

Fishy Business
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‘Always the same words from my lousy manager. “Go feed the sharks, Justin. You’re not doing it right Justin! Chop the fish heads, Justin!” Perfect Gabriella never does anything wrong. That goodie two shoes. I should’ve gotten that job, not her.’

Dragging his feet, Justin went to feed the sharks. Climbing to the top of the tank, he noticed the sharks crowding around one spot. He peered closer to see a murky lump at the bottom of the tank. Using a long-handled gaff, he started to haul the object out of the water. It was exceptionally long to be a baby shark and too heavy to be food.

What on Earth could it be?

He pulled it to the surface. It was the mangled body of Gabriella Hudnall. Shreds of her work uniform clung to the mutilated corpse. Something was wrong with how her head was lying. What happened to her neck?

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SEAL TRAINER FOUND DEAD IN SHARK TANK AT FAIRDEAN’S AQUARIUM was the headline in the newspapers that day.

‘I’m sorry but no one is allowed in or out Ms?’ the policeman said.

‘Falco. Séphora Falco, and I am allowed in because I’m the detective sent in by the agency to solve this crime. So, I’d suggest you move out of my way, and let the experts deal with this.’

‘Yes Ms Falco, ma’am.’

‘Where’s the body?’ Séphora asked as she charged in.

‘I put her in the freezer.’ the red-eyed manager sobbed, ‘why are you—’

‘Bring the body here and get the father while you’re at it.’

‘I am the father, and why should I listen to you! I’m supposed to be waiting for the detective.’ the manager said, fuming.

‘I am the detective. So, will you please go get your daughter.’

As Séphora watched the man scurry away, she looked around the crime scene. ‘No fingerprints on the glass, and the water had only a tint of red.’

As the two men heaved the body onto the prep room table, Séphora inspected the jagged wound on the neck. Looking around the room, she could see a bucket full of fish heads in the corner and several serrated knives hung up on the wall. ‘I need to see the camera

footage now,' Séphora said, heading to the office. 'Run the camera footage from last night. Fast speed,' Séphora demanded.

The footage rolled through until 8:00 am when the seal and shark tank areas showed static for ten minutes. During those ten minutes, only one person could be seen in any other area.

'May I please have the shark feeder here ASAP,' Séphora said to the manager. As the manager ran to grab the suspect, Séphora replayed the footage in her mind.

So, the murder happened at about 8 am with Chef in the kitchen and shark feeder nowhere to be seen.

'The shark feeder is in the office, ready for you.' The manager proclaimed.

Séphora strolled in to see a scrawny, little teenager. She settled into the chair. 'Where were you between 8:00am and 8:10am?' Séphora said.

'I was in the prep room chopping fish heads,' he replied.

'Really? What did you use to cut these so-called fish heads?'

'I did chop the fish heads! I used a serrated knife, like always.'

'Did anyone see you in the prep room?' Séphora asked.

'No, but—'

'You killed her, didn't you? You used your serrated knife to slit Gabriella's throat, then dumped her into the shark tank to get rid of the evidence! When you found the body still intact at 9 am, you chose to "discover" it to eliminate yourself as a suspect. Admit it. You killed her.' Séphora thundered.

'I didn't do it. I swear. It was that Chef Áron. He's Gabriella's ex. I could hear them yelling at each other while I was in the prep room. He hated the fact that she cheated on him.'

'Thank you. You may leave now,' Séphora said calmly, 'Can you tell the chef to come in?'

As Justin hurried away sobbing, the chef came in, ready for questioning. Chef's muscles were bulging as the tall man eased down into the seat. "What were you doing from 8:00 to 8:10am?" Séphora asked.

'I was chopping onions.'

'Is it true that you're Gabriella's ex? And did you have a fight with her this morning?'

'Yes, and none of your business.' Chef growled.

Séphora noticed a jagged cut across his palm. 'What's the cut from?'

'Cutting onions, you can see it in the footage.'

‘I’ll see you and Justin later. For now, you can go back to your job,’ Séphora said.

A ring echoed through the room after Chef closed the door. ‘Hello Séphora, this is the agency. You have today to solve this case or else you’re gone—for good.’

‘But—’

As Séphora entered the kitchen, she could see Chef preparing different foods at high speed. He started chopping chives, parsley, and onions with clean, straight slices. ‘Order number five,’ the chef yelled. After a short period, Chef stretched his arms over his head, mumbling ‘Break time’ as he shuffled out the door.

Now was her chance. Séphora started opening cupboards. Cereal, herbs, more cereal, spices, more cereal?

Yes! Found it.

‘Get the shark feeder and the chef to meet me in the office,’ Séphora ordered the police officers

‘Please be seated. Let’s take a close look at this case. Firstly, the argument. Justin heard Chef and Gabriella arguing while he was in the prep room. Next, the blood. I had looked in the seal area to see smears of blood on the ground going all the way to the shark tank, indicating it had been cleaned quickly. This could have easily been done by Justin because of how close he was to this area. However, only Chef could have dragged the body from the seal area to the shark tank.’

Séphora stood behind Chef’s chair, her hand on his shoulder.

‘Then there’s the camera footage. The seal and shark tank areas showed static from 8:00am to 8:10am, showing the time of the murder. In the kitchen, Chef was chopping onions with a straight blade. The prep room however, had no feed whatsoever, meaning Justin has no alibi, but, in the kitchen feed, Chef is chopping his onion so excruciatingly slow that it took him 10 minutes to chop one onion. Whereas, when I saw the chef cutting an onion 20 minutes ago, it took only 30 seconds, showing that the video feed was tampered with. Now, for the last piece of evidence, the weapon. I searched the kitchen and found this! A giant shark tooth. Next, I checked if the tooth was the weapon. I cut Gabriella’s hand with the tooth – it was an exact match to her neck wound. It also matched the cut across Chef’s palm,’ Séphora claimed.

‘You’ll regret this,’ Chef yelled, as the police officers pushed him into their car.

Séphora smiled. ‘Case closed.’