

The Mystery of the Dead Brother

The scorching sun glared overhead as the sleek black Mercedes jerked to a halt beside the police station. Rumbling to a stop next to the faded brick building, the driver's seat swung open and a young woman stepped out. Her golden-brown curls bounced around her face as she scanned the building with clear blue eyes. As a private detective, she had been called to the police station when a challenging case had stumped them. She had received a phone call that morning about a mysterious death of a man, and according to the frantic voice on the other end of the phone they had found the man's body on the side of the road. Wobbling to the entrance of the station on her unsteady high-heels, she was greeted at the door by the police captain, Captain Gordon. He glanced at her breathlessly, remarking, "I'm glad you're here, Natasha Johnson! We haven't been able to figure out this case."

Natasha murmured a greeting in reply as Captain Gordon directed her through a maze of corridors in the building to the morgue. According to the captain, the victim's name was Chris Bane. As she stepped inside the cold, brightly lit room, an overpowering stench of decay rolled out to meet her. Forcing herself not to draw back at the smell, she approached the dead body sprawled across the metal table. Immediately she noticed a long, jagged wound stretching across the victim's chest, as if somebody had stabbed the man, which had resulted in his death. "It's a knife wound," she muttered to the Captain, who stood anxiously beside her. "If we can find the knife, we might be able to find the killer."

Half an hour later, Natasha and the Captain arrived at the road where the body had been discovered. Clambering out of the car, Natasha turned to the Captain, instructing him to look in the bushes for the weapon that was used to murder the victim. The sharp tang of blood wafted in the air, and dark scarlet stains had discolored the dirt along the road. Several scrubby bushes grew in clumps near the road. Natasha prodded through the plants, separating the leaves carefully for any signs of a weapon. As she was looking through a bush, the reflective glint of steel caught her eye. Reaching forward, she parted the leaves and picked up a long, sharp knife that was covered in dried blood. Her eyes glittered with excitement.

The Captain hurried over eagerly. "You found it!" he exclaimed. "Now we have to find out who it belongs to."

Natasha inspected the knife closer, feeling a rush of recognition when she noticed the brand name on the blade. "This isn't just any knife," she said. "It's a rare

kind that you can only buy from Jack's Chef Supplies, which is a fancy cooking shop nearby!"

Captain Gordon's eyes flared with excitement. They scrambled inside the car and sped to Jack's Chef Supplies, happily exceeding the speed limits because they were allowed to. When they arrived a short time later, they burst inside the shop and demanded the owner, "Has anyone recently bought a knife like this?" She delicately removed the knife from the plastic evidence bag and presented it to the owner.

The owner appeared to be slightly taken aback by the smears of dried blood covering the blade, but he started searching through his recent sales records, typing frantically on his keyboard. Finally, he raised his eyes to peer at Natasha through his glasses and gave a tentative nod. "Our most recent customer who bought that knife was Roger Bane."

"Roger Bane . . ." the detective muttered. Then her blue eyes grew round. "Bane!" she exclaimed. She whirled around to face the startled captain. "Isn't it obvious? The victim's last name is Bane, just like Roger Bane! They might be related! Let's go pay him a visit!"

Captain Gordon could barely contain his enthusiasm. "Let's go!" The store owner stared after them in bewilderment as they rushed out to the car and rumbled off towards Roger Bane's home.

When they arrived, the car jerked to a halt beside a flawless white mansion. Climbing out of the driver's seat, Natasha paused to stare up at it in utter amazement. A maroon Mercedes was parked in the driveway, and when Natasha peered inside the dark tinted windows, she let out a gasp of horror when she saw dark crimson blood staining the leather seats. "This has to be the killer's house," she confirmed grimly.

They hammered on the front door, and a moment later the door swung open to reveal a tall, muscular man that towered over both of them. Natasha glared up at him, forcing herself not to take a step back. "Are you Mr. Bane?" Natasha demanded.

The man stared at them warily. After a heartbeat's hesitation, he nodded. "Yes, I'm Roger Bane. What do you want?"

Natasha trained her eyes on his hazel ones, not letting him glance away. "Mr. Bane, would you be in any way related to Chris Bane?"

She watched his face for any reaction to the name of the person he had murdered, any twitch of a muscle or flash of surprise in his eyes, but his face remained calmly indifferent. "Yes, I'm his brother."

Natasha and the captain exchanged a glance before Captain Gordon inquired, “He was found dead this morning. Would you have anything to do with this?”

For a heartbeat, Natasha could see a glitter of surprise and guilt in his eyes, and he steadily lowered his gaze. “I—I don’t know, sir,” he muttered.

Natasha wasn’t convinced. “We found his body on the roadside last night, with this knife in the bushes.” She drew out the long, glinting blade and dangled it in front of his face, satisfied when she saw a flash of recognition and fear in his eyes.

Still, he attempted to deny his involvement. “I don’t have anything to do with that knife. In fact, I’ve never seen one like it before in my life. I didn’t kill my brother, if that’s what you’re thinking.”

“Is that so?” Natasha questioned. “Then why is the inside of your car covered in blood?”

“I . . .” He struggled to find an excuse for a moment, and then stuttered, “I had a really bad nosebleed.”

They had heard enough of his feeble excuses. “You are under arrest for murdering your brother,” Captain Gordon announced, whipping out a pair of shiny metal handcuffs.

“Alright, alright, I admit it!” Roger Bane confessed helplessly. “I murdered my brother.”

“Why?” Natasha demanded.

“My father is about to die and he was going to give half of his fortune to my brother and the other half to me. But I needed all the money to pay off a gambling debt,” Bane sputtered, as the steel handcuffs bound his wrists together behind his back. As they shoved him into the backseat of the car to take him to the police station, Natasha felt a rush of satisfaction that she had been able to figure out this challenging crime and put another criminal behind bars. *Case closed*, she thought.