

Oh Darling

A Murder Mystery

Chapter 1

As she drove up the shady tree lined driveway towards the farmhouse, Kathy Clarkson tried to suppress her frustration; why couldn't people wait to die or be killed till after Christmas Day. She had been staying overnight with her family and was anticipating a very festive family dinner when the phone call came through to say a body had been found on the Anderson farm just out of town. As Detective Inspector it was her duty to respond; so here she was, and far from happy about it. As Kathy walked from the car to the front door her eyes did the customary scan; looking for anything out of place, any clues as to what had happened here and why.

She rang the front door bell and after what seemed an unusually long time, a man and woman jointly answered the door. The woman had the appearance of an earthy farmer's wife, wearing jeans, polo shirt, riding boots and no makeup. It was clear that she had been crying as her eyes were puffy and red rimmed. She introduced herself as Suzanne Anderson and the man beside her as Geoff Grimes, a cousin visiting from America. Geoff was overly loud and appeared somewhat excitable as he pumped Kathy's hand in welcome. "Come on in, come on in" he drawled. Kathy followed the two of them into a large homely living room, with a wood fire at the far end. There were three more adults and a teenage boy sitting around the fire in uncomfortable silence. They all looked up as Kathy was ushered in.

"Now, I suppose you want to know who everyone is," Suzanne queried, and went on to introduce each person, one by one.

The sole woman in the group was expensively dressed and had a somewhat haughty look. Suzanne introduced her as Gillian Anderson, her late husband's sister. This was a timely piece of information, clarifying that the deceased person was the farmer, Clive Anderson. There appeared to be a palpable tension between Suzanne and her sister in law. Next to be introduced was a middle aged man, balding and slightly overweight, Kathy made a mental note that he looked harmless therefore probably wasn't, it

appeared that he was the next door neighbour. The teenage boy was the neighbour's son who was working for the Andersons, helping out in the dairy.

"I would appreciate it if one of you would care to tell me where and when the body was found, and who found," it asked Kathy, adding that she hoped no one had moved the body. She noted that Gillian and Geoff Grimes gave each other a furtive glance.

Suzanne as wife of the deceased spoke up first. Through her tears she explained that Clive had not come to bed the night before. She did not worry unduly as he and Geoff had been celebrating Christmas Eve with generous amounts of whiskey and song, she had gone to bed and left them to it. When she woke up in the morning and discovered Clive had not come to bed, she expected to find him slumped and sleeping in the lounge. Feeling annoyed that he was likely to be hung-over on Christmas Day she went downstairs to find him. All was silent downstairs, neither he nor his drinking partner were anywhere to be seen. She put on a coat and boots and walked outside, checking the shed, the dairy and the stables and calling out to him, there was silence. Now somewhat concerned she went back inside to find someone else to help her find him.

Gillian and Geoff Grimes both responded to Suzanne's call for help. They emerged from their separate rooms and down the stairs. Suzanne turned to Geoff, anticipating that he would be able to throw some light on where her husband might be. He looked a bit sheepish and explained that they had been in the dining room playing poker till 3am, when he had retired to bed leaving Clive to tidy up. All three of them rushed through to the dining room where they found Clive lying in front of the fireplace, cold, stiff and clearly dead. He also had a severe head wound from which a large amount of blood had been seeping. Suzanne's reaction was to be expected, she had flung herself down beside him and tried to shake him awake, calling his name and becoming more distraught by the minute. When it was clear that no amount of shaking or calling was going to rouse him, she'd begun to sob hysterically. Gillian had looked on dispassionately, leaving Geoff to do the comforting. They all reassured Kathy that Clive's body was still where they had found it in the dining room, but they had covered him with a blanket.

"OK," said Kathy, "I am going to have to interview you all one by one, so please don't leave the house".

She phoned for the Crime Scene Investigation team.

Suzanne was first to be interviewed and was not able to add anything to the information she had already provided. When Kathy probed into their relationship, asking if they had been having any marital problems, Suzanne became even more upset. She said they had recently been having a lot of rows about Clive's excessive drinking, but stated that she loved him dearly and would never hurt him. Kathy noted this information and asked for Gillian to come through.

Gillian arrived with an arrogant air, expressing annoyance that she had to be interviewed.

"He is my brother, why on earth do you think I would have anything to do with murdering him?"

"What was your relationship like" Kathy asked.

"Apart from the fact that he inherited all this, the farm and house when our parents died, I suppose he was a reasonable brother" she responded.

Kathy asked and was told that Mr. and Mrs. Anderson senior had both been killed in a car crash two months ago. It materialized that Geoff Grimes had been driving. Kathy dismissed Gillian and asked her to call him into the room.

Geoff arrived, unnaturally loud and effusive given the circumstances. Kathy questioned him about the car accident and his role in it, he referred her to the full accident report which the police already had. She then went on to ask about the game of poker; did they often play, did they play for money and if so had either of them lost money last night. Geoff admitted that he had taken Clive to the cleaners, but there were no hard feelings and that the wins and losses evened out during their regular games.

The neighbour James McCarthy was next to be interviewed and Kathy agreed to interview him together with his son Andrew. It appeared that Andrew was a troubled, surly, young man, was not coping at school and had left of his own accord. He said he wanted to work outdoors and his Dad had approached Clive Anderson to see if there was any work he could do on their farm. Clive had kindly agreed to take Andrew on and teach him the ropes of working in a dairy. The Anderson's had an extensive dairy herd and were major milk suppliers to the local Coop. James was extremely grateful to Clive for giving his son a break. He said he was a good man.

Andrew interrupted his Dad to say that he was not such a good man, reminding him, "The day before yesterday, Mr. Anderson had really lost his temper and abused me. I told you Dad, he was really angry and threatened to fire me."

Kathy made a note of this and asked Andrew to explain what had happened to make Mr. Anderson so angry.

"Nothing," Andrew and his father simultaneously replied.

(Pat Matthews)

Chapter 2

Kathy cast her weary eyes upon the motley crew of could be murderers. She had been up till the wee hours of the morning, wrapping the last of the presents. Earlier that evening she had made a last minute, midnight dash to the shopping centre, much to her disgust. Kathy liked to make a close analysis of her potential purchases. Does it have any scratches; is it faded, dirty, overpriced? nothing escaped her attention. She had agonised for weeks over suitable gifts for her 3 nieces and 2 nephews, whose ages ranged from 4-8. In the end after close scrutiny off all the facts, she finally decided to purchase them all a copy of Mary Poppins.

What had just happened Kathy thought, had her mind drifted from the task at hand? This was a strange occurrence for her; usually all of her senses would be on high alert. Her gut instinct would kick in within seconds of arriving to the crime scene. She had unwavering trust in it and it, was never wrong. This secret weapon was the cause of much annoyance of her peers in London. Her male counter-parts in particular watched in dismay, as he climbed the ranks of Inspector Sargent much faster than any woman or man before her. This feeling was not a gentle passing nuance but more like plyers, knotting a piece of chain wire. She had this gift, or some would say curse since an early age and she could always spot a fake within 20 paces.

Kathy accepted this part of her nature with unwavering faith and consequently solved crimes at a lightning speed. But not this time, something was different; she waited a few seconds, nothing, nil, nada, zilch a big fat zero! What was happening was she too preoccupied with Christmas cheer and gastronomical delights?

She took a deep long breath, "focus, Kathy, focus" she whispered under her breath. She re-examined the details and as always started to formulate a motive. Rapidly, she crossed off her mental list of unlikely causes for such an abhorrent act. Kathy had always been quite dogmatic in her approach to solving a crime, good versus evil, white versus black but lately grey had started to sneak in, even if it was through the back door. Quiet little nudges villain or victim? Hero or coward? The lines were getting blurry and even if she did not want to acknowledge it, her body was speaking volumes.

Kathy's top Motives list was now completed: greed, revenge, self-defence, mental illness or her favourite, a crime of passion. Where was the CSI team she thought? They were taking their sweet time to get there, probably indulging in the last of the egg nog. She looked into the embers of the inviting fire and then at the stark contrast of poor

Clive's cold lifeless corpse. Or was Clive really deserving of her sympathy, was he a violent, abusive drunk who took out all of life's frustrations on his poor wife Suzanne?

Was Gillian the loving sister who adored her brother and wished him good fortune on his financial legacy or was she consumed with bitterness? Then there was Andrew, why had he left school? Did he have anger issues or was he a sensitive soul, being bullied and could not take it anymore? Oh and Geoff the over exuberant cousin, finally a nudge from the pit of her stomach! She knew he had not committed the act, but he knew something, was he protecting someone? Questions, question but no answers all she could see was opaque.

Kathy had spent the last 5 years in London but had decided to return home to rolling gentle hills of Badgers Rift, even if it was to be for a short time. It's not that she disliked the hustle and bustle of the city, but as with every turn of her life, her restless spirit was always looking for a new adventure. She had made a few good friends but inevitably felt a little on the outer even with them, just hovering on the edges never quite fitting totally in. Like the stork had delivered her to the wrong planet.

For as long as she could remember she had always felt like this, even with her own family. She was the youngest of three daughters but was often asked in jest, if she was adopted? Her sisters were blonde, blue eyed amazons, whereas she was 5'2" on her tippy toes. They had long golden locks where Kathy had short black hair cut in a pixie style, that framed her almond eyes perfectly. Her siblings had petite size 8 figures while she was a shapely 14. Her shoulders were broad like a swimmer and she had taken great pride in being the unbroken arm wrestling champion of her local co-ed primary school.

They were sweet and placid where she had a sharp tongue and a steely glaze that had been known to make a grown man cry. Her parents embraced boisterous, energetic nature even though at times it bewildered them. Her sister's loved and tolerated her, but as they grew older their differences created discord within the family. Kathy felt and voiced openly that they had both just settled for dull, dreary husbands, the 4.5 bedroom cottage on the 3.5 acres, the 2.5 children, 1.5 pets and don't forget the 2 land rovers! The next 20 years nicely, safely catalogued. But if her time in the force had taught anything, it was that no one was ever safe.

She was really feeling annoyed now, where the hell was the team, they should have been there by now. As she observed her suspects again she pondered if they too had settled. Had they been conditioned into believing they had no choice? Were the cards

they were dealt the only ones in the pack? Had they surrendered to a life full of quiet desperation? Her brain pounded relentlessly against her head, but yet more questions! Kathy shut her eyes only to hear a faint whisper above the roar, asking, where they all just prisoners of their self-imposed jails?

(Tina Pleschka)

Chapter 3

As Kathy Clarkson mused, the cuckoo clock broke her reverie: *Merry Christmas* chirped the cuckoo in bird-speak - to the chagrin of its audience; the announcement of midday heralded the day as half over.

'Merry Christmas indeed. I need a drink. Anyone else?' sulked Clive the cadaver's sister Gillian, who promptly high-tailed it over to the whisky decanter and poured herself three fingers.

'Not the best idea, seeing the CSI will be here shortly and will expect sobriety, or should I say perhaps not take seriously anyone who has been imbibing,' scolded Kathy.

'Party pooper' quipped Gillian, put out, not used to anyone telling her what to do. She left the drink on the table to gather dust.

Kathy surveyed the group. All appeared tired. Suzanne, Clive's wife, was genuinely upset. The rest avoided eye contact. She voiced a niggling worry:

'James and Andrew' (at which they sat up, looking startled) 'Did you stay the night here?'

'Yes.'

'But why? Would you not have found the mood too tense, after the altercation you had with the deceased?'

'We knew nothing of it - the altercation I mean, when we invited them.' interrupted Suzanne too quickly.

'Well?' pressed Kathy. The two neighbours looked at each other, a subtle nod from Andrew the son giving his father tacit permission to do the talking.

'We wanted to make amends with Clive.'

'And did you?' queried Kathy.

'Well, not really. He didn't give us a chance to get near him all night.'

'What time did you arrive here last night?'

'Must've been round sevenish?'

'And those were the boots you wore?' Kathy asked, pointing to both his and the boy's shoes.

'Yes'

'Would it not have made more sense for you both to go home, seeing your property is only around 500 metres from here?'

The pair looked at one another as though having no idea why they stayed, or how to reply to her sensible question.

'Um well, we hoped to have a chance to catch Clive in the morning. You know, to patch things up.'

'What about the rest of you? Are you wearing the shoes you wore last night?'

The all agreed the shoes they now wore were those worn the night before. The boots Suzanne wore when she scanned the shed, dairy and stables lay mud-splattered on the doorstep.

'Tell me James, what was the altercation about? Why was Clive Anderson so angry that he threatened to fire your son?' Kathy decided more sense would emerge from the father.

He looked down to his hands, folding and refolding them as though negotiating a Rubix cube.

'It's all a bit embarrassing. You see, Andrew was just learning the ropes - how the machinery worked, that sort of thing. Clive decided to put him onto one of his manual milking machines rather than the automatic system. Well, Andrew got a bit careless and forgot to attach several teats. When Clive pulled him up about it, well, Andrew lost his temper and threw a bucket of milk over him.' At that point James crossed himself.

Gillian and Geoff stifled giggles.

'Is that true, Andrew?'

'Yes' confessed the boy.

'Did you tell anyone else about the altercation?'

The neighbours looked to each other, clearly worried.

'Only Geoff,' said James.

'What was his reaction?'

'He said that the old fart probably deserved it.'

'You *bastard*' blurted Suzanne.

Right, thought Kathy, just a seemingly concerned father and idiot son, mentally half crossing them off her list. But one never knew how or when someone would crack.

'Geoff, you appear to be the last person who saw Clive alive.' Geoff stared ardently at Kathy, as though she were about to give him a communion wafer. 'You said you won last night's poker game. How much were the winnings?'

Geoff stood up, puffed out his chest, ready for battle. 'It was five grand,' he drawled.

Gasps rang out through the room.

'And did he give you the money last night?'

'Well, um, yes he did.'

'And how much would you say you have won from Clive in the past during your poker games?'

'Maybe fifty, I don't know.'

'Fifty thousand dollars?'

'Yes.' Folds his arms, looks down.

'You *bastard!*' shouted Suzanne again. 'How could you do that to him, to us?'

'Well, what can I say? He was a lousy poker player.'

More tears sprang from the human sprinkler which was Suzanne.

A car pulled up. CSI, thought Kathy. After yellow taping the area, the man appeared at the open door, decked out in white overalls, head cover and gloves. Kathy ascertained his name was Karl and quickly briefed him on the situation. The man took measurements - body - body from fireplace etc. He sketched detailed diagrams of the scene, removed several hairs from the mantle, put labels on possible evidence, collected a scrape of blood from the wall. He asked questions of them all, many of which Kathy had already asked. Finally, he sprinkled white powder on some areas to collect fingerprints.

'And all of you stayed in your rooms last night?' asked Karl of the group.

'Yes, everyone echoed.'

'Remember I said I was going to say that I just went downstairs for a glass of milk?' said Andrew to his father.

'Shush,' scolded James.

'What?' asked Kathy.

Suzanne shot the boy a worried glance.

'Look, the poor kid's just confused. It's been a long day,' begged James.

'No. I want Andrew to tell me why he went downstairs last night,' insisted Kathy.

'Alright, sorry Dad. I heard Clive and Geoff arguing. After a while I went downstairs to the dining room, where I had heard the shouting. It looked like Clive had passed out on the chair. Geoff was sitting on a chair. He had all this money, hundred dollar bills sticking out of his pockets. . . Geoff told me he wanted me to do something for him.'

(Jane Ireland)

Chapter 4

'Sorry', said Kathy, 'did you say one hundred dollar bills?'

'Yair, sure.' replied Andrew.

'So, Geoff, why all the American dollar bills?' asked Kathy. 'Did you bring them all the way from the States? I know that you wouldn't have had to declare anything under ten thousand when you left, but why. You can't spend them here.'

'Well,' said Geoff, 'it added a bit of interest to the game. Clive didn't have any spare Bank of England pound notes, but I had the American dollars, so we played for those.'

'Unusual, but not illegal, I suppose,' said Kathy.

'What bothers me though, is that when I first arrived,' continued Kathy, 'you said that you had gone to bed at 3 leaving Clive to tidy up, but now I hear that Clive had already passed out in the chair when Andrew came downstairs, at which time you asked him to do something for you. Can you explain all that?'

'Sorry,' said Geoff, 'I was just a little befuddled. I guess that I had assumed that Clive would eventually wake up and tidy up before he went to bed. Then, when Andrew appeared, and because I was a tiny bit unsteady, and seeing that it was snowing, I asked Andrew to move my car, because I knew that it would be in the way of the farm workers when they arrived in the dark to start the milking at 6.30.'

'Ok, said Kathy, I'll leave it at that at the moment, but I'll be talking to you again about your movements.

She stonily surveyed the people in front of her in the living room. Their poses ranged from bored, to aggressive, to near emotional collapse. Incongruously, the Christmas tree stood in the corner, with its tiny coloured lights blinking over the colourful presents underneath.

To break the ice, Kathy said, 'Perhaps we could all adjourn for Christmas dinner, it's really getting quite late in the day. I know that some of you have been in the kitchen getting it all ready, and despite the circumstances, it would be a pity for the food to go to waste.'

Kathy ruefully remembered her own family who would be taking their own meal under very different circumstances.

Everyone pulled up a chair around the table, but took little from the roast meal set out on the serving plates.

When the meal was finished, and the dishes cleared and put in the dishwasher, they all adjourned to the living room where they sat in the chairs and settees pulled up around the fire.

‘Struck with a heavy blunt instrument from behind,’ whispered Karl, the Scene of Crime Officer, in her ear, surprising her. She’d forgotten that he was there, even though he’d joined the family Christmas dinner. ‘I didn’t want to disturb you earlier.’

‘Thanks,’ said Kathy, but thought ‘Not a very difficult diagnosis’ and at least it confirms my suspicions. Now what could come easily to hand? Candlestick? No that’s too Cluedo. Sledge hammer? Really? It’s too heavy and would have left more of a mess. Back of an axe? In a farm house, seems plausible.’

Kathy walked slowly over to where Suzanne was sitting on the settee with her head in her hands, sobbing gently, and settled gently beside her. ‘Suzanne, I know that this is very difficult for you, but would you mind telling me where the wood shed is?’

‘What’, sobbed Suzanne gently.

‘What is this?’ barked Geoff. ‘We don’t need more wood inside, there’s plenty right there beside the fire.’

But Suzanne seemed to follow the logic, and said through renewed sobs: ‘The shed is just outside the back door, but the axe is kept in the boot room by the back door.’

Now having an inkling of what may have been the weapon, Kathy then began to review in her head the Means, Motive and Opportunity for each of the people who had been in the farmhouse overnight.

Firstly, Suzanne. Well, there doesn’t seem to be much of a motive, even if she did berate her husband from time to time over his drinking. But perhaps he was womanising? And even if both, would this kindly farmer’s wife really take to him with the back of an axe at around 4 in the morning when he was supposed to be up well before 6.30 to supervise the farm workers? It seemed an unlikely scenario. Suzanne’s shock had seemed to devastate her completely. Would she not have gone straight to the dairy to check for Clive, assuming that she’d woken up at about six, when Clive would have usually been getting out of bed? Even in a drunken stupor he would surely have remembered his cows. It’s a no-brainer for a dairy farmer to be fixated on his routine. So, perhaps because the he wasn’t in his usual place along with the farm-workers, and

because they hadn't seen him either, she came back to the house to look more fully. Makes sense.

Then there is her sister in law. She had grown up on this farm, and would have known intimately where everything was kept. Gillian was also no doubt angry that her parents had left the whole of the farm to her brother. She had worked on the farm just as much as he had during their schooldays, so would have expected due recognition for her contribution. Then, seeing her brother drinking to excess and gambling away what small profits the dairy farm was making could possibly have taken her over the edge, and she took her revenge. She also seemed to have been fully dressed early this morning when Suzanne called her for assistance in finding Clive, so may well have been up to no good some time earlier.

And what about pompous Geoff who lords it over everyone. How was it that he was driving the car in which Clive and Gillian's parents were killed? As no charges had been laid, maybe it was just an unavoidable accident. Perhaps he took a corner too quickly when driving on the wrong side of the road. It does take a bit of practice to go from keeping to the right in the USA to keeping left here. But what is he doing in England, seemingly for the rest of his life? Had he perhaps taken a shine to Suzanne, and was disgusted with Clive and his dissolute life? Which Geoff was no doubt contributing to, and deliberately perhaps, to hasten his end. But Suzanne obviously didn't like Geoff, her husband's cousin. Perhaps Suzanne knew something of Geoff's past in America. Perhaps he was escaping his reputation there. Too many questions, too many questions. Did the death of Clive's parents, and also the death of Clive, leave Geoff open to marrying Suzanne and taking over the farm? Was this what Gillian was upset about, losing her fortune, again?

So that leaves father and son McCarthy. Not the full quid those two. Seem to sponge off their kind neighbours too much. Kathy remembered that her initial instinct was that the father was harmless, meaning that he probably wasn't. So, what was it that James looked shifty about? Did he have designs on Suzanne? Would a liaison with her, apart from her obvious womanly charms, which Geoff possibly also appreciated, deliver to him a better future than that of his own financially insecure property? But probably a whack on the back of the head to her husband early on Christmas morning would not be conducive to endearing her to him. So, nothing clearer there. But, both James and Andrew seemed quite comfortable with staying over at Anderson's when their own house was only a short distance away. Maybe there was an unspoken relationship between James and Suzanne. Or maybe . . . maybe between Clive and Andrew.

That brings us to young Andrew. Obviously a little lost in the world. Couldn't cope with school. Apparently can't cope with direction in a work sense. How disposed to violence is he? Could he suddenly succumb to a fit of rage while ostensibly looking for a glass of milk? Was suddenly throwing a bucket of milk over his boss an indication of his anger management problems? And, how come Andrew didn't notice that Clive was more than just 'passed out on the chair', when he was talking to Geoff, but did notice the pockets filled with American notes?

Kathy's head was having trouble sorting all this out. Timing was obviously the key. But how to sort out who came downstairs after Geoff and Andrew had gone to bed, and Suzanne came down to look for Clive? That's probably between about 4 after Geoff and Andrew had gone upstairs, and about 6 when Suzanne woke at her usual time to get Geoff off to milking.

And, do I actually believe any of them?

(Don Gemmell)

Chapter 5

Karl from SOCO checked for the axe in its designated spot in the boot room and found it missing. He went out to the wood shed to see if it was there; damn there it was large as life, shiny and clear of blood. He figured it unlikely that the murderer would have put it in such an obvious place if it was the murder weapon. No matter how careful people were trying to get rid of evidence, they didn't usually succeed in these days of high technology. Doubts aside he collected the axe and took it back to the house ready for removal to headquarters. He and the rest of the SOCO team commenced a rigorous search of the rest of the house, whilst Kathy directed everyone to remain in the lounge. She took herself off to the dining room where she pulled out her notebook and started trying to make sense of the jigsaw puzzle.

It seemed that everyone had a possible motive, even if it was a weak one. Suzanne could possibly have been driven to murder by Clive's drinking and gambling, which was likely to be causing financial stress; Kathy made a note to look into the Anderson's finances, and whether Clive had a life insurance policy. Next was Gillian, who might think she was next in line to inherit the farm, Kathy made another note to see if Clive had left a will. Geoff, the dislikable cousin; well there could be something suspicious about the senior Andersons death in a car driven by him and Clive could have found out about it. The neighbour James had a possible motive to protect his son who may because of their row, deliberately or inadvertently have killed Clive. Think Kathy, think, she chided herself and got back to her note making. She reflected on everyone's behaviour when she had first arrived, Geoff was blustering, Suzanne was weepy, Gillian was arrogant and neighbouring father and son appeared bewildered, nothing to trigger her usual gut instinct. She decided to interview everyone a second time, and to come down a bit more heavily with her interview technique.

"Suzanne please come through to the dining room, I want to talk to you", said Kathy. Suzanne's tears began to flow again and she looked terrified. Kathy came straight to the point and asked whether Clive had a life insurance policy and a will; please find them she said; oh and also your latest bank statements both for the farm and personal. Suzanne left the room, head down and making a small sobbing sound. God is she genuine or not Kathy asked herself.

Whilst waiting for Suzanne to return she called Gillian who entered with her usual snotty and superior look, prompting Kathy to take an even tougher approach with her.

“Right sit down”, she said, “I want to know what is between you and Geoff, and I want to know why you have such an attitude. Something smells.”

Gillian looked furious and then to Kathy’s surprise her face crumpled and she blurted out, “OK you’ve got me, I will come clean. I have been making a play for James next door, if I can’t have this farm I am damn well going to get the one next door.”

This was a new turn of events and although it seemed a most unlikely relationship, Kathy could quite well believe that Gillian was capable of heartless manipulation to get what she wanted. “How does James feel about it,” Kathy asked, and goggled when Gillian replied that in the early hours of Christmas morning, over a cup of coffee in the kitchen she and James had agreed to marry. Who else knew about your plans Kathy demanded.

“None of your bloody business” was Gillian’s curt reply; she had obviously regained her composure and was back to her arrogant self.

At this juncture Suzanne returned with various bits of paper, Kathy dismissed Gillian and put out her hand for the paperwork. Suzanne sat down opposite, looking a little less distressed. The will clearly nominated Suzanne as beneficiary, both the farm and personal bank accounts were looking healthy and a further document showed that Clive’s life insurance policy had been cancelled 2 years ago. ‘Right you can go,’ said Kathy, somewhat more gently than was her usual manner. Strike Suzanne off the murderer list.

Next to be summoned was Geoff, who came in looking less confident than he had previously been. A sudden shout from upstairs alerted Kathy, it was Karl from SOCO.

‘Stay here,’ she instructed Geoff, and bounded upstairs where she found Karl looking very pleased with himself.

‘I found this in the spare bedroom where young Andrew spent the night; it looks a likely weapon and has dark stains on it.’

‘Things are getting more and more muddy,’ Kathy moaned, ‘just when I think I am narrowing down the suspect something distracting pops up.’ She examined the item in Karl’s hand, it was a trophy with a heavy base, on which was inscribed “Clive Anderson Champion Dairy Breeder 2015”. ‘Bag it and take it downstairs,’ she

instructed Karl, "I am going to get back to Geoff and then have a deep and meaningful with young Andrew, if he is capable of sensible speech".

Back with Geoff she pulled out her notebook, gave him a searching gaze and asked bluntly what he was really doing in England and if he and Suzanne were in a relationship.

"Good God no" he replied, "' and I am in England because I am in trouble in America."

"That's better, now we are getting some honesty, what happened in America?"

"I was involved in a counterfeit money racket and had to clear out before the police got to me. I thought it wise to come over to the UK and stay with my favourite cousin and his wife; they were bound to welcome me."

"So what is the story with the gambling and all those dollar bills," Kathy asked.

"They are all fake, I wasn't really trying to fleece poor old Clive, we just liked to pretend we were playing for real money, it gave the game an edge."

OK, another question, and don't give me the run around," said Kathy, "I want details of the accident that killed Clive's parents."

Geoff, very contrite by this point, confessed that he had been speeding and that he was being charged with dangerous driving. He added that Clive had just found out, "And incase you think I killed him because of that, I can assure you I didn't, I reckon that crazy bloody kid did it".

"Why on earth would you say that?" asked Kathy

"Because he is fucking nuts, that's why, and he had it in for Clive after their row. I believe the row was really because of jealousy over Clive's win at the Agricultural Show last month. James and Andrew believed they were certain winners. Runner up was worth nothing and they really needed the prize money of \$10,000. They are on struggle street and this would have given them a big boost. I reckon they came over here with evil intent.

"Hmm, thanks Geoff, send Andrew in to me please."

Kathy decided she had had enough of sitting in the dining room where the smell of blood kept wafting over from the fireplace. Thankfully it was too cold for the body to start smelling, she thought, looking dispassionately over at Clive's shrouded body.

When Andrew sloped into the room, she got up, took him by the elbow and said, "Right young man, take me out to the dairy, I want to look around, and I want to talk to you".

The two of them walked over to the dairy, it was clear and sunny, but freezing cold. With frost still visible on the ground, their boots crunched over the driveway. Once inside Kathy asked James to show her exactly what had happened to annoy Clive so much, and cause their altercation.

James led her over to the milking machine and showed her the set up, and the attachment that he had forgotten when setting the cow up in her milking stall. Suddenly his face turned bitter, he faced Kathy and said, "The stupid old sod thought I didn't know how to use the milker, *as if*. I was just trying to stir him up. I wanted a fight; he cheated Dad and me out of \$10,000 winnings at the show. He has been giving his cows massive doses of steroids to bump up their milk production."

Kathy blinked in surprise; this was not the dull young man of a few hours ago. "Right, that's enough, back inside," she instructed James. "I am going to talk to your father, and you stay right there in the dining room".

Kathy escorted Andrew into the kitchen and sat him down opposite her, she decided a bit of bluffing might well flush out some facts. "Andrew, James has told me everything, but I want to hear it from you, how did you kill Clive"?

To her delight, Andrew gave a sigh of resignation and said, "It wasn't James, it was me. I was in the kitchen with Suzanne when we heard Clive and Geoff in the dining room and wondered what they were up to. I crept up on them and saw them locked in a pretty vicious fight. Clive was getting the better of Geoff and I thought he was going to do him a nasty injury. I saw the trophy he had won, the cheating bastard, so I picked it up and brained him across the head. He slumped down, it looked bad. Geoff and I examined him to see if he was still breathing, he wasn't. I could tell that Geoff was the worse for drink, and he seemed to think he had killed Clive. At that moment James sprung up from behind the bookcase and shouted out, "Bloody brilliant Dad, you got the old bastard. So that was that. James confirmed my guilt. Next minute, amazingly

Geoff clapped me on the back and said, "Mate my lips are sealed". Clive was about to go to the police about my criminal activity in America. He was not about to forgive me for killing his parents in that accident, I am only too happy he is out of the way".

Kathy read Andrew his rights, and handcuffed him, "You are charged with the murder of Clive Anderson. Geoff will be charged with being an accessory to murder, and your son will be charged with concealing a murder."

She led the three of them off to the squad car, quietly congratulating herself on getting the business done in time for the Christmas night festivities. A good malt whiskey was going to go down a treat.

(Pat Matthews)