

The last case of Aelfric Murphy

by Joke Bertram

Aelfric Murphy wasn't happy to be stood up by his boss. Even worse was the fact that his new case took place in Ireland. Ireland - the home of trolls, elves and drunkards. And additionally he should play babysitter for a new detective. A young woman, her name was Eythora Karlsson, and for him her name sounded as weird as the fact that a young woman could apply for the Criminal Investigation Department (C.I.D.). In Detective Chief Inspector Murphy's opinion a woman should stay at home, raise the children and clean the house, even in the 21st century. But a crime scene is absolutely the wrong place for a woman.

Detective Inspector Eythora Karlsson wasn't surprised when she saw her new British colleague appearing in her office, with no smile and a wrinkle between his eyes. She had already heard that he wasn't amused by women with guns. But unfortunately, he was one of the best detectives Great Britain had to offer and the parents of their new victim committed to him.

"Mr. Murphy, pleasure to meet you. My name is Eythora Karlsson and I'm the leading Detective Inspector in this case. I hope we'll solve this case as well as we can." "It's Detective Chief Inspector Murphy for you, Ms. Karlsson", he murmured into his short beard. "So, tell me what do we have? I don't want to spend too much time in this goddamn city and I like doing my work as perfect as possible. Just 'good' is not enough." "It's our case, not yours!" Karlsson answered still smiling. Then she led him into a small room stuffed full with folders and a whiteboard in front of a small desk and some chairs. Pinned on the whiteboard hung some photos and a short profile was written with an ornamental handwriting.

"Our victim is Hayley Cunningham, she's 19 and was an aspiring ballerina at the Ireland National Ballet. She broke down two days ago, during a rehearsal for the Nutcracker and died within the next hour in the hospital. First, they thought it was a circulatory disorder but our pathologist found out that she showed signs of being poisoned. That's all we have at the moment." "Do I understand you correctly? You ordered me to come to Dublin, but all you have is the most obvious information anybody could get. Don't you, and young people in general, use those weird "wanted" posters on your computers and cell phones?" he asked reproachful. "We already checked it. But she was disciplined and had no Facebook profile or Twitter account. She did not exist on the internet. And by the way, not everyone under 60 is using social networks. Besides, we know how to compile a profile for victims and culprits, but the current information is all we have about her."

Detective Chief Inspector Murphy wasn't really pleased about the amateur he had to work with but decided to try his best, especially because of the meaning this case had for him. It would be his last one before announcing his retirement. And maybe the blonde, young Detective Karlsson could help him to stay alive in the city where everybody was driving while drinking Guinness and wearing green clothes.

~ 30 minutes later ~

“Mr. Higgins, nice to meet you again. This is Detective Chief Inspector Murphy from London. He’s my partner in the case of Hayley Cunningham”, greeted Karlsson while shaking the hand of the Ballet’s President. “Where are they?” snared Murphy while looking around the entrance hall and strictly ignoring the hand of Mr. Higgins. “Excuse me, whom are you talking about?” Higgins asked. “The suspects. Who else?” “Yes, sorry for asking, Sir. Everybody who worked with Cunningham is waiting in one of our rehearsal studios.” Sixteen people were sitting in the room, six men and ten women. Everyone was wearing colourful and even extraordinary dance clothes and two girls just started sewing their point shoes in order to prepare them for the evening show.

Murphy walked through the studio and his grey eyes scanned one and all. Their gestures, how they averted his gaze, their shaking hands, red eyes from crying or expressionless faces. “You, you and you stay. Everybody else can go”, the older fellow waved with his left hand to emphasize his order. “What? Why are you doing this, Murphy? We’re a team, we’re supposed to work together. This is not a one-person-mission!” Eythora yelled but was interrupted by the jingle of her cell phone. Ironically it played the I-am-a-gummi-bear-song.

“Karlsson!” “Hi, Felicity Jones from the Police Forensic Centre. We discovered the cause of death, she was poisoned, approximately a day or two before her death. We are waiting for exact results, but surely she consumed the poison via her nutrition.” “Okay, thank you. Call me with updates.” “Murphy, Ladies and Gentleman, Hayley Cunningham, your company member was poisoned. And, however he, my colleague, decided this, but every one of you seems to fit in this case. You’re all suspects, every single one of you.” “Great, Karlsson. You disturbed my plan of interrogation”, Murphy chuntered at her while checking a small piece of paper. It was a list with names, written in tremendous lettering. “The best friend, her boyfriend and last but not least the principal dancer of the Irish National Ballet.” Murphy first looked at a tiny, brown haired woman. Her eyes were red as well as her cheeks. The tall guy, Cunninghams’ boyfriend Miguel Suria, looked nearly as concerned as the woman, maybe a bit more believably. The second woman looked like she, or her family, was from Japan or maybe Korea.

“I want to talk to her!” Murphy roughly pointed at the Japanese. “Okay, I guess I’ll get the others.” He just rolled his eyes and dragged the woman into the left corner next to the grand piano.

Eythora sighed annoyed, then turned around to face her two suspects. “I’m Detective Inspector Karlsson, C.I.D. May I ask you some questions?” Miguel Suria and Elisa Summers portrayed their relationships to the victim: How they got to know each other, how they worked together and they told Karlsson that Hayley Cunningham was a kind-hearted person, always willed to give her best and to be the girl everybody wanted to see. And yet she was headstrong and didn’t like to see unfairness. “My forensic assistant told me, she was poisoned via her nutrition. What did she usually eat? Any special preferences? Unusual eating habits?” Eythora asked when Murphy and the Japanese returned. “No, I haven’t witnessed anything, you Ryoko?” asked Miguel the new one. “No, me neither. She always ordered the same: Rice and a light fruit salad.”

Two hours later both detectives were sitting in the office, Eythora with a coffee while Murphy paced around the room. “Arsenic poisoning?” he dug deeper. “I can listen, I can read: So yes, I’m 100 percent sure Ms. Smoke said arsenic poisoning. Why?” Karlsson replied.

“Great, it’s perfect!” Murphy shouted and impetuously grabbed three folders. “Look, it’s so obvious! Summers, her best friend discovered her in a changing room, half dressed and foam around her mouth. Additionally, she checked in with her identity card of the National Ballet Company three minutes before. She couldn’t have done it, it’s impossible to enter the backstage area without a pass or ID. And besides she really has no motive”, Murphy explained. “Okay let’s say it’s the truth. But we also have her boyfriend and the principal dancer, Ryoko. What about them?” the young detective asked, still sipping her cup of coffee.

“Her boyfriend loved her, in my opinion way too much, but it’s none of my business. Haven’t you seen his bag? On top of his shirt lay a tiny jewel case. I’m sure he wanted to propose to Hayley.” “Okay, it’s neither her best friend nor her boyfriend. But it’s stupid to think it could have been Ryoko, the principal dancer. She never had to fear Cunningham”, argued Eythora just to catch a concerned look from Detective Aelfric Murphy.

“Have you ever looked at Hayley’s trophies? Have you seen the profile of Ryoko Yagyu? She is from Japan, her home is in a province called Saga, which is one of the poorest. Her parents paid for her education and every third of her income goes to her family in Japan. I think she saw a rival in Hayley Cunningham. And killing her was her only ray of hope while she tried to survive.” “You’re crazy. You may forget, but our victim was poisoned by arsenic. It’s nearly impossible to buy or order here in Ireland”, Karlsson discussed. “You don’t believe me”, he said and grabbed her by her arm ignoring her protests.

“Where are we?” “House of Ryoko Yagyu. I’ll ask her where she got arsenic, just to prove to you I’m right”, Murphy said knocking on door number 15A.

“Detectives, can I help you?” Ryoko opened the door. “Yes, answer one question: What kind of rice do you use?” Aelfric Murphy asked her shamelessly. “From my family, they send me a package every two months or sometimes every third one. Why?” Ryoko now looked quite confused. “You’re from Saga and there are some rice fields contaminated with arsenic. Not fatal for people who grew up eating it, but for a person who never came in touch with it before, it is deadly. Especially in such a high concentration like you used. Why have you killed Hayley Cunningham?” reasoned Murphy already looking for his handcuffs. Within a second Yagyu changed her facial expressions. “Because of this rich whore, I lost my privileged position in the company. She should replace me, but I wasn’t willed to give her my title of principal dancer.”

~ Later on ~

“You could have talked to me”, Karlsson said to Murphy and gave him a big cup of Earl Grey, his favourite tea. “Maybe and I’m sorry. But even though I still don’t like Ireland, I learned to like your work, detective”, he replied. “But you did all the work”, Karlsson reminded him. “No, I didn’t. I just combined everything you already detected. It would have been a question of time; you could have solved this case alone as well as you did with me”,

Murphy patted her shoulder. "Thank you, Murphy", Eythora smiled and turned around to leave her office. "Thank you too. It was a great last case."