

The Third Firing

THE CASE FILE

Roland Culbreth, who had sold the studio without a word, lay on the floor at 9:50. The coroner read the one mark three ways and would not pick: a flame lick, a lungful of salt fume, a splash of polish bath. Three jobs run here: glory reheats in open flame, fuming runs laying metal salt, acid dips in the bath. A cracked pot cooled at the door; Havelock, Rackham, Denholm and Straley each set one out.

Nine tags on the board, one job and one rack each, three to a rack: door rack the hollow irons, wall rack the solid take-off rods, bench rack the short fetch irons. Reheat, fuming, acid in order. Door: Rackham, Havelock, Rackham. Wall: Havelock, Denholm, Rackham. Bench: Havelock, Denholm, Straley. The third firing draws no rack; Denholm had it last, two reheats. An iron keeps its hand's punch. The lab returns the cause and the rack.

THE VICTIM	FOUND AT	TIME	APPARENT CAUSE
Roland Culbreth, 58, studio master	Hot shop floor, by the marver	Found 9:50	Undetermined

THE SUSPECTS

1

LENA HAVELOCK

Gaffer, north bench

Motive: Culbreth had struck her name off the studio's spring show.

Alibi: "I stayed at the cold shop wheel all evening." The grinding log carries her name at 9:20. A log takes the wheel, not the hand at it.

2

OTIS RACKHAM

Gaffer, east bench

Motive: Culbreth was moving his signed line onto the studio label.

Alibi: "I never came out of the batch room after eight." The mix sheet is signed at 9:05. A signature fixes a minute, not the hour.

3

MARA DENHOLM

Gaffer, south bench

Motive: Culbreth had promised her the third firing for a year and kept it.

Alibi: "I walked the yard to the cullet bins and back." The gate book holds her mark at 9:35. A book fixes a gate, not the run of an hour.

4

CLEM STRALEY

Gaffer, west bench

Motive: Culbreth had taken back the pieces he blew for the county fair.

Alibi: "I was crating stock at the loading door." The freight tally is written up at 9:40. A tally counts crates, not the hands that filled them.

A	N	C	L	N	O	S	I	R	A	P	C	G	K
C	L	O	H	D	T	X	S	J	B	H	N	T	Y
A	A	P	I	W	H	C	U	S	E	I	R	D	O
J	U	I	Y	T	A	K	K	M	K	E	I	X	Y
U	G	G	S	L	U	C	I	O	P	M	R	K	T
S	L	N	D	R	A	C	H	S	P	L	W	J	N
R	W	I	Z	J	A	C	O	A	T	T	I	N	U
U	N	H	I	L	J	E	L	R	E	Q	F	O	P
G	W	S	B	C	X	E	H	L	T	R	D	N	M
Y	B	U	S	M	M	E	L	S	I	C	N	Y	N
W	R	R	Z	E	R	U	T	T	A	D	E	J	I
N	Y	C	N	Y	C	Y	E	M	P	B	T	L	V
A	C	T	V	M	A	R	V	E	R	P	V	V	E
N	O	I	T	A	L	A	H	N	I	E	M	U	F

EVIDENCE 2 - THE HIDDEN MESSAGE

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|-----------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. MARVER | 2. PARISON | 3. CULLET | 4. PUNTY |
| 5. FRIT | 6. JACKS | 7. MOIL | 8. SHEARS |

YOUR LETTERS

THE HIDDEN WORD

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EVIDENCE 1 - THE MISSING WORD

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|-----------------------------------|--|--|-------------------------------------|
| ☐ SCALDING | ☐ CHEMICAL BURN | ☐ FUME INHALATION | ☐ IMPALEMENT |
| ☐ CRUSHING | ☐ ELECTROCUTION | ☐ CHOKING | ☐ BURNING |

EVIDENCE 1 - METHOD

EVIDENCE 2 - LOCATION

VERDICT - CULPRIT
