

# NEWS

## MURDER 101 'LOCKED ROOM MYSTERY'

### SYNOPSIS

After finishing up a lecture, Criminology Professor Jonathan Maxwell and private investigator Mike Bryant visit a local new age book store to take part in a meditation circle – mostly because Mike is interested in Arielle, one of the employees who claims to have psychic abilities. Once there, it turns out that the circle has been cancelled, but Arielle tells them that Samuel, a renowned spiritual guru with many rich and famous followers, will be there to conduct a healing.

Samuel goes about apparently “healing” people of different afflictions. Jonathan and Mike deny needing healing, but Samuel says that just being in the room with the positive energy should help them. Turns out he may be right: Jonathan’s bad shoulder feels better.

The next day, Jonathan and Mike head to Samuel’s center. As they look around, Samuel leads a small group to a locked meditation room for a deep trance exercise. The students are Panache, Samuel’s top assistant, Jasmine, a model, Donald Meritt, a wealthy businessman, and Camilla, a famous actress.

The group is running late, so Solar, Samuel’s trainee, checks on them. When no one answers, he kicks down the locked door to find Samuel dead, with a gun in his hand, and the four students still in their deep trance-like state. Since only Samuel’s instructions can bring them in and out of the trance, Solar discovers nothing, not even a blank shot, wakes them. Luckily, Jonathan figures out to use a CD of Samuel conducting the same exercise, which wakes the students, who are horrified to learn of Samuel’s death.

Arielle says that Samuel wouldn’t kill himself, but the police find a suicide note in his desk, which says, “The time is coming soon when I will leave you.” Turns out her hunch is right, as a trip to the morgue leads Jonathan and Mike to discover that Samuel didn’t have gunpowder residue on his hands; he did not fire the gun.

Jonathan, Mike and Ben, Mike’s nephew, an aspiring PI, examine the meditation room. It was locked during the session, and the only two keys were inside, with Samuel and Panache, so it would have been impossible for someone to sneak in and out.

Panache begs Mike to help catch the killer. He says the center will cover the fees. Ben offers his help also. Mike suspects Panache, but Jonathan warns Mike not to only focus on one person. Everyone is a suspect, even Arielle.

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At the center, Mike speaks with Solar, who's surprised to hear that Panache offered to have the center pay for Mike's fees. However, with Samuel dead, Panache would be in charge of the center and all its funds. Arielle points out that it was rare for Panache to be part of Samuel's deep meditation group, but she doesn't believe he is the killer. Samuel was incredibly generous to Panache; he even bought him an expensive car as a gift. Arielle also explains that Samuel had two "spiritual wives," both of whom were in the room with him. Camilla was with him for years, until the Jasmine came on the scene.

In Samuel's room, Jonathan notices several supplements that he took. Suddenly, the sheriff arrives and says Panache's clothing tested positive for gunpowder, and arrests him. He thinks that Panache shot Samuel and then used his own skills to put himself back into the trance, and offered to pay Mike in order to cover his tracks. Despite the compelling evidence, one thing bothers Jonathan: why didn't anyone hear the gunshot?

Later, Mike and Jonathan speak with Camilla and Donald, who suggest that, while Panache may have fired the gun, he can't recall it because Jasmine might have hypnotized him to do so.

Jonathan talks about the case and the different motives the students may have had. Panache would be number one at the center, Camilla has jealousy issues, Jasmine could have jealousy issues too and Donald is a major contributor, but they don't know his motive.

At Jonathan's home, he looks into Samuel's background and checks the supplements that Samuel took. One of them, Inositol, is a chemical found in beans and brown rice. The three of them watch a DVD of Samuel's lecture, noticing a few things: first, Samuel keeps rubbing the small of his back, obviously in pain. Second, there is obvious tension between Camilla and Jasmine, so much that Camilla finally storms off. Jonathan asks Ben to look into other lecture videos for clues.

Jonathan receives a tip that the autopsy is complete, and heads to the morgue. He is astonished to learn that Samuel had advanced pancreatic cancer and would not have lived more than six more months. This explains Samuel rubbing the spot on his back.

Mike and Ben finally interview Jasmine, who says how she noticed Samuel had been in pain recently, despite being someone who "shouldn't feel pain." She says he was afraid of something approaching in the future, but wouldn't say what. Mike follows this up by meeting with Camilla. She wasn't aware that Samuel was sick, but thought he was hiding something. Still, she denies hating Samuel when he left her for Jasmine, the "other woman."

Jonathan tells Mike that Inositol is also an alternative cancer treatment, which means he knew he was dying. Mike wonders if Samuel had Panache shoot him, to avoid the long, painful death, even if Panache was unaware of his own actions.

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While taking measurements in the meditation room, Ben finds a washer lying on the ground. Mike comes in and asks him to fire a gun filled with blanks, while he and Jonathan wait where they were the day of the murder. Turns out you can hear the gunshot loud and clear, which doesn't make sense since no one heard the fatal shot.

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At the hospital, Solar takes over watch of Panache and lets Arielle go home. But in the parking lot, she is nearly run over by a car, which speeds off. At the police station, she's shaken up but okay. Mike arrives to escort her home, and suggests that she knows something about Samuel that can help Panache, making her a target.

Jonathan and Mike discuss who is trying to scare Arielle. Jonathan thinks only Jasmine knew that Samuel was dying, but several people had noticed his mood had changed and he seemed worried and angry. Suddenly, Jonathan has a hunch why no one heard the gunshot. He tells Ben to get a list of all the hardware the center has bought in the last six months.

Jonathan explains to Mike and Solar that no shot was heard because the killer put a homemade silencer on the gun, and when they took it off, the washer fell on the ground. The killer took the silencer with them when they left the room. Once again displaying her potential powers, Arielle tells Mike she had a dream of the murder, and in it she heard a soft noise, just like the silencer would make.

At the hospital, Panache finally wakes up. Meanwhile, Jonathan gets a call from Arielle asking him to go back to the center to talk with her and not to tell Mike about this. Jonathan agrees to do so, but calls Mike right away. Then, Jonathan gets a hold of Ben, who has found the order inventory for the center. He runs through it with Jonathan, who hears something very interesting...

Jonathan returns to the center, only to be greeted by Solar holding a gun. Solar ties him up with Arielle. Jonathan explains to Arielle that Samuel wanted to simply disappear, leaving the center to Panache. But by killing Samuel and framing Panache, the center would go to Solar. How did Solar get into the locked meditation room? Turns out Ben found out that Solar had an extra key made, so he could slip into the room, put the gun in Panache's hand and fire it, then leave the gun in Samuel's hand and slip out.

Between Arielle's dreams and Jonathan's detective skills, Solar was bound to be caught. The pair has to go, but before he can kill them, Mike and Ben arrive and subdue Solar long enough for the police to arrive and arrest him.

With all the excitement, Jonathan needs to relax a bit. The next morning, Mike and Ben find him deep in a meditative session with Panache, in full meditation attire.

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