

HILLWALKING CAN BE DANGEROUS

Killing her husband had been much easier than she ever imagined it would be. In a way, she almost felt sorry for him, but there really had been no option. He simply had to go. After all, she was entitled to have the best life she possibly could. She accepted that he had been a good husband - hard working, and generous to a fault, kind and loving, and she knew that all her friends were quite jealous of her. But the fact remained that she wanted more. She wanted a life of complete comfort and ease, with almost unlimited money, as much time as possible with her assorted lovers, and a far higher status in society. So she had no choice. It was hardly her fault, was it?

He had always been a very keen climber and hillwalker and she came up with a plan. There was no possibility of arranging things as quickly as she would have liked - the very best murders leave nothing to chance, and she certainly did not want the insurers to start asking too many questions. From the day she had taken her wedding vows, she had plotted and schemed. She needed the marriage to give her a step up in society. Her husband was from a good family, and was quite a successful man, and there was no doubt that marriage to him was definitely to her advantage. But he was just the first step. She made sure that very large life policies were in place, that the mortgage on her beautiful home was fully insured, and that the bank accounts were nicely filled. And then, after a few years, during which she was at pains to keep her secret trusts very secret, she expressed an interest in taking up climbing.

Her husband was delighted and taught her everything he knew. He arranged for her to go on training courses, and bought her the very finest equipment possible - all designer of course. And gradually her skills improved, and the expeditions - always just the two of them together - became more and more daring. Summits were scaled, peaks were conquered, and she showed great enthusiasm for winter climbs. And all the time she made sure to be seen as the ever-loving wife, hanging on his arm in public, snuggling up to him whenever friends visited, and telling her closest confidants how much she loved him, and how empty her life would be without him. In short, a perfect couple.

The actual murder was so easy. They reached the summit in a blizzard. Visibility was only a few feet and there was not a soul around for miles. She asked him to photograph her standing on a slab of rock above a precipice, looking out over the void. He was at pains to tell her to make sure she stood a few feet back, as the surface was covered in thick snow and ice, and a couple of steps too far forward would be horribly dangerous. She promised she would be careful, and she made very certain she was, and the picture was taken. And then it was his turn. Oh yes, she took the photo. And then asked him to stand still "while she took another one". Two or three steps forward and one hard and sudden push and that was it. He stumbled forward, his arms windmilled frantically, he screamed, and slid rapidly down the slope and that was it. A few seconds later his screams ceased and - even from 500 feet above the rocks below, she heard the satisfying crash as his body landed. And his life ended.

As she made her way back down the mountain, she rehearsed the story in her mind. She would weep inconsolably, she would throw herself into her parents' arms, she would eventually, after a day or two of sedation, be able to tell the police what had happened - with regular crying breaks of course. He had insisted on the photographs being taken. She had been very scared, but posed for him to take hers. And then he had moved to the edge for her to take his picture - and of course, there it was in the camera. He had started to turn back towards her, but had slipped, just as a gust of wind came from nowhere and caught him off-balance. She was a devastated and heartbroken widow.

And, in due course, after a decent interval, and when she had worn black for several weeks, she would claim on the policies, take a recuperative break to somewhere in the sun, and find a new lover. And her life would be perfect. She would actually really miss him, but needs must.

The Pathologist looked at the battered and torn body on the slab. The Detective Sergeant stood beside him, and despite being hard-bitten professionals, they were both saddened by such a tragic death, The Pathologist asked the DS what the police thought had happened. The conclusion was that the poor chap had decided he wanted his picture taken and had gone just a foot or so too close to the edge. It was quite a common occurrence and even more so today with the craze for selfies. His hysterical wife had rushed down the mountain for help and the rest was easily worked out.

The Pathologist sighed sadly and picked up the scalpel. The cause of death would undoubtedly be multiple injuries due to a fall, but he must go through the motions. He had a child of the same age which made it more personal. So sad, He imagined the poor woman, running for help, hysterical, when she stepped on a cornice and plunged hundreds of feet to her death. Just like her husband.

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