

Trinity

A Haydn & Speaker Mystery

Chapter 5



A creature of habit always, Connie Haydn was at his most predictable on Sunday mornings. The enlarged weekend edition of the Herald and Examiner lay at the heart of his program. He read several sections at the breakfast table (starting, during the baseball season, with the Sports section), moved to the den to watch the Sunday morning interview shows—in an election year they were both more predictable and yet more interesting—while reading the other sections. Finally, only after harvesting all that the paper offered, he'd start putting around with weekly chores—house cleaning, yard work, shopping—whatever the season of the year and the state of supplies required.

On this Sunday morning, May 14, as he walked down the driveway to pick up the morning paper, his mind turned to the discussion of the previous evening. Even though the day was dawning warm and sunny, the investigation still seemed foggy and, perhaps even worse, shapeless. When he opened his street-side

mailbox to take out the paper, he was struck first by the redness of the box's interior, then by its wetness, and then (and the transition from one impression to the next was very fast) by its sheer wrongness. He hesitated, stepped back, and then plunged his hand into the box to pull out a soggy newspaper, dripping with blood. He immediately dropped it and looked around. No one was in sight; nothing untoward marred the quiet Sunday morning on Palmer Street, but for this grossly confusing thing. He picked up a stick lying on his lawn and prodded the wrapped-up newspaper open. There, revealed in the middle of it as it fell open, was the body of a decapitated squirrel.

For a moment Connie could only stare at the soggy mess lying on the ground in front of him. Ever the rationalist, he first wondered how a mistake of this sort could have been made. But it took him only a moment of reflection to realize that the appearance of a mutilated squirrel in his morning paper could not have been a mistake. Someone had put it there deliberately. And if its appearance was deliberate, then someone was sending him a message. This realization led immediately to the next: someone was telling him, in a very visceral manner, that he should stop looking into the death of Vincent d'Amato. Connie understood that to some degree he was responding as film and television shows had taught him to respond, for in both

these media the unexpected arrival of a dead animal had become an almost conventional form of warning. But precisely because the message was iconic, it was also clear. The sender, whoever he (or she) was, could be confident that the recipient would understand.

Connie walked quickly back into his house, pulled a plastic wastepaper basket bag out of its packaging, returned to the foot of his driveway, and with the help of three sticks prodded the newspaper-cum-corpse into the bag. He then walked to his garage, deposited the bag on the convenient seat of his bicycle, and went into the house to wash his hands and phone the sheriff.

A woman's voice answered, and Connie asked to speak with George Fielding. Learning that the deputy was not yet in —“this is, after all, Sunday morning,” the woman's voice unhelpfully explained— Connie asked that Fielding be told that Connie Haydn (“that's H-A-Y-D-N”) had called, and that the matter was urgent. The woman's voice sounded unimpressed, but offered an assurance that the message would get through. Connie was briefly puzzled that he could pronounce a matter “urgent” and not arouse deeper curiosity from the person handling phone messages.

The deputy returned the call at about 9:15 a.m. “What's up, Connie?” He sounded more puzzled than distressed.

Connie explained what had happened in his customary lapidary style, hoping Fielding was appreciating his ability to be concise in explanation and accurate with respect to important detail.

“Did you see anyone?”

“No. It was just like any pleasant, spring Sunday morning. No people, no traffic.”

“Do you know what time your paper is delivered?”

“No. I’m afraid I don’t even know who delivers it. But that’s got to be information that we can get from the Herald and Examiner office.”

“I’m sure it is. If you went to pick the paper up at 8:15, the window of opportunity was pretty narrow, I’d say.” Fielding paused. “I’ll get on it right away.” There was another silence, longer this time. “What are you going to do?”

Connie was pleased that George Fielding had not wasted time with silly talk or even with advice. “I’m not sure yet. I need to talk with Shrug. We knew that we might stir someone up if we started nosing around in an old murder case. I think that our decision was that we wouldn’t allow ourselves to be intimidated. But it was easier to say that before anyone went around thrusting mutilated rodents into our lives. I’ll let you know if we’ve decided prudence is the better part of valor.”

Once he had hung up, Connie realized that his hand

was trembling. He stared at it and tried to will it to quiescence. The disobedient hand kept fluttering. So he picked up the phone to let Shrug Speaker know that the investigation had collided with unpleasant reality.



Shrug was out when the phone rang. He made a point on Sundays of attending the 9:30 service at Trinity Episcopal, for Father Clark tended to reserve his full-fledged sermons for the 11:00 a.m. service, and Shrug—much as he admired Allen Clark—was not a fan of his (or of any clergyman's) sermons. Attitudes toward the preached word in fact constituted the most important divide in the Humboldt parish. Those who shared Shrug's preference for a short homily tended to attend at 9:30; those who enjoyed basking for twenty minutes in a sea of sonorous sounds liked to attend at 11:00. Father Clark was an African-American. He had been raised a Pentecostalist, and while he had later abandoned the ecstatic fervor of the old-time religion for the reasonable discipline of the church that Hooker called home, he had never foresworn its preaching techniques—repetition and fire, all undergirded with authority and delivered by the most magnificent preaching voice that Shrug had ever heard. While it

was likely that Allen Clark had been regarded as too theologically liberal for the religious tradition of his birth, in the capacious environment of the Episcopal Church he was clearly a theological conservative. He was uneasy about the ordination of women, uneasier still about the church's efforts to find grounds on which the various issues of sexuality bedeviling the Episcopal Church might be shoe-horned into compromise solutions. For Shrug, homosexuality was not an issue that loomed large. Though his body didn't understand the inclination, he had trouble understanding why some people found other people's sexual practices so disturbing. But he admired many of those, like Father Clark, who were disturbed, believing that they were holding out for a more important point of view—the conviction that on matters of doctrine the church should not pay much heed to the teachings of worldly wisdom or political correctness. The comparison he made in his own mind was to smoking: he didn't smoke himself and never had, for he knew smoking was bad for health, and yet he could only admire those who, in the face of all sorts of social and legal pressures, insisted on remaining smokers, as if a cigarette at the mouth was a badge of honor or even defiance. When he had once revealed this comparison to Connie, his friend had said his was a classic example of sloppy thinking.

Shrug had never mastered the kind of self-control that prevents a mind from wandering at unexpected moments during a church service. “It’s as if the mind has a mind of its own,” he thought. And with the discussion of the previous evening teasing his brain, he was more distracted than usual. The prayers went well enough, for Shrug felt authentically in need of God’s help as he tried to figure out the riddle of Vince d’Amato’s death. But Father Clark had scarcely begun his homily—something about what Jesus did in the forty days after His resurrection—when Shrug found his mind turning to the perplexing musical-theme cards. He went over each melodic fragment in his brain.

“The first tune and the third tune have some melodic potential, in 4/4 time,” he thought. Pause.

“The others don’t seem very likeable in either 4/4 or 3/4.” Pause. “What about harmonizations?” Again the first and third tunes seemed the most congenial, slipping easily into a 3/4 rhythm, with the opening note serving as a pickup in each case and with the harmony shifting, as appropriate, between a V chord and a I chord. “I kind of like that,” he said of number three.

“...Jesus appeared to many men and women; skeptics in our day never pay enough attention to the empirical evidence that...”

Shrug drove Father Clark's voice from his mind. "Why aren't there any bar lines?" he wondered. "And why no accidentals? And why, in every case, are we given only five notes, not four or six... or twenty?"

"...the disciples regrouped, overcoming the shock and disappointment of Good Friday, and, drawing strength from the women who had remained faithful, they..."

On this day Shrug wasn't interested in the dilemma of the disciples. "Maybe these tunes aren't really pieces of music at all. Maybe they're signs of something else. But of what?" He let his concentration slip its leash, and again Father Clark intruded.

"...the heat of a Palestinian noontide would overwhelm those of us who are accustomed to the temperate climate of southern Ohio, and so we must..."

"Or maybe these tunes are coded messages." Shrug was suddenly excited. But a few experiments with spelling out the tunes showed the fatuity of that hypothesis, at least in any simple sense. "G-B-C-C-D. That's not very useful. We need some vowels. A-A-G-B-A." He stopped, then twisted his lips. "Aagba, AAG-ba, aag-BA." Pause. "That's not very useful either."

"...God needed some way to get His message out to the whole world, a world divided by tongues, skin colors, and recriminations..."

Shrug realized that Father Clark was pulling the congregation forward toward Pentecost and had just allowed his tongue to savor one of his favorite words—the wonderfully rich “recriminations,” which rolled slowly out of the preacher’s mouth with the stateliness of a vast ocean liner emerging from a bank of fog.

“Since the notes of the scale stretch only from A to G,” thought Shrug, pulling his mind in again, “there’s no way that they can be a straightforward code.” Pause. “Is it important that they come in fives? What does come in fives?”

“...the Old Testament and the New Testament speak with one voice on this matter, and the faithful Christian can have no doubt that...”

But the stream of “pents” and “quints” flowing through his head washed away the preacher’s cadences. “There are five fingers and five toes... and five chess pieces (excluding pawns)... and five feet in a pentameter... and five centuries in a quinquennium... and five players on a basketball team.” And even as Shrug began to chide himself for his silliness, a passion for finding fives in the world swept away his self-doubt.

“...there are five books in the Pentateuch... and five golden rings... and five wise maidens (five foolish ones too)... and five continents (if we separate Europe from Asia and don’t count Australia)... and five senses... and

five symbols at the door... and don't forget our current season of Pentecost..."

"...we can come to understand God's will for the world if we study scripture, heed the historic teachings of the church, and pray for..."

"...there are five sides to the Pentagon... and five events in the pentathlon... and five Olympic rings..."

"...words of the Nicene Creed..."

Those five words shook Shrug out of his pentatonic dream world and reminded him—"why didn't I think of that one earlier?"—of his responsibility to rejoin the congregation as the service moved toward its eucharistic high point. He generally found the moment of communion to be the most moving part of the Sunday morning service, and so he had no trouble breaking free from his thrall to fives—though it lingered long enough for him to realize that the Lord's Prayer contained only four petitions, not five. When the service ended, he chatted for a while with friends before walking home. The day was actually becoming hot! Whatever the calendar said, it would be—meteorologically speaking—the first day of summer.

And so it wasn't until well past 11:00 a.m. that Shrug got home and heard Connie's terse voice-mail announcement that their investigation was no longer a game.



Connie Haydn called Jimmy Lomax at 12:00 to ask if they could talk that afternoon. The two men were acquaintances, since their common interest in baseball brought them together several times a year, most particularly when Humboldt High's perennially outstanding baseball teams made their predictable appearance in the state tournament. Connie thought Lomax an intelligent younger man, and had often wondered if he taught some academic subject at the high school. When Lomax learned that Connie was looking into the possibility that Jason Bigelow had been innocent of murder, he quickly agreed to a conversation, proposing that the two men meet at the local sports bar at 3:00 p.m. Before hanging up, Lomax assured Connie that he'd help out in every way he could.

"Why are you and Shrug doing this?" Lomax asked after the two men ordered their beers.

Connie's answer was the by-now standard one. But recalling that Shrug's failure to honor the principle of full disclosure had not been well received by Rita Grabek, he opted for candor when he had to disclose how Jimmy Lomax's name had come to their attention.

"Shrug spoke with Rita Grabek the other night. She

told us you were a friend of Jason's."

"Ah yes, Rita. How is she?" The tone was flat, neither friendly nor hostile.

"She's fine—seems to be prospering in Seattle. And just so you know, she said that you and she had dated some and that the break-up had been, shall we say, unsettling."

Jimmy Lomax chuckled, though more to himself than openly. "Well, that's one way to put it." He gave thought to what he wanted to say next. "I asked her to marry me and she turned me down."

Connie was somewhat surprised. In his thirties, Jimmy Lomax was a famous bachelor in town and known as a ladies' man. Connie had assumed that any relationship between him and Rita Grabek had been one of convenience, not deep affection on either side. He waited to see if Lomax would say more.

"It was funny." Jimmy Lomax was almost speaking to himself. "I really cared for her and I really entertained the hope that she cared for me. I knew that George Fielding was using her, and I thought she'd appreciate a proposal—that sounds so old-fashioned, and I don't mean it in its old-fashioned sense anyway—a proposal that we live our lives together. She said she wasn't ready for marriage yet and might never be, and our relationship cooled quickly after that."

The first thought that came to Connie was how much America had changed in fifty years. It was almost inconceivable that any girl he had known about 1950 would have spoken so lightly of the prospect of future marriage; it was totally inconceivable that in the rivalry between George Fielding and Jimmy Lomax for the affections of Rita Grabek the racial difference between the two men would have gone unmentioned.

“But you wanted to talk about Jason Bigelow.” Lomax paused, as if to gather steam. “I was, as Rita told you, a friend of his. But it was an odd sort of friendship, especially in the last weeks before his trial. He suddenly claimed that his wife had been having an affair with Vince d’Amato. I know this will sound silly, but he wanted me to investigate the matter, even though Vince was now dead. I’d taken a course in private investigation once at Hocking Hills Community College, and he thought I was now prepared to ferret out all sorts of hidden truths about Patricia. I turned him down, of course. My training had been too limited, and since I regarded Patricia as a friend too, I didn’t want to do anything that might hurt my relationship with her. Still, right up to the time of his trial he kept asking for my help.”

“Do you know why he had that suspicion?”

“Not really. D’Amato was a creep who often cheated

on his wife Bianca. And Jason thought Patricia had begun acting strangely the previous spring. But that's hardly a foundation for a suspicion of infidelity. I told him so. And I never learned what Patricia thought of the accusation."

"Did you tell Rita Grabek about this?"

"No. We were moving apart by this time—in fact, she was seeing more of George Fielding—and I didn't want to give her information that might further inflame her hope to pin a murder charge on Jason."

"Inflame is a strong word. Is that how Rita's pursuit of her story struck you—as something prompted by a driving passion?"

Lomax considered this question for a few seconds before replying. "Maybe that's too strong a word. Rita always struck me as a pretty fair-minded person. But I think it's safe to say that once she focused her sights on Jason, she became blinkered when considering alternatives. I didn't want to give her further ammunition. Not that it did any good. The jury found out about his dislike of Vince, and that iced the cake."

"Do you think he killed Vince d'Amato?"

"No, I'm sure he didn't. That's why I want to help you. At the time of his trial I was uncertain about it, especially since he wouldn't produce an alibi. But later he wrote me a letter from prison. Or rather a note. It was short and to the point. Something like, 'don't lose

faith in me, Jimmy. I'm innocent and sooner or later the real killer will be found.' Well, maybe. But now it's too late for Jason."

Connie decided the time was ripe to ask the sexuality question. "We've been told that Jason Bigelow was gay. Do you know anything about that?"

Jimmy Lomax was visibly staggered. "That's absurd." His voice dropped. "In fact, he often spoke of his dislike of gays and he called them by disparaging names. Sometimes he even shouted at them. Whoever told you that is either ignorant or pulling your leg or a liar."

Connie's smile was internal. He knew enough pop psychology to recognize evidence suggestive of self-loathing or concealment when he saw it. But he didn't push the matter. Instead he moved to his final question. "This sounds rather theatrical, but... can you remember where you were the night of the fire?"

Lomax smiled, and not entirely pleasantly. But his reply seemed unruffled. "Yeah, that's easy. It was 1996. I was at Muirfield for the Memorial Golf Tournament. That's the year Tom Watson surprised everyone by winning. I spent each night of the tournament in Columbus."

Connie was on the point of asking if Lomax had proof of being in Columbus at that time when he chose instead to censor himself, realizing that Lomax was a

friend, that he himself was not a policeman, and that nothing whatsoever had suggested that Jimmy Lomax was the murderer. “There will always be later opportunities to seek evidence, if it becomes necessary,” he thought to himself.

The two men left the sports bar together and walked three blocks before separating. “On balance,” Connie thought to himself as he squinted into the afternoon sun, “Jimmy Lomax’s recollections tend to hurt Jason.” He realized that he felt disappointment. He also realized that Jimmy Lomax did not strike him as a decapitator of squirrels.



At the very moment that Connie Haydn and Jimmy Lomax were entering the sports bar, Shrug Speaker finally reached Tyler Delsin by phone. Shrug had almost given up, three efforts earlier in the afternoon having proved fruitless. Delsin listened quietly to Shrug’s request for a conversation and invited him over. “I’m leaving town tomorrow for a few days, so if we don’t talk today, we may have to wait til mid-week.”

When Shrug reached Delsin’s house at about 4:00 – Delsin had asked for an hour to “straighten the place up”—he still hadn’t decided whether to begin with Vince d’Amato or Jason Bigelow. But his first sight of

the chiropractor, attired in knickers and a tam o'shanter and looking for all the world like Payne Stewart—"what is it with this town and golfing, anyway?" he thought—blew the investigation out of his mind. The four manxes that swept around Delsin's feet when he opened the door added to Shrug's sense of modest disorientation. Shrug was not an animal fancier, and cats in particular seemed to him to be unfriendly companions. Delsin invited him into what in most houses would have been the living room, but which in this residence was a photo gallery. Arrayed along the walls and on the various tabletops was a rich assortment of pictures, all featuring Tyler Delsin with someone else. Many of the people standing next to the chiropractor were not faces familiar to Shrug. But some were. There was Delsin with Ronald Reagan, Delsin with Bill Clinton, Delsin with Woody Hayes, Delsin with Wayne Newton, Delsin with Jessye Norman, Delsin with Jack Nicklaus, Delsin with Shaquille O'Neill, and of course Delsin with Britney Spears. "Is it really this easy to get one's picture taken with a celebrity?" Shrug wondered.

"I'll bet you want to know why I visited Vince d'Amato on the day of the fire," Delsin said, pulling Shrug back into the world of real people. "That's what Ms Grabek was curious about, and you're probably following the same line of investigation."

“Well, yes, because it’s...”

Delsin jumped back in. “Vince and I both attended Our Lady of the Sorrows.” Shrug recognized the name of Humboldt’s large Catholic church. “On the previous Sunday Father Gonzalez had told us of Vince’s ankle injury and added that Vince might appreciate a visit while he was recuperating, especially since he was separated from his wife. I didn’t know Vince all that well, but since I enjoy baking, I made some cookies for him and took them over early in the afternoon. We had a short conversation. He was hobbling about, clearly in pain. He said he expected several visitors that afternoon, and so he was staying downstairs until after dinner. As I was leaving, Mr. Wilkinson arrived, and we exchanged pleasantries before he went in and I returned home.”

Shrug was making notes on his pad, pleased that the times and order of the visits on the day of the fire was emerging so easily.

“What did you do after you left?” Shrug hoped it sounded innocent, almost off-hand. He really wanted to know if Delsin could account for his whereabouts in the evening of that day.

“I had plans for Columbus that night, and so I needed to get home to get ready.”

Shrug could think of no unprovocative way of pursuing the matter of the unidentified plans, and so he

asked whether Tyler Delsin remembered anything about Vince d'Amato's mood that afternoon.

"He seemed happy enough, I guess. But he was in pain. As I said, we weren't close friends, but he was getting a little stir-crazy and appreciated the company and a chance to talk. We discussed the building project at Our Lady of the Sorrows—he was quite interested in that—and the Memorial Tournament. He said he missed Bianca. Nothing very deep or personal or unexpected. Oh, and he liked my cookies. When I left I had the feeling of satisfaction you get when you make a little effort to do a good turn, and find the effort appreciated."

Shrug contemplated the gap between the bizarreness of Tyler Delsin's attire and setting and the gentle conventionality of his attitudes. "I came expecting to meet some sort of attention-seeking oddball, and I've found a nice guy," he thought to himself.

"What can you tell me about Jason Bigelow? Rita Grabek said that you were one of his closest friends."

"I suppose that's right, though it really shows how impoverished Jason was for friends. He'd begun brooding over his marriage. Wondering if Patricia was faithful. Trying to figure out if she had a lover." Delsin paused, smiled, looked at Shrug, and quickly said, "Oh no, not me. I don't know if she was fooling around, but if she was, I wasn't the paramour."

“How often do you hear that word?” Shrug wondered.

“I suppose I thought it peculiar that she took up again with Gene Simons so quickly afterwards, but then lonely people need...” He didn’t finish the thought.

“Just how quickly did Mrs. Bigelow and Mr. Simons resume their high school friendship?” Shrug felt slightly amused at his clumsy choice of words.

“I don’t know for sure. But if something hadn’t been rekindled earlier, then it was certainly launched while Jason was in prison, because Gene and Patricia got married very soon after Jason died. People were talking.”

If the exact dates were important, Shrug knew that they could be gotten. Meanwhile he felt again his gratitude for the human propensity to enjoy the sharing of gossip. It made informal investigating so much easier. Shrug also felt his interest in Gene Simons rising swiftly.

“Do you know anything about Jason Bigelow’s unused alibi for the evening of the fire? Can you imagine why he might choose to withhold it?”

“No and no. That was very disconcerting to those of us who wanted to believe in his innocence. And I know it upset Patricia too. But he was unbending. I can almost hear him shouting at us: ‘I didn’t do it. I was somewhere else. And I’m not going to say where.’ I couldn’t tell whether pride or fright lay behind the silence—or maybe something else even—

but desperate as his plight was, he wouldn't provide an alibi. End of story."

"Connie and I have been told that Jason Bigelow was gay. Do you know anything about this?" Shrug felt awkward putting the question forward, for he wondered if Tyler Delsin himself were homosexual, and he feared that if he were, all the trust that the conversation has thus far generated might be dissipated.

Delsin's reply seemed unproblematic, however. "I hadn't heard that. Almost anything is possible, I suppose. But I'd be surprised if it turned out that Jason was gay."

"Do you know why Jason visited Vince d'Amato that afternoon? I wouldn't have thought them to be friends."

"I have no idea. As I say, I knew Vince only through occasional meetings at church, and while I knew Jason better, I don't recall him ever talking about Vince. But then, there are lots of things I don't know about lots of the people I know."

Thereafter Shrug allowed their talk to slide away from the investigation. To the extent that he was trying to determine what Jason Bigelow's alibi might have been, the conversation had been useless. But he had picked up some other useful kernels of information. Maybe it would all make a pattern some day. Besides, a book entitled *Five-Star Restaurants of Europe* that lay on the coffee table in Delsin's living

room reminded him of his effort to wring meaning from the cards with five notes. Eager to return to that puzzle, Shrug enjoyed two recently-baked cookies, shared some thoughts on investing in Enron—"it's doing well, but I'm very conservative these days—if Bush wins, the market may fall hard"—and took his leave of Humboldt's eccentric chiropractor. The brief visit to the kitchen had provided Shrug with yet another hint of Delsin's preference for an unconventional ambience, for it allowed him to realize that each room of the house was painted a starkly different color—forest green or turquoise or scarlet or orange or yellow—and left him with the odd sensation that the house was some sort of celebratory banner.

"Could Tyler Delsin be the man who planted the dead squirrel in Connie's paper?" Shrug wondered as he made his way home. It seemed unlikely. But in this investigation everything was turning out to seem unlikely.



Shrug ate a late-afternoon snack before returning to the mystery of the tunes on the cards and of their connection with IBM. He massacred the first movement of Schubert's B flat major sonata before aurally testing the harmonizations of the tunes against the mental

judgments he had made in church. His opinions did not change: whatever meaning the tunes carried, it was probably not musical. He then opened up his associative faculties again, in the hopes that by reflecting on “five”—by letting “fiveness” flow through his brain—he might see some meaning in these five-membered melodies.

“There are five Great Lakes... five stages of grief... ‘Hawaii Five-O’...” The famous theme song thumped its way through his head. “And don’t forget ‘Slaughterhouse Five’ and ‘The Jackson Five.’” He smiled: “For that, I deserve a high five.” Then he tried to rally his powers of self-discipline. “This is silly. I’m not allowing myself to think straight. If the tunes are a code, then I need some referent that might have meaning—or rather, that might have different meanings for different note patterns. Lakes and stages of grief and Olympic rings aren’t very helpful as referents. I need to think of something useful that these tunes might point to.” He walked over to his desk, sat down, and began fingering through the mail that had arrived the previous day. Two bills. The Friday edition of *The Christian Science Monitor*. Several ads. An offer of a credit card. Then he suddenly stopped fingering and stared hard at the mail. They all had addresses. The addresses all had zip codes. And the zip codes all had five numbers!

This was worth exploring. Suppose each tune represents a zip code. If so, then each tune would represent a place—"not an address—the tunes have only five digits, not nine," he thought." If so, then maybe there is something significant about that place. Shrug felt his excitement rising. Maybe something happened there. Maybe something is there. Or maybe somebody went there or mailed something there or knows something about somebody or some thing there. The possibilities rolled on, and Shrug realized that what he needed to do first was test his theory. And to do that, he needed to figure out how to translate notes into numbers.

Happily for him, the task was quite simple. He knew that every scale was divided into eight tones, designated by the numbers 1 through 8. Since all the tunes on the cards were apparently in the key of C, he could begin with the assumption that C equaled 1, D equaled 2, and so forth. As for the two missing digits, 0 and 9, he could get both by extending his scale one note at each end. "This is fantastic," Shrug thought, deeply pleased with his Eureka moment. "Now if only it's true!"

It took him only a minute to translate the six tunes into presumptive zip codes.

50112

66506

23185

45701

97702

01267

Thereupon he began googling to summon up the locations designated by these zip codes. The first was Grinnell, Iowa. "There's a college there," he thought. The second was Manhattan, Kansas. "I know that name, but I can't remember why." The third was Williamsburg, Virginia. "That's where the restored colonial village is located." The fourth was Athens, Ohio. "That's just a bit south of here. The home of Ohio University." The fifth was Portland, Oregon. "That's fairly near Rita Grabek's new home town," he thought, with the easterner's typical tendency to conflate the states of the Pacific Northwest. The sixth was Williamstown, Massachusetts. "That's where Williams College is."

Shrug's mind was flying now. "At least three of these places are homes to colleges or universities. Maybe they all are." He looked over the list again. "Oh sure, Williamsburg is the site of William and Mary College. So that's four." He was exultant, for he now knew his hunch was right. All that needed to be done was to identify the institutions of higher education in Kansas and Oregon. An almanac and ten minutes of time sufficed for that task, and Kansas State and Reed College were added to the

list. Every tune on a card referred to a college or university address.

“But what does it have to do with IBM?” he wondered. Possibilities quickly came to his mind—that IBM was building in these locations, that it was providing endowment money or scholarships to these schools, that it was recruiting staff from them. “Who knows?” he finally reflected. “I need more information. I need to go to the newspaper files and see what IBM might have been doing with these schools back in 1996. And if that doesn’t help, I can just ask IBM outright and see what they say.” Feeling triumphant, he returned to the piano and made the sad discovery that conquering the code of the tunes hadn’t made conquering the intricacies of Schubert any easier.

Later that evening, before going to bed, Shrug phoned Connie to tell him of the breakthrough. Neither man knew whether the six college towns were related to Vince d’Amato’s death, and both were surprised that d’Amato could read music. But Shrug’s decoding achievement was still impressive, and Connie told him so. He added that since he was seeing President Morrison the next evening, he’d ask her if the academic grapevine had passed on any information about IBM’s involvement with these (and maybe other) colleges and universities. Each friend noticed that the other did not speak of the dead squirrel. Their

mutual silence told each of them that they were not going to allow themselves to be intimidated by theatrical threats. By unspoken agreement, the investigation would continue.