

# S is for...

## SCENE OF THE CRIME

Detective Rogers pulled into the parking lot of the downtown restaurant just as the rain started to get really bad. Sergeant Forkner was waiting for him at the door.

"How's it look in there?" the detective asked, though he could already tell it was a mess. Plates, silverware, and food *scattered* all about. On the floor, in front of the jukebox, was what he guessed was the victim's body, now *covered* with a sheet.

"It's a mess, as you'd expect. The manager's in back, said he can talk with you whenever you need."

"Good, good." Rogers knelt down and lifted the sheet. His examination of the body was quick. "Wait... how did he die? Gunshot?"

"No... not shot. Believe it or not, he was *smothered*," Forkner replied. The detective raised an eyebrow and silently pointed to the bullet holes that *peppered* the counter top and even a few of the large plate glass windows. "Those are from the victim's gun, we think. But he's not got a bullet in him. We found a towel that had been *chunked* out back into the dumpster. Brought it in before the rain started. Blood spots, probably from the deceased's mouth. With all these bullet holes you'd think someone would've been *capped*, but not so... thankfully."

"But how does a guy with a gun get himself suffocated? Witnesses?"

"'fraid not," the sergeant answered with a shake of the head. "The place was empty except for the manager, and he was in the back, off the grill for a moment. Said he heard gunshots and he stayed in back for several minutes after it got quiet. Oh, but we did find this in the victim's hand." He handed Detective Rogers a note sealed in an evidence bag.

The policeman let out a low whistle under his breath.

"This man was a puzzler?!"

"I guess he was."

"This gets more and more interesting by the minute."

"Sure does... but why would someone want him dead?"

"Puzzling's a dangerous life," Rogers said. His voice was *topped* off by a tone that hinted he had dealt with such crimes in the past. "Don't fool yourself, Forkner. Trying to hide a puzzle piece can get you in a lot of trouble with people you don't want to be in trouble with." He examined the note more closely as he leaned against the jukebox. "You play in enough of these 'Puzzle Parties,' and eventually you're gonna have to face the music. Let's get to the bottom of this murder, and maybe, just maybe, we'll find ourselves a puzzle piece to boot."

### THE NOTE:

S-piece securely sequestered...

22-09-03, 37-01-06, 07-08-07, 45-02-10,  
33-08-13, 38-07-01, 19-14-07, 08-05-08,  
37-15-07, 34-02-05, 00-06-03, 09-09-10,  
42-07-04, 15-03-12, 23-04-10, 30-11-07,  
05-01-03, 40-12-12, 21-06-07, 03-06-02,  
39-04-16, 20-01-07, 20-01-02, 44-08-06,  
18-10-07, 10-07-06