Mac Bruyard had been in Springmill only a month when he fell in love with a ghost.

It hadn't been an easy transition from Portland to a small-town police force. His buddies had kidded with him unmercifully, but with an undercurrent of sympathy. Mac had been hurt in a high-speed car chase, and it had taken six months to put him back together. Then he was given a choice: early retirement or transfer to a less demanding assignment. He chose Springmill. Retire? He wasn't even thirty-five.

Mac was a bachelor, a victim of two broken engagements and more disappointments with women than most men have in a lifetime. The truth is, despite his profession, his hard jaw and cobra eyes, Mac Bruyard was a romantic. He was waiting for "her" to come along. But when she did, Shana Ward had been dead a year.

It had been Chief Riley who introduced him to Shana. On his first evening in Springmill, he drove Mac around town in the Department's one and only police vehicle, pointing out the sights. The tour had taken less than an hour, and it had ended at the sea, where a gabled manor loomed like some feudal castle against the
setting sun.

“They named it Whitecliff,” Riley said. “But nobody ever calls it that. It’s just the Blackthorn house. Blackthorn family’s lived there for the last fifty, sixty years. Not a big family, either. Just the old man and his wife and son, couple of servants.”

“Only a couple?” Mac asked.

“They’re not that rich anymore,” the Chief said. “Howard Blackthorn inherited a whole bunch of money but didn’t invest it too wisely. He’s got a wife whose hobby is shopping and a son who’s always coming up with business schemes that fall through every time. But they’re still the big enchiladas in Springmill. Own half the property, and most of the jobs.” Riley’s grin returned. “The Blackthorns gave this town something else, too. An unsolved murder.”

The words snapped Mac out of his lethargy. “Murder? Who was the victim?”

“The gardener’s daughter. Blackthorns have quite a garden, probably the most famous in the state. Young girl named Shana Ward, lived with her father in the gardener’s cottage. A real beauty. Maybe too beautiful for a small town like this.”

“Where was she killed?”

“In the garden. Stabbed to death.” He grunted. “But don’t get any ideas about working on the case. A dozen hotshot detectives couldn’t figure it out, and I don’t want you wasting the Department’s time. Understood?”

“Sure,” Mac said.

“And if you hear anything about a ‘haunted garden’ —well, just ignore it. Lot of superstitious people in Springmill. We don’t want to offend them or encourage them. Got my meaning?”

“You’re the Chief,” Mac said.

He turned to look at the Blackthorn house again, the deepening shadows making its contours not merely gothic, but sinister.

For the first few weeks, Mac tried to forget the Shana Ward case, but curiosity got the better of him. He started asking casual questions around town but didn’t get many answers. As for the “haunted garden,” it wasn’t mentioned until an old man named Greeley lost control of his vintage Buick and smashed into a barbershop. On the way to the police station, he said:

“Oh, there’s a ghost, all right. Seen it myself, couple of
weeks ago. Kind of misty light moving back and forth real slow in the Blackthorn garden. It's her, looking for the knife that killed her.”

Mac finally had a fact to work with. The murder weapon had never been found.

In the station house, Mac decided to ask Sergeant Joe Petkoff, a friendly bear of a man, about Greeley's story.

“He's a little senile,” Joe smiled. “But who knows? Maybe Shana Ward is really haunting the place.”

“Believe in ghosts, Joe?”

“If they looked like Shana, I would.”

Mac made no comment, and his silence proved too tantalizing for the officer to ignore. He went to the file cabinet, and came out with a thick folder. Mac found his heart beating rapidly as Joe pulled out a handful of color photographs.

Somebody had done a thorough job of covering the murder scene. The camera had captured every corner of the Blackthorn garden, from every point of the compass. It was obvious why the garden was a prize-winner, even if Mac could name only a few of the flowers that gave it its glory. There was a massive display of pink hydrangea. There were tall delphinium and foxglove. The peonies were dazzling. The iris were breathtaking in their purple majesty. The roses were the reddest he had ever seen, but with a pang, Mac realized that they didn't supply the only touch of red in the pictures. There was a small lake of blood on a pathway, and lying in its midst, wild black hair mercifully concealing her face, was the body of a young woman.

“She wasn't killed in the garden,” Joe said solemnly. “There was a bloody trail from the French doors of the study. She must have been trying to escape her killer, running towards the gardener's cottage. But she didn't make it that far.”

“The study?” Mac said. “That means someone in the house had to be involved, doesn't it?”

“We thought the same thing,” Joe said ruefully. “But try to prove it! It was two a.m. All the Blackthorns claimed to be asleep in their separate rooms. The French doors were unlocked—the Blackthorns were pretty indifferent about doors and locks, because they were so isolated. Anyone could have walked into that study, met Shana there...”

“You think it was a rendezvous?”
“I don’t think about this case any more,” Joe said wearily. “For months, nobody in this town thought of anything else. They blamed the Department for not coming up with her killer—hell, they still do! But ours wasn’t the only failure. A dozen big city detectives worked on the case, and what was the result? Zilch. Nothing.” His hand dipped into the folder again. “This is Shana alive.”

It was a casual shot, taken on a bosky corner of Springmill. The young woman was climbing onto a bicycle. She was laughing. A storm of black hair framed her perfect face. She was so full of life that Mac felt a pang in the center of his chest.

Another snapshot showed Shana in a cheap waitress outfit, but she made it look like royal robes.

“She worked at the Springmill Tavern. Met a lot of guys there. Of course. The last one was a high school English teacher named Neville James. We think he sent her this.”

Now Joe took out a plastic evidence envelope and handed it to him. There were half a dozen scraps of vellum-like paper, with handwritten letters that might be described as calligraphy. Which didn’t make them easier to read.

“... forward violet,” Mac said aloud. “Thus did I chide... What is this? Shakespeare?”

“Nice going,” Joe grinned. “Took us a week to figure it out. It’s one of the sonnets, number ninety-nine. Just the kind of love letter an English teacher might send, right?”

“But she tore it up?”

“Somebody did. We found the scraps in the study. Don’t ask me about fingerprints—there weren’t any. Maybe they were on the knife, but we never found it. Maybe that would have solved the whole case, if we could have laid hands on the weapon.”

“Killer might have taken it with him. Or her,” Mac said.

“Pretty bloody knife to carry around. We figured he was smarter. That he got rid of the knife, probably buried it.”

“You mean in the garden”

“Logical, ain’t it?” Joe said. “Nice soft soil. Stick the blade into the ground and cover it up.”

“Why not dig up the garden and find it?”

This time, Joe’s grin had no humor in it.

“You don’t know Springmill, pal. You don’t dig up the famous Blackthorn garden. That’s like tearing down the Taj Mahal,
or ripping up the Mona Lisa..."

"I'd like to see that garden," Mac said, "But I don't suppose they'll invite me." He looked at its photo again, flipped it over idly. There was a penciled notation, the date: June 4.

"What's today's date?" he asked.

"June 2," Joe said. "Two days and it'll be a whole year."

He sighed and put the photos back in the folder, without realizing that one of them was missing. It was Shana's picture, and it was in Mac Bruyard's pocket.

The Springmill library was small, and far from comprehensive, but Mac had no trouble finding the Shakespeare sonnet that was apparently the only clue in the Shana Ward murder.

It read:

*The forward violet thus did I chide:*

*Sweet thief, whence didst thou steal thy sweet that smells,*

*If not from my love's breath? The purple pride*

*Which on thy soft cheek for complexion dwells*

In my love's veins thou hast too grossly dyed.

The lily I had condemned for they hand,

And buds of marjoram had stol'n they hair:

The roses fearfully on thorns did stand...

Flowers, Mac whispered to himself. Flowers were everywhere in this case. Shana was like a flower herself, a wild rose cut too soon by an evil gardener... He frowned, and remembered what Chief Riley had said. The Ward case was over as far as the Springmill police were concerned, and especially as Mac Bruyard was concerned.

But Shana's photograph was now in his wallet, facing his police badge...

Two days later, Mac had a chance to meet Neville James, the English teacher. There had been a fire at the high school, started by a disgruntled custodian who had to be subdued by force. Neville James didn't assist the police. He was a handsome, fragile—looking young man. Mac didn't like him. The thought that he might have held Shana Ward in his arms revolted him.

When he was sure that he wasn't overheard, Mac asked him
casually about Sonnet 99.

"Sorry," he said stiffly. "I've already told the police everything I can. And I still don't believe Shana tore it up."

"Any idea who did?"

"Nobody believed me the first time," he said. "The Blackthorns are untouchable in this town."

"Are you saying it was someone in the family?"

"Of course it was! Someone who resented her getting love letters! Probably the same person who murdered her!"

"So you think the motive was jealousy?"

"What else would it be?" Neville James said, and walked away.

Mac looked after him thoughtfully. In truth, he agreed with the English teacher. It was the only motive that made sense. Somebody killed Shana Ward because he couldn't have Shana Ward. Jealousy is a beast that kills. But could that beast have been Neville James himself? What if the poem, and Neville's wispy charm, weren't enough to win Shana's love. Would that have driven him to murder?

For the next few weeks, Mac tried to concentrate on the police problems of Springmill. There were three traffic violations. A husband beat his wife. A ten-year-old ran away from home and had to be retrieved from the movie house where he was hiding. He arrested a shoplifter, and rescued a beaten dog. And every day, every hour, he thought of Shana Ward.

One day, he decided to commit a theft.

When the office was deserted during a community softball game, he went into the files and stole the Shana Ward folder.

He found the text of three interrogations.

Q. Mr. Blackthorn, you say you heard nothing at all last night?

MR. B: Been a sound sleeper all my life. Even in Nam, used to sleep right through the bombardments.

Q. What did you think of Shana Ward?

MR. B: Never thought about her. Nice girl, probably a little wild. Her father should have taken better care of her, but he was more interested in his garden... Our garden, I mean.

Q. Mr. Ward said you were very generous to his daughter. Said you once gave her a very expensive string of pearls...

MR. B: Absolutely not! Maybe she told him that, but she
THE HAUNTED GARDEN

must have gotten it from some rich boyfriend!

Q. Just one last question, Mr. Blackthorn. Do you own a knife?

MR. B: You mean like a hunting knife? Certainly not.

Q. How about a letter knife?

MR. B: Used to have one. Antique Florentine metal dagger, but some servant must have stolen it a long time ago...

The second interview was with Blackthorn’s son.

MR. B. JR: Are you kidding? Of course I knew Shana well. We practically grew up together.

Q. Would you describe yourself as friends?

MR. B. JR: Hardly even that. I mean, I’m not a snob or anything, but she was the gardener’s daughter, for pete’s sake.

Q. So you had no “romantic” interest in the girl?

MR. B. JR: I knew she was damned attractive. I’d have to be blind not to notice that.

Q. Mr. Blackthorn, would you please look at these receipts? They’re from a hotel in Atlantic City. Apparently you spent a weekend there with a girl who fits Shana Ward’s description.

MR. B. JR: Yes, I was in Atlantic City, but the girl was somebody else, same dark hair. I can’t remember her name now. Just somebody I picked up on the boardwalk.

Q. Mr. Blackthorn, do you own a knife?

MR. B. JR: Who, me? I think I’ve got a Swiss Army knife somewhere in the attic. Want me to look for it?

Q. I meant something like a hunting knife, or a letter-opener.

MR. B. JR: I once had a wooden letter knife, but don’t ask me where it is now. It was carved mahogany. My aunt gave it to me as a gift.

The third interrogation was with Blackthorn’s wife.

Q. You and Mr. Blackthorn sleep in separate bedrooms?

MRS. B: My husband is a very restless sleeper.

Q. But you didn’t hear anything yourself the night of the murder?

MRS. B: This house is quite soundproof, you know. But it’s obvious what happened. That awful girl met some lover of hers in the study—in our own home. They must have had a quarrel, and he stabbed her. People like that often carry knives, you know.

Q. Almost everybody owns a knife of some sort.
MRS. B: If you mean kitchen knives, we have a cook who handles those. I doubt very much that Mrs. Muller committed this murder.

Q. I was thinking more about a letter knife. Do you own one?

MRS. B: I suppose I do. No, come to think of it, it vanished two or three years ago. It was so pretty, too, carved completely of ivory from India or someplace. I'm sure one of the servants stole it. It's so hard to find honest help these days. I've already fired two girls this year.

Q. Mrs. Blackthorn, I hope you won't be offended by this next question. But did you ever accuse your husband of flirting with the gardener's daughter?

MRS. B: I will not excuse such a question! I never did anything of the kind! Who told you such a thing?

Q. Actually, it was one of your ex-maids. But perhaps she was only being vindictive.

Mac was about to put away the folder, but decided to take one more look at the photograph of the flower garden where Shana Ward had spent the last moment of her life.

Now there was something evil about the blooms which surrounded the slaughtered girl. The pink hydrangea, the purple irises, the red roses... they all seemed so indifferent to the cruel sight in the Blackthorn garden. And perhaps the instrument of murder lay beneath the soil which nourished them...

Mac was just sliding the drawer shut when Chief Riley entered. The softball game had ended early due to rain.

"So it's true," Riley grunted. "You're spending half your time on that damned murder case! I warned you about that, Bruyard!"

"I'm sorry, Chief."

"You'll be a lot sorrier if you keep it up! I'll transfer your butt out of here, and there might not be another assignment. You can buy yourself a rocking chair!"

Mac spent a miserable night—not because of Riley's threat, but because he knew that there would be no more joy in his life if he didn't solve the mystery of Shana Ward's murder, that there would be no rest for her ghost if her killer wasn't brought to justice.

He was just dozing off when the phone rang, and a voice he didn't know said:

"Detective Bruyard? This is Jeremy Ward."
The Haunted Garden

It took him a moment to realize that he was talking to Shana's father, the gardener on the Blackthorn estate.

"I hope you don't mind me calling," Ward said. "I've been hearing all over town about how you're trying to find out who killed my little girl. You're the only one, Mr. Bruyard, the only one! Nobody else wants to find out, and I'll tell you why! It's because of the Blackthorns! Everybody in Springmill is afraid of the Blackthorns! Afraid they'll call their loans, or close their businesses, or fire somebody in their family!"

"Look, Mr. Ward," Mac said, but got no further.

"I know who killed her, you see! I don't know which one exactly, but I know it was one of them! One of those high and mighty Blackthorns! The old man was after her, and so was the son, and old Mrs. Blackthorn was just plain jealous of both of them! One of them killed my little girl, and has to be punished. Please—can you come and talk to me?"

It was almost one a.m., but if Mac was going to disobey the Chief's last injunction, perhaps it was the best time.

"I'll be right over," he said.

The gardener's cottage was bigger than Mac expected, a square stone house with three chambers and a large potting shed. Jeremy Ward slept in the smaller of the two bedrooms, and kept the other door shut against memories. The living room was comfortable enough, but Mac wasn't, especially as Jeremy Ward continued to moan his complaints.

"I should have left this place," he said. "Then I wouldn't have to keep on looking at those people, knowing one of them killed my girl..."  Mac was relieved when Ward remembered that he had a chore in the potting shed.

"Got to fill up half a dozen vases," he said. "Mrs. Blackthorn likes flowers all over the house. I make up fresh bouquets for her every couple of days..."

Mac looked at the six vases in the shed, each filled with different species of flower: hydrangea, peonies, foxglove, roses, delphinium, irises.

"They say there's a language of flowers, don't they?"

"I wish there was," Jeremy Ward said bitterly. "I wish they could talk. So they could tell me who killed my Shana."

Mac looked around with interest. When he spotted the flashlight, he picked it up and asked:
The Haunted Garden

"Tell me something. Is the shed door always open?"

"Why, yes, I guess it is. Not many locks in this house."

"Then anyone can get in here, pick up a flashlight, and a spade?"

"I suppose so."

"Even a ghost?" Mac said.

"What are you talking about?"

"I just realized who's been haunting this garden," the detective said. "It's the same evil spirit who killed your daughter. Somebody who might have gotten nervous when I started asking questions..."

There was a well-thumbed planting manual on the scarred wooden table. Mac picked it up, and found the pages that were dogeared, describing the flowers that Jeremy Ward was sorting so carefully.

Suddenly, he looked up and said:

"Mr. Ward—all these flowers you're arranging—are they the same flowers that were in the garden a year ago?"

"That's right. They're called perennials. Come up every year."

"Will you do me a favor?"

"What's that?"

"I want you to mark those flower groupings. Just put a card on each one of them, naming the flower they contain. Can you do that?"

"But what for?"

"Just as a little demonstration for the police... And while you do that, I've got a little digging of my own to do."

He picked up the flashlight and spade and went out into the Blackthorn garden. There was a full moon, and it helped guide him to the flower bed where the murder weapon was buried.

The next morning, as he showed the clues to Chief Riley and the others, he not only put Shana Ward's killer in prison, but the ghost of Shana Ward to rest.
SOLUTION: Where did Mac Bruyard dig? How did he know the weapon would be there? And how did he identify the killer? Assemble the puzzle and see the clues. Then see if you can solve the mystery of The Haunted Garden!

Detective Bernhard realized there was something different about the flowers in last year’s photographs and the flowers planted which led her to suspect the body might have been interred. They were not. The photos taken last year showed pink hydrangeas. The hydrangeas the Detective found in this year’s garden were blue. Why would make the color change from one year to the next?

The answer was: the presence of injected ingredients in the garden. The ingredients—anti-meat—had been mixed with the particular ingredients. He dug up the letter knife buried in the garden. He was the only one who owned a knife completely made of meat. In a recent explosion, the body received injuries from the bomb site.

The End