear, and not wanting their further interference in these two crimes, DI Jackson sends both men back to Qualicum Beach. Père Joseph objects. He says that he's due to fly out of the country in a week to join his abbot in Paris to return to Africa. DI Jackson tells him that he doesn't think a week will be sufficient to clear this matter up. Père Joseph accompanies Father Jerome back to Qualicum Beach. They're both short of questions and truly out of answers. When they arrive at the rectory, Cecilia Robinson, Father Jerome's secretary-cum-housekeeper is waiting for them. The bishop has left two messages already saying Father Jerome is wanted for questioning...!

Chapter Three

CH 3/Scene 1 – Before he contacts the bishop, Father Jerome phones his friend, Detective Inspector Robert Damien at the South Vancouver Island Precinct. The Father tells him the whole story and asks what he thinks they should do. The answer is simple: both Père Joseph and Father Jerome should return to Horseshoe Bay if they're wanted for questioning. Inspector Damien knows that Father Jerome has probably stumbled on some sort of feud between old South American families, but does not say anything to the Father.

CH 3/Scene 2 – However, Father Jerome finds it strange that the bishop would be already informed of his involvement in this case and that DI Jackson did not contact him personally – the detective has his statement now and has all his contact information in hand. Father Jerome makes his feelings known to Père Joseph. The latter suggests phoning the bishop anyway and perhaps asking if both of them could pay him a visit – pretext: Père Joseph going back to West Africa to accompany the Canadian medical team with their next lot of Ebola vaccines.

CH 3/Scene 3 – The bishop is very surprised to hear the story and, as curious as the man is, he wants to see both Father Jerome and Père Joseph at the first opportunity. When asked if someone from the

bishopric phoned Cecilia, the bishop answers that, to his knowledge, no one has phoned the Qualicum Beach parish today or any other day for that matter. After lunch, Father Jerome and Père Joseph go over the cases again. They make notes of everything they remember seeing (or not seeing) near and around each crime scene. The only thing that Père Joseph noted about Laura – the lady who died at the café – is that she appeared much younger than Ariadne. There was no family resemblance between the two women. As for Father Jerome noticing anything out of the ordinary in Ariadne's house; it was the fact that there was no family picture anywhere in the living room. Of course, there might have been some in the bedrooms. Moreover, it was strange to find a woman idle in the middle of the morning. Generally the old ladies always have things to do, unless they're invalids or not easily mobile.

CH 3/Scene 4 – Father Jerome concludes that Ariadne did not live in that house. Perhaps it was Laura's house. And the phone number was Ariadne's cell-phone number. But why would Ariadne be in Laura's home. Or was it that she did not want anyone to know where she, herself, lived. And, who would want the two women dead? Besides, who wants Father Jerome to return to Horseshoe Bay?

Part Two - Main Action

Chapter Four

CH 4/Scene 1 – DI Jackson does not sleep on his laurels. He is quick to find out that Laura Albert was Ariadne Silver's niece. Laura Albert was in fact the owner of the house where Ariadne died. Both women, according to the local ME died of curare poisoning. The minute darts the ME recovered from the women's necks contained enough of the poison to kill several people. These blow darts are probably sold on the internet – difficult to trace their provenance. Meanwhile, Inspector Damien, on Vancouver Island, doesn't like what he heard from Father Jerome. What if the killer is now after the Father or even after Père Joseph for no other reason than they were both in Ariadne Silver's house when she was killed?

CH 4/Scene 2 – Inspector Damien phones DI Jackson. The two detectives know each other for having worked together in the past. DI Jackson tells Damien that one of the reasons why he sent Father Jerome back to the island is because they witnessed the second crime and the perpetrator is probably afraid the Father would know by now what this is all about. The two men decide to provide protection to the clerics and to keep in touch about the case.

CH 4/ Scene 3 – As soon as Father Jerome and Père Joseph come off the ferry the next morning, the Father notices a vehicle following them down the highway leading to downtown Vancouver. They do not want to reveal the location of the bishop's house and drive to some other place in town. Father Jerome's cousin has a house near one of the highway's exit ramp. Luckily, this being Saturday, the cousin is at home. Father Jerome makes the introduction and both visitors are invited indoors. Once Father Jerome explains what's happening to his cousin, he phones the bishop to let him know that he has to defer their meeting. The latter tells the Father that DI Jackson has contacted him and that it will be better for the two priests to stay away from any of their usual haunts. He also tells Father Jerome that an unmarked car is possibly following them – it's for their protection.

CH 4/ Scene 4 – Neither Father Jerome nor Père Joseph has ever been chased by criminals before. It's all new to them. Cousin Joshua suggests that both change clothes. They're too "visible". A half-an-hour later, both priests come out of the house dressed in casual attire – jeans, t-shirt, light jacket. They carry a bag that contains their habit and cassock. Cousin Joshua also suggests using his car for a few days – less "visible" than the Father's Austin Mini. When the two clergymen pull out of Cousin Joshua's driveway, even the police officer in the unmarked car, parked a couple of blocks away almost let them go past him and be on their way before he recognizes them.

CH 4/ Scene 5 – Meanwhile, DI Jackson and Inspector Damien are hard at work trying to find a motive for the two women's murders. Without any obvious reason for the killings, the two detectives run a background check on the ladies. It turns out that Ariadne was once married to an antique dealer who dabbled in the purchasing and re-selling of precious stones, Brazilian emeralds being his favorites. At the last report from the Customs and Excise Office, Ariadne was suspected to still holding a cache of emeralds somewhere in Laura's house when she was killed. That house is a heritage home with nooks

and crannies everywhere. DI Jackson loses no time to send the forensic people on a scavenging hunt for the Brazilian emeralds.

Chapter 5

CH 5/ Scene 1 – Nevertheless, both detectives wonder why killing Ariadne before she had a chance to retrieve the emeralds from their hiding place. Again, Inspector Damien is worried about his favorite priest. *What if Ariadne has given the emeralds to Father Jerome already or what if the phone number has another significance*, which thought leads him to conclude that Ariadne's cell phone must reveal some indication of the location of the emeralds.

CH 5/ Scene 2 – As soon as Damien tells Jackson that he thinks the location of the emeralds might be written somewhere on Ariadne's cell phone, Jackson retrieves the phone from their evidence carton and gives it to his IT girl to examine. In no time the young woman tells the detective that after looking at a few texts and emails, she noticed that Ariadne kept referring to the fireplace in Laura's house. Again, Jackson doesn't wait. He contacts the forensic guys and tells them to look for a canister, box or anything that could contain a dozen stones. Ten minutes later, DI Jackson receives a call from the Chief Forensic Officer saying that they located the stones behind one of the decorative bricks surrounding the hearth.

CH 5/ Scene 3 – Now that they have recovered the stones, DI Jackson and Inspector Damien want to find out the reason for the senseless killings. No criminal in their right mind would kill his prey before knowing the answer to his question. In this instance, the location of the stones. Besides which, neither detective understands why killing Ariadne just before she was probably about to reveal the location of the emeralds. "It doesn't make sense."

CH 5/ Scene 4 – Once the stones are locked in the evidence room, Inspector Damien calls Father Jerome to ask him to come to the Horseshoe Bay Precinct with Père Joseph. He doesn't tell the Father why their presence is suddenly required. Father Jerome is however happy to oblige – he was getting tired to drive around the city. When the priests arrive at the precinct, Inspector Damien takes Father Jerome aside. He wants to talk to him privately. Father Jerome is at a loss to know what this is all about. Damien tells the priest that they have recovered the stones. They were safely kept in a lined canister which also contained a note. This note is an explanation. When Father Jerome reads the note in question, he crosses himself and asks God to forgive the child for his trespasses – they were well meant.

CH 5/Scene 5 – In the meantime, DI Jackson has invited Père Joseph to sit in the interview room where he proposes to have a conversation with him as soon as Father Jerome is free. A few minutes later, DI Jackson reappears in the interview room and sits down across from the young monk. Père Joseph knows what's coming, but refuses to speak until his attorney is present. Father Jerome and Inspector Damien are observing the young man from behind the two-way mirror.

Part Three - Resolution

Chapter Six

CH 6/ Scene 1 – Father Jerome returns his car to Cousin Joshua and takes his own vehicle back. He takes the opportunity to don his cassock again. While at Joshua's house, he phones Cecilia on the island saying that he won't be back that night. He will stay in Horseshoe Bay with Father Connelly (the local parish priest) to be in hand if Joseph needs him. The bishop is the next person on Father Jerome's phone list. He advises the man that Père Joseph will probably be arrested tonight on suspicion of having conspired to commit murder. The bishop cannot believe what he's hearing. Joseph is a good young man. "Why would he do such a thing?" he asks Father Jerome.

CH 6/Scene 2 – Father Jerome has no logical explanation to offer yet. He suggests however for the bishop to call the mission's abbot and advise him that Père Joseph will not make the return trip to West Africa this time. The bishop agrees and tells the Father that he will keep him informed if there's any follow-up to be done. When Father Jerome returns to the precinct, as expected, Père Joseph has been arrested. However, DI Jackson is still puzzled. Why having the murders committed before the stones' hiding place was revealed. "It doesn't make sense," he repeats for the umpteenth time.

CH 6/Scene 3 – As soon as Père Joseph’s attorney arrives (finally) the young monk is ready to talk. He tells DI Jackson that his mission needed money desperately. The vaccines cost a fortune: much more than the mission’s coffers contained. The Vatican, on the other hand, was slow in granting a loan to the mission. Père Joseph could only see one way out of this nightmare. He contacted a friend of his in Rio de Janeiro. The friend agreed to help and sent the canister of emeralds to Ariadne. Père Joseph was to meet “a woman” at the café on the fateful morning, together with Father Jerome. When Laura was killed at his feet, he thought he better keep the whole thing a secret for the time being.

CH 6/Scene 4 – When Ariadne was about to talk, Joseph hoped she would reveal where the stones were. Unfortunately, she got killed instead. Père Joseph’s only crime, as far as he’s concerned, is not to have shared with the police what he knew about the emeralds. He is sure the courier – the person who brought the emeralds to Canada – is the culprit. He probably wanted to sell the stones to local jewelers for a hefty profit and “disappear into the night” as it were.

CH 6/Scene 5 – “Now, that makes more sense,” DI Jackson has to concede once the interview is over. He still has to contact Père Joseph’s friend in Rio to confirm the gift and the story. As for finding the courier – the murderer – he will pull all stops and cancel all of his officers’ leave of absence until the criminal is found. No one is killing two women in the space of a few minutes on his patch without being caught. Last, since the stones are not intended to be sold in Canada and truly belong to the West African Mission now, they are returned to Père Joseph with Customs & Excise’s blessings.

CH 6/Scene 6 – The next morning, Father Jerome returns to Qualicum Beach, driving his precious Mini, in company of Père Joseph. The latter will spend the last week of his stay in Canada in Father Jerome’s company and delight in Cecilia’s fantastic cooking (and baking).

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