

Somewhere had deliberately poisoned the chocolates!

Nancy was shocked as she stood in the hospital waiting room while the police detective questioned the others waiting with her. Nancy's friend, Gretchen Moore, lay in a room just down the hall, still unconscious after ingesting a considerable amount of poison found in the chocolate hearts given to her by her boyfriend, Keith Prescott. Nearly all of the chocolates had been eaten, but the remaining two pieces had traces of the fast-acting poison that had succeeded in putting poor Gretchen in the hospital.

"I didn't do it!" the blond haired young man exclaimed, tears streaming from his eyes. "My God, Gretchen and I are in love! Why would I want to poison her?"

The eighteen-year old sleuth couldn't help but feel sorry for the young man. The police had found only his fingerprints and those of Gretchen on the box of chocolates, so needless to say he was the prime suspect. Keith insisted that he had never even opened the box from the time he purchased it at Heartfelt Gifts to the time he had given it to Gretchen.

"I can't believe he would do such a thing," sighed the pretty young girl standing next to Nancy. Cassandra Smythe was the owner of Heartfelt Gifts & Chocolates, which always did a booming business around Valentine's Day. "I mean, when I dated him, he never seemed to me to be the type to try and kill someone!" The dark-haired girl shook her head in disbelief. "Now I'm glad he broke up with me! But poor William is all torn up. He blames himself." She looked over at her brother, who was standing against the window looking out over the city.

"How could he have predicted this?" Nancy questioned.

Cassandra shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know. I mean, I would have never sold Keith those chocolates if I knew he was going to do this with them!"

Nancy knew from experience that sometimes people were capable of doing completely unexpected things, but she kept her comments to herself. She walked over to the window where William Smythe, Cassandra's brother and Gretchen's ex-boyfriend, stood. He looked over at Nancy as she approached.

"It was my fault," he whispered, and Nancy's eyes opened wide. "I was too wrapped up in my schooling. But couldn't she see that I wanted to be a chemist so I could give her the life she deserved? She said I didn't pay enough attention to her, so she broke it off! She said she had found someone that appreciated her. Now look at where she is! Some appreciation he showed. If she had simply stayed with me, then this wouldn't have happened!"

Nancy was amazed at the fact that the young man was more concerned for the fact that she had left him than for her actual welfare. She left his side when the police detective called her over to the nurse's desk.

"Well, I think that about wraps up my statements," the detective told her. "Between the chocolate store owner, the chemist, and the boyfriend, the only real evidence we have is the boyfriend's fingerprints on the box." He sighed as he scratched his forehead. "None of them seem to have any motive for wanting her out of the picture."

Nancy studied the three other people in the waiting room. Cassandra Smythe had opened up her business directly out of high school with the money that her parents had left her when they died. She was doing well and seemed relatively happy. Her brother, William, however, seemed to believe that Gretchen's near death experience was because she had left him. Some men were certainly possessive in that way, she mused. Gretchen's current boyfriend, Keith, seemed to have no motive, but his fingerprints were very incriminating.

"I'm not seeing a connection," Nancy chided herself. She ran her fingers through her shoulder-length titian hair. "There's some clue I'm missing. Think, Nancy, think. What is it?"

And then it dawned on her. As sure as the poison had put Gretchen in the hospital, Nancy knew the identity of the person who had tried to take Gretchen out of the picture. As the police detective began to walk away, she ran up to him.

"Wait!" she called out. "I know who did it!"

DO YOU KNOW WHO PUT THE POISON IN THE CHOCOLATES? WHY DID THE CULPRIT DO IT? HOW DID NANCY FIGURE IT OUT?