

A FIONA BYRNE MINI MYSTERY



THE FIVE-MINUTE **ALIBI**



A fair-play case from Duncarragh

Four ordinary statements. One timeline that cannot be true.

CAN YOU SPOT WHAT FIONA SPOTS?



THE FIONA BYRNE VILLAGE MYSTERIES

The Missing Photograph

Friday evening in Duncarragh, the community hall is being prepared for a small display of old regatta photographs. At 7:10 p.m., Rita Devlin notices that the oldest framed photograph - a faded picture of the harbour from 1980 - is gone from the display board. It had definitely been there at 6:40 p.m.. Nothing else is missing.

FOUR PEOPLE WERE NEAR THE HALL

Rita Devlin

"I was in the kitchen the whole time, making tea. I never went near the display."

Maura Considine

"I left at 6:45 and went straight back to the post office. I had a registered letter to process."

Patrick Sullivan

"I left at 6:50, walked to Byrne's for picture books, then went straight home. I did not go back to the hall."

Vincent Greaney

"I was on the quay fixing the display stands. Fiona could see me from the shop window."

Your question

Whose statement cannot be true? Do not guess who took the photograph. Fiona never confuses a broken story with guilt.

Four Things on Paper



BYRNE'S SHOP RECEIPT

Picture hooks, cash sale. 6:58 p.m. Fiona remembers Patrick buying them.



THE WALK

From Byrne's General Stores to the community hall takes four minutes on foot. Harbour Street is closed to traffic for festival setup.



THE HALL MAINTENANCE BOOK

A line in Patrick's handwriting reads: "6:59 - rehung loose frame, P.S."



THE OTHER ALIBIS

Maura's registered-mail receipt is stamped 6:53 p.m.. Fiona can see Vincent on the quay from the shop window. Rita's kettle is still boiling when the photograph is noticed missing.

One minute is enough to break a story.



THINK LIKE FIONA

Do not ask who looks suspicious. Ask what cannot be true.

1

Start with the fixed record. The shop receipt gives you a time that does not depend on anyone's memory.

2

Put geography beside time. Patrick cannot be in two places faster than the road allows.

3

Do not leap from lie to guilt. A false statement tells Fiona that someone is hiding something. It does not tell her what.

YOUR ANSWER

Whose statement breaks against the timeline?

Patrick's Minute

Patrick's statement cannot be true. He buys the picture hooks at 6:58 p.m.. The hall is a four-minute walk away, with no vehicle access. The earliest he can reach the hall is about 7:02 p.m.. Yet the maintenance book says he rehung a frame there at 6:59 p.m..

WHAT FIONA DOES NEXT

She does not accuse Patrick of taking the photograph. She asks why he wrote the maintenance entry after the fact. He admits he went back to the hall. He had noticed the old frame coming apart, took the photograph home to repair the backing, and meant to return it before anyone noticed. He lied because he knew Rita had told everyone not to touch the display.

Fiona's rule

A broken alibi tells you where to look. It never tells you what you will find.

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