Dear Calculus Student,

You are such a big help to me. Thank you thank you thank you thank you thank you. Because of your beneficent munificence (or is that munificent beneficence?), my Philo and I are becoming twin souls with one heart beating. Or something like that. I'm writing this letter to you with my darling Philo looking over my shoulder, and her breath wafting across my left eyebrow leads to my being just a little confused.

Your letter regarding the most excellent storage boxes came at a marvelous time; I read it aloud not two minutes after Victor had boasted aloud, "If there's a better way to build these boxes, then I'll !#$%-ing kiss your &@@, Myron". Needless to say, as much as I appreciated YOUR help, I did not take HIM up on HIS kind offer.

I had begun to notice, with my usual observant perspicacity, that Philomena had seemed increasingly uneasy around her purported fiancé lately. I had attributed this change in her attitude to my own serene devotion toward her well-being, but it turns out she had other reasons to be wary of him. After I read aloud your letter (and Victor stormed off in search of a good Calculus textbook), she confided in me the true reason for her recent mental distress.

You may remember that I had mailed to her a large cardboard box filled with bank statements. I forgot that the box also contained other terrible mementos of our patron, Gus Gusterson. There was a flyer advertising a sale at his hardware store; there was another flyer advertising an apartment for rent on the 6th floor of that same majestic 90-foot high building; there were newspaper accounts of his murder; and there was a photograph I had taken of the crime scene. (As an 11-year old, I had the bizarre notion that somehow I would be the super-sleuth who would apprehend his killer. Eventually, my anguish after his death caused me to toss all my sleuthing into the same box with the bank statements, where I would no longer have to face them).

It was this photograph that had caught Philomena's eye. It did not seem like a particularly interesting or crucial photo; I had taken it maybe three or four hours after Mr. Gusterson's body had been found, and his body had already been removed to the morgue. The picture simply has a bunch of crime scene tape and a view of the front foyer of the building. But it was this picture that caught Philomena's eye -- and then for another reason, caught mine.

What Philomena noticed was the buzzers for the apartment dwellers in the building. The first floor, of course was the hardware store. The second floor was Mr. Gusterson's apartment. After that, the list reads:

3 Barnaby Smith

4 Delavan White
5 Sister Mary Halverson

6

7 Victor Dendron

8 Elspeth Jones

9 Roger Driver

(The 6th floor was vacant, hence the reason for the flyer). Philomena saw Victor's name there as the tenant on the 7th floor. He is considerably older than her -- I must add, especially since she is still reading this over my shoulder, that this is yet another reason why he is entirely unsuitable for her -- and he was already 21 at the time of Gusterson's death. Once she realized this, Victor's sudden interest in hardware, and also his probing questions to me about a man he told her he never knew, began to take on a suspicious appearance.

The newspaper articles reminded me that the principal suspect at the time had been the 9th floor tenant, Roger Driver. The police never managed to establish a motive, or to find sufficient evidence to implicate him, so he was never formally arrested or charged.

Gus Gusterson died when a large sack filled with lead shot fell on his head just outside the hardware store as he was opening up in the morning. The newspapers reminded me of many details that I had forgotten. He let himself out of his second floor apartment by the back door that morning; he had a cup of coffee at a small cafe down the street at around 6:30 a.m., as was his habit. The police conjectured that he then returned to the hardware store via the front door. He punched in the security code by the front door.

Mr. Gusterson loved gadgets, especially gadgets connected to clocks. He had clocks that timed his telephone calls; he had clocks that recorded when lights went on and when they went off again. The clocks were all synchronized to incredible accuracy. This time it was one of his gadgets that did him in. The police gathered that the "enter" button on the alarm box was connected to a trigger high above him that released the sack from -- they supposed -- a balcony outside Driver's apartment. So it was his own action of turning off the alarm that brought death down from the sky.

What caught my eye in the photograph was not the list of tenants, but two clocks. The first clock in the photo ostensibly gave the time of day. It reads: 6:51:25.67 a.m. The second clock says "Alarm off: 6:51:23.63 a.m.". Now, I know that I wasn't there taking that photo before 7 in the morning. The only thing I can guess is that the force of the blow (the bag burst as it fell, scattering lead shot everywhere) stopped the first clock.
When I saw those two clocks, all my sleuthing instincts returned. Surely this is enough to tell us whether Roger Driver was indeed the murderer, and whether Victor himself was implicated in any way in this tragic event.

Philo and I eagerly await your response.

Yours most investigatively,

Myron Sopher