

The Glass Box

By Maheema Haque

Detective Dreyfus scratched his beard. The oak floorboards were polished recently, and the heavy varnish was spread thickly, giving the floor a pristine finish. The table had been set with fine china plates decorated with borders of red and pink flowers interlaced with gold. The dresser and the maple countertops shone with new varnish, and the air smelled of a roast turkey. But lying in the middle of the tiled floor lay a bloodied body, eyes rolled back and mouth slightly open. The woman's hair had been torn out, and she had been stabbed several times. Her white gown was drenched with red blood.

"I don't know what happened!" cried the red-faced maid. "I came in, and me mistress was dead!" she added, her voice cracking, and she blew and wiped her nose on her white apron.

"It's quite alright, Miss. By word of Scotland Yard, we will solve this." assured Dreyfus in a baritone voice. The maid with red watery eyes, whimpered, nodded, and left.

The detective with furrowed brow scratched his chin. An object on the top of the dresser suddenly caught his eye. He picked it up with his small, porky hand... It was a little glass box. He coated the glass box with contamination powder, hoping to find fingerprints all over its transparent glass sides. The gold-plated edges were stained with small traces of blood, and the ornate mosaic of a hummingbird with chocolate wings spotted with white, golden beak half-open, flapping its wings in mid-air and a flower showed prints, and the mirror bottom was scratched with nail marks and smudged. He touched the hummingbird

again, and his fingers dragged across the outline of it... It all clicked in his mind. The detective covered the box with a hessian bag and bounded out of the house onto the nearest horse he could find. The horse whinnied as its hooves clicked on the stone road to the police station. The detective jumped off his horse and sped into the police station. He waddled up the stone steps of the station and pushed open the heavy, brown, creaking door with bars on the window. When he entered the police station with decaying walls, a set of run-down mahogany furniture with balls of white cotton poking out, a crowd of fifteen men with graying beards and hair gathered around him.

He pushed these men aside and shuffled into his office near the back of the old, decaying station and disappeared for the rest of the night.

The next day the detective emerged from the station with dark rings under his eyes. He yawned and his breath smelled of stale coffee beans and cigar smoke. Onlookers saw a wrinkled man with a porky build, thin, wispy grey hair and beady brown eyes which darted from side to side, and a grin that exposed slightly crooked, stained, yellow teeth. With a moth-eaten brown coat and a fading bowler hat, he looked at a piece of paper with a brown hessian bag.

Arriving at a large mahogany door, the Detective straightened his coat and hat and cleared his throat. He checked his scrap of white paper. He was about to use the hummingbird shaped copper knocker when he caught sight of the glossy golden nameplate on the door.

‘Dr. Hummingbird’ it said. ‘Dealer of Jewelry-Specialist in Glass Boxes.’